

Service Sunday 24 July 2022 Rayleigh

Welcome to everyone worshipping here at Christ Church this morning and to those watching on Facebook.

Prayer of Approach

Our God in heaven,
we come to worship you.
We gather as your people.
We seek your kingdom here among us,
searching for peace and harmony, justice and fairness.
To you, our God, we come.

Amen.

Song – Come on and celebrate WF20

Come on and celebrate
His gift of love, we will celebrate
The Son of God who loved us
And gave us life.
We'll shout Your praise, O King,
You give us joy nothing else can bring,
We'll give to You our offering
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate and sing,
Celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate and sing,
Celebrate and sing to the King.

Patricia Morgan & Dave Bankhead

Theme introduction – Bad Gifts, Good Gifts (PowerPoint slides)

Sandy says she would really like to have a delicious vegetarian chilli con carne. Instead she is offered a bowl of pigs' trotters.

Gwyneth says she would love some binoculars to use for birdwatching. Instead she's given a big hairy spider.

When Jesus was with his friends they asked Jesus to tell them how they should pray to God and Jesus told them a story about people asking for nice things but instead being given really horrible things. Jesus told this story to show the people that God is not like that. Jesus said that we should pray and ask God for the things that we need because God - unlike me - is a loving and caring and generous God who really wants to give us the good things that we need for our lives. If we ask God for something we definitely won't end up getting a bowl of pigs' trotters or a big hairy spider. We don't need to be worried or scared about praying to God and telling God the things that we really need or really are hoping for. God wants to hear our prayers. Sometimes we might need to keep on asking God for something if it doesn't happen straight away but God doesn't get cross if we keep on praying.

Prayer of Thanks

Thanksgiving is in our hearts as we worship our God.
For freedom to pray: **thanks be to God.**
For gifts given: **thanks be to God.**
For care offered: **thanks be to God.**
For love flowing: **thanks be to God.**
For life in its fullness: **thanks be to God.**
For the Word made flesh, dwelling among us: **thanks be to God.**
For the Holy Spirit, inspiring and moving us: **thanks be to God.**
For the promises of God lived out between us: **thanks be to God.**
For bread for the day: **thanks be to God.**
For life everlasting: **thanks be to God.**
Thanksgiving is in our hearts, as we worship our God
and live out our lives, day by day.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Loving God, forgive us when we think too much about ourselves and when we don't show love to people around us.

Merciful God, forgive us when we're not patient with things or people and we upset people with the things that we say.

Faithful God, forgive us when we have so many things to do that we forget about you and your love for us.

Thank you Lord that you are patient, loving and kind with us and that nothing we can do will ever separate us from your love.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – Shout for joy and sing WF 84

Shout For Joy And Sing Your Praises To The King
Lift Your Voice High, Let Your Hallelujahs Ring
Come Before His Throne To Worship And Adore
Enter Joyfully Now The Presence Of The Lord

You're My Creator, You're My Deliverer
You're My Redeemer
You Are Lord, And You're My Healer,
You're My Provider
You're My Shepard And My Guide
Jesus, Lord And King, I Worship You

David Fellingham

The Grace and Children leave for Sunday Club

Offering and prayer

Accept what we offer:
our time, our talents and our money,
and all that we have and are.
So that this world, our world, Your world,
need not be gripped by fear or want,
or lack of shelter, or lack of friends.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Reading – Luke 11: 1-13

Talk 1

Prayer is surely 1 of the foundation stones of our Christian faith. We have the very great privilege of being able to have a personal and direct relationship with God through prayer. We have the freedom of being able to speak with God without any need for ceremony or to have somebody approaching God on our behalf. When Jesus speaks to his disciples about prayer in Matthew's gospel he says all they need to do is 'go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'

There must have been thousands of books written about prayer over the decades – different styles and types of prayer, different techniques for improving and strengthening our prayer life. It's a subject that rightly demands our time and effort but also can be 1 of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of our Christian faith.

The reading from Luke's gospel shows Jesus giving his disciples a simple framework for their daily prayers, encouraging the disciples in how they should pray and also offering the Holy Spirit as a helper and companion. So let's look at each of those areas in more detail.

It was the custom in Jesus' time for a Rabbi to teach his followers a simple prayer which they could use on a regular basis and in our reading we see Jesus' disciples asking him to do the same. These guidelines have been valued by Christians of all denominations for centuries. So what does the framework that Jesus offers, which is known to us as the Lord's prayer, teach us about the things we should be praying about?

By starting the prayer with the fact that we are praying to our heavenly Father, we share the closeness of Jesus' relationship with God. God is our Father and we are his beloved children. Jesus teaches that we can have an intimate and deeply personal relationship with God/

Jesus then teaches that our prayers should encompass the following areas:

- By praying 'hallowed by your name' Jesus shows us the importance of starting our prayers by honouring and respecting God for all God is and does. In Hebrew the name is much more than just the particular name by which a person is known. The name refers to the whole character and mind and heart of the person – in this case God.
- By asking 'your kingdom come' we are seeking guidance and strength from God to do God's will here on earth, for the world to be transformed into what God originally intended and for God to reign over all things. When we pray for God's kingdom to come we are making a commitment to work with God to achieve this and when we pray for God's kingdom we can pray for people and places in the world where we know there is pain and suffering.

