

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday March 26, 2006

On this day in 1555, William Hunter, a 19-year-old English weaver, was burned at the stake for not giving up Bible reading. A Roman Catholic bishop ordered his execution and the order was signed by Queen Mary. Today, in an Afghan prison, Abdul Rahman awaits his possible execution. His crime? He turned to Christ. The evidence? His Bible and his refusal to renounce Christ. Some say he's crazy.

Let us pray.

Lord, Thank You for not hiding Your face from us, Your creations who bear Your image. So we worship You, knowing that without Your revelation, we'd be in the dark. How would we know the depth of Your love but for Your letter of love, written in Your blood? So thank You for revealing who You are and who we are in You, and for warning us of what we'd be without Your grace, and of wooing us to all we can be, only by Your grace.

We thank You for the Bible in which we read of Your grace down through the ages and on to ages without end. Thank You for the Gospel that spells it out so plainly in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, Your Word in flesh and blood.

Yet sadly, stupidly, we can be and have been and are negligent of Your words. We have the very words of the Creator of everything, yet we pay little attention. We have the very words of our Savior and yet we get bogged down in other words. Your Word was written to be read but we refuse to read. Your Word was made flesh to redeem us but we refuse to repent. We have the Book that many have died to read and some, even today, await death for having read. O Lord, may we, with our hunger pangs, go to Your words that, alone, will nourish us. May we, with parched throats, go to the water of life that, alone, will quench our thirst. Your word is deeper than our lives and stronger than death.

We thank You that our minister reads Your words to us each Sunday morning. Lord, do we heed them? We're free to read Your words throughout the week. Lord, how diligently do we read? We're invited to study Your words here, together, from time to time. Lord, do we take the time? We're grateful that, although Your word is foolishness to many, it's life to us if we're as crazy as our Afghan brother.

So, whatever it is that we must face in this life, may we always look first into Your holy word for Your encouragement and guidance in the only life worth living: Life in Christ.

We pray in his name and add the prayer he taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.