

Prayer of the Month • February 2013

Janet Morley

O God, the source of all insight,
whose coming was revealed to the nations
not among men of power but on a woman's lap:
give us grace to seek you where you may be found,
that the wisdom of this world may be humbled
and discover your unexpected joy,
through Jesus Christ, Amen.

All Desires Known / Janet Morley. 1992

This prayer for The Epiphany is clearly based on the Visit of the Magi described in Matthew 2.1-12. However, it brings out implications in the story and leads into a plea for justice. It is more common to contrast a kingly throne with the humble manger. Here, however, Janet Morley contrasts the expected royal setting of male-dominated court with a domestic scene on a woman's lap. This idea is taken further in the request that we may seek the Lord wherever he is to be found, however unlikely the place. The prayer concludes not with the condemnation of power or the insufficiency of human wisdom, but with the joy of discovery – God is present and we can know it by his grace.

Janet Morley has written a lot of prayer and worship material for Christian Aid, where she led the churches team. After leaving Christian Aid she worked for the Methodist connexional team for ten years. She is now a freelance writer, speaker, trainer and grandmother. She is responsible for a number of books. Her best-known book of prayers, now recently re-issued in a third edition, is *All Desires Known*. This was first published in 1988, before women were ordained to the priesthood in the Church of England. In this year also, the Liturgical Commission report, *Making Women Visible*, was published, and Janet Morley has been a campaigner for more inclusive language in prayers. The theological perspective of this is that God should not be seen in terms simply of maleness. Her collects, like the one reflected on here, tend to be original, poetic, punchy, and sometimes disturbing or shocking. One, for Good Friday, for example, begins: 'Christ our victim'. Some of her prayers have made their way into *Common Worship*, such as one for the bereaved, which begins: 'O God, who brought us to birth and in whose arms we die'. These prayers are worth spending time with.

Colin Lunt