- When we ask God to 'give us each day our daily bread' we are acknowledging that we depend on God for all things and asking God to provide the things we need each day. Because God is our loving and generous Father, we can take all our concerns, however big or small, in prayer to God. The implication here is that we are not to worry about tomorrow or the future but to live 1 day at a time and trust in God.
- When we pray 'forgive us our sins' we seek God's forgiveness for the wrong we have done in the past and continue to do. This is about God's wish for us to be honest about the mistakes we've made and the things we've done wrong and by doing this our relationship with God will grow stronger. We also give God our commitment that we will forgive people who do wrong to us.
- By praying 'lead us not into temptation' or lead us not into the time of trial we ask for God's help with future challenging situations that we will inevitably face. This doesn't guarantee that we will escape such testing times but rather that, with God's help, we will be able to face them and remain faithful to God.

Time of prayer/reflection

We're going to spend a couple of minutes now reflecting on or praying about one of the areas of prayer included in the Lord's Prayer (honouring God, asking for the transformation of the world, asking for our needs to be met, asking for forgiveness, asking for God's help in testing times). So if you would like to pray silently for 1 of those areas please do or if you'd like to come to the front and light a candle for a particular issue you can do that as well.

Lord's prayer

Part 2

Following Jesus' teaching about what we are to pray for, Jesus then continues by telling a parable, a story with a hidden meaning, which shows us very clearly some key aspects of how we should pray.

The story is of somebody being visited late at night by a friend. The person being visited has no food, not even bread, to offer the visitor so they in turn go to a friend's home asking for food. The friend's door was already shut and locked and in the culture of Jesus' time nobody would consider knocking on a closed door unless it was absolutely vital. But the man looking for bread was not put off – he kept on knocking until he got a response. It's not surprising that the man inside the house is very unhappy at being disturbed so late at night – he and his entire family have been woken up by the persistent and shameless knocking of the person in search of food. Eventually the householder relents and gets up and gives the neighbour some food for his visitor.

Jesus says this story is about prayer. Jesus contrasts the grudging and reluctant response of the householder with how much more God, our loving Father, longs to respond and to supply our needs. God knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and God's heart is full of generous love towards us.

We can also learn something about our approach to prayer from the shameless persistence of the person who would not give up knocking. We need to be bold and brave in our prayers - the phrase shameless audacity is used in the reading - not timid or hesitant or constrained by what we think God is able to do or provide. Audacity is defined as courage or confidence of a kind that other people find shocking. If we look at the wording used in The Message paraphrase of this reading, we find it's spelt out very clearly – Jesus says 'But let me tell you, even if he won't get up because he's a friend, if you stand your ground, knocking and waking all the neighbours, he'll finally get up and get you whatever

you need. Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This is not a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in.'

How can we pray more like this – with greater courage and confidence? If we want to pray into a situation in our own life, in the life of this church, in our local community or elsewhere in the world, wouldn't it be wonderful if our prayers could be filled with the same shameless audacity as the late night visitor in Jesus' story. What might the impact be if our prayers and requests and pleadings to God were truly audacious – praying and asking for things which might seem unreasonable or impossible to us but trusting in God's abundant love and generosity.

Song – Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God R&S 512

1 Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

2 Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

3 Man shall not live by bread alone,
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Karen Lafferty

Part 3

Jesus says in our reading that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and God's gift of the Holy Spirit can help us in our prayers.

In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul encourages us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.. The Spirit provides us with strength and determination to pray and keep on praying when it feels like the situation is hopeless. Jesus said he would send the Spirit to the disciples and the Greek word used has the meaning of advocate, helper and counsellor.

There will be times when we find it hard to know what to pray for, to find the right words or even the strength to carry on praying. In such times we might feel powerless and be on the verge of giving up on prayer and on God. But God doesn't abandon us in such times. In situations like this we can rely on the Holy Spirit to find a way of bringing our needs to God so that they don't go unheard. Paul talks about exactly this circumstance when he writes in Romans chapter 8 that

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

And again if we read these words from The Message modern wording we find that

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves,

We can speak with God in many different ways – we can whisper our love, we can weep our sorrows, we can shout our anger, we can bargain on behalf of others, we can chat about our day, we can plead for help, we can ask for mercy. God doesn't limit how we communicate, though maybe sometimes we do. God longs to hear about our needs and hopes and fears. And God longs to respond. And when we come to God in prayer, let's do it with courage, confidence, perseverance, expectation and hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Song – Holy Spirit living breath of God WF 34

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
May Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin,
In each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth,
Cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
May be clear for all the world to see.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Prayers of intercession

Song – What a friend we have in Jesus R&S 413

1. What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

2. Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
3. Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.

Joseph Scriven

Sending out prayer

Lord, help us to think before praying,
and pray before acting.
May we see our community
and the people who make it up
as precious to you and precious to us,
as we seek to preserve all that is beautiful
and build up all that is holy and Godly.
Amen.

Carry Bible to back of the church

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