

## Monday 16th December

### Syria

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."* Matt 6:9

Former Islamic State group (IS) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi killed himself during a raid by US Special Forces on his compound in north-west Syria in late October. Even though the leader of the group is dead, the ideology that drives IS is not. Young people are particularly vulnerable to their ideology and to being recruited by them.

Neighbouring countries continue to fight for control of Syria. More than 6.2 million people are now internally displaced within Syria and more than 5.7 million have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees.

Syrians desperately hope for peace. They don't want their children to have to grow up in a war zone or as refugees.

Listen to Hark the Herald Angels Sing and join in worshipping God and praying for Syria:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19w0IHPL4X0>

There is an urgent need for us all to stand in prayer and support for Syrian people in desperate circumstances. Many are open to the gospel message and need to hear this message of hope.

- When we pray the words "Our Father", we are declaring that God is not just 'my Father'. As the Creator, he cares for all his creation. He also longs to rescue the lost and to adopt people from all nations as his sons and daughters. Let's pray that many Syrians, including IS members, would eagerly welcome the One who came bearing words of eternal joy and peace for all - Christ the Messiah.
- God is the Great Provider. He sees Syrians' needs with a tender heart. Just as He sustained the Israelites in the desert and fed the 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish, let's ask that He will bring the Syrians exactly what they need each day to survive; to comfort them as they struggle; to nourish their souls with renewed hope each morning and guide them to places where they can find help and rest.
- Pray for peace for Syria and that one day, all Syrian refugees will be able to return home.

Source of some material: <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/pray-for-syria>

## Tuesday 17th December

### Nigeria

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* Matt 6:10

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and it is facing huge challenges in the north. The south is mainly Christian while the north is mainly Muslim. Northern Nigeria is a spiritual battleground. For

10 years or more, radical religious movements have ravaged the land with horrific acts of violence. These have been carried out by the extremist group, Boko Haram. Armed Fulani herdsmen have clashed with the mainly Christian farming communities. Both need land so there is tension between them.

In the last two years Fulani militants have killed over 6,000 people according to church estimates and damaged or destroyed many church buildings. Church leaders called on President Buhari, who is himself a Fulani Muslim, to take action. In October this year, he ordered extremist Islamic schools should be discontinued. Extremist groups often offer status and financial stability to vulnerable youth.

In a recent edition of Barnabas Aid, it was reported that last year an elderly Nigerian imam risked his own life to save 262 Christians fleeing from Muslim extremists. He hid the women and children in his home and the men in the mosque and told the Muslim Fulani militants that everyone inside was Muslim.

Not only are believers suffering, but there is a lot of suffering amongst the general Nigerians in the country. Muslim background believers also face rejection from their own families and pressure to give up being followers of Jesus.

But there is hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are Christian radio programmes being broadcast in the local heart languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Kanuri, to name a few.

- Pray for the kingdom of God to come in Nigeria and for His will to be done, for then there will be peace, joy, happiness and love - a slice of heaven here on earth.
- Pray for Fulani militants, the members of Boko Haram and other extremist groups; that His will be done in their lives.
- Pray for local Nigerian people to come across Christian broadcasts in their own language and be drawn to listen to these programmes.
- Pray for President Buhari to continue to take decisive action to bring peace and justice to his country.

### **Wednesday 18th December**

#### **Bangladesh and South Asia**

*"Give us this day our daily bread."* Matt 6:11

Monsoon rains in South Asia that fall between June and October every year often cause flooding. However, the intensity of the rains in Bangladesh this July was very unusual. They led to one of the worst floods to hit the country in years. More than 300 people died and millions more were displaced after severe flooding hit parts of India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Millions of people in Bangladesh are affected every year during the monsoons when many of the 230+ rivers that feed into the Bay of Bengal burst their banks. The torrential rains this year in Bangladesh killed more than 47 people and at least 700,000 were forced to flee their homes. Rain-

swollen rivers submerged dozens of villages. Although the government opened hundreds of temporary shelters, many people were unable to reach them. Schools were closed, crops and roads damaged and many livelihoods disrupted.

Rohingya refugee camps were also hit and thousands of refugees were affected by the flooding.

In India's tea-growing state of Assam, close to the border of Bangladesh, severe flooding displaced millions of people and killed more than 60.

- Pray for those who need their daily bread and for sufficient aid and help as Bangladesh rebuilds after these devastating floods. Many families do not have the means to rebuild since they lost both their homes and their livelihood.
- Not only do they need their daily bread, but also their spiritual bread – the word of God. Pray for a great hunger and thirst for the word of God and pray for workers who can go there to bring the love and compassion of Jesus, together with the Good News.
- Ask for comfort for the distressed and bereaved, that they receive the help they so desperately need.

Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/south-asia-flooding-death-toll-bangladesh-india-nepal-pakistan-a9015901.htm>

## **Thursday 19th December**

### **Yemen**

*“And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”* Matt 6:12

The Iran-backed Houthis, who control the capital Sanaa and other parts of Yemen, have been fighting against a Saudi-led coalition that supports the country's internationally recognised government in a devastating five-year war. In September this year, the Houthis proposed halting attacks on Saudi Arabia as part of a peace initiative. Yemen's conflict has killed tens of thousands of people – most of them civilians – and driven millions more to the brink of famine in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

In August, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), backed by the United Arab Emirates, seized control of the southern port city of Aden, leaving the Saudi- and UN-backed government led by President Hadi in possession of little land or effective power. The STC is a Yemeni group that joined the Saudi-led military alliance, which first intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to restore Hadi's government shortly after it was removed from the capital by the Houthi rebels. However, it wants recognition in the government in the south of the country.

In October it was reported that a Saudi-brokered agreement had been reached between the warring sides in the south of Yemen. The agreement will result in a government reshuffle to include the STC separatists and give them equal representation, with their armed forces being placed under government control.

This agreement is hoped to pave the way for wider peace talks to end the civil war in the rest of the country. A former UN Security Council Yemen consultant said that the agreement was a cornerstone for bringing peace to Yemen.

- Pray that the Father's mercy is able to penetrate the hearts of the different warring factions in Yemen, so that they will be able to forgive their one another.
- Let's pray that this new agreement that has been signed will be respected and upheld by all sides, bringing peace and reconciliation to the south of the country.
- Pray that this agreement will be a way forward to bring lasting peace to the rest of the country.
- We know that Christ is the cornerstone. Psalm 118:22 declares: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." Let's pray that Christ will be the cornerstone on which Yemen is rebuilt.

Sources: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/peace-deal-announced-yemeni-government-separatists-191105145143441.html>

## **Friday 20th December**

### **Afghanistan**

*"And lead us not into temptation"* Matt 6:13a

When we recently prayed for Afghanistan, peace talks between the Taliban and the US were expected to end in a deal being signed in the very near future. This would have seen the withdrawal of US troops, with the hope of less conflict in this country. It was also hoped this would pave the way for peace talks to commence between the Afghan government and the Taliban, bringing lasting stability in the country.

After nine rounds of negotiations in Doha, it seemed that most of the differences between the US and the Taliban had been resolved. The US special representative for Afghan reconciliation also said a peace agreement had been finalised in principle. However, talks were cancelled by the US, after the Taliban claimed responsibility for a blast in Kabul in early September that killed 12 people including a US soldier.

With the withdrawal of the US from the negotiating process, it is now hard to see how peace can be achieved in this country. About 2.7 million people from Afghanistan are living as refugees. In February this year, the UN said civilian deaths reached a record high in 2018. It said more than 32,000 civilians had been killed in the past decade and many lives continue to be lost, with many innocent people suffering.

- Let's ask God to help members of the Taliban not to fall into temptation, not to pursue conflict to achieve their aims, but for the grace and strength to pursue a peaceful resolution.

- Afghanistan has been at war for over 18 years. Pray that the Prince of Peace will come to reign over this nation, bringing His peace and healing into the hearts and homes of its people.
- Pray for Afghan refugees across the world, particularly those in Pakistan, as they face an uncertain future. Pray for right decisions to be made for their future and for protection over these vulnerable people.
- Pray for the international leaders and the Afghan Government as they make decisions about Afghanistan. Pray for wisdom and that they will set realistic goals that will see this nation being able to move forward.

## Saturday 21st December

### Unrest in the Middle East

*“But deliver us from the evil one.”* Matt 6:13b

The Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 did not bring the freedom longed for by the people who demonstrated against tyrannical leaders. But the consequences of the upheaval are still being felt, including the wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya and a much tougher police state in Egypt.

Over half the population of the Middle East is thought to be under the age of 30. The young are increasingly frustrated by the levels of corruption and high unemployment. Iraq ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, according to a number of indices of worldwide corruption. Lebanon is slightly better, but not by much. It is also on the brink of economic collapse, having a stagnant economy and high levels of public debt. Protesters there have paralysed the country and led to the recent resignation of Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri.

In Iraq, demonstrators are being shot dead in the streets. In recent weeks the Egyptian security forces crushed attempts to protest against the police state of President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi.

The failure of corrupt systems to accommodate the needs of a large and young population guarantees that the anger and frustration behind the demonstrations will not go away.

Let's sing Joy to the World and remember the words of this carol: “He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Xo64Q2ucQ8>

- We ask God to deliver the people of this region from the evil one and for His rule of truth and grace across the Middle East.
- Pray for the gospel to go forth in love, power and compassion and for divine opportunities for Jesus to be exalted.
- Let's cry out for the young people of this region to find hope in God.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray*

*to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jer 29:11-13*

- Pray for leaders in these countries to love justice and mercy and to stand against corruption and inequality.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-50219821>