

National Prayer Weekend 23-25 September

Preach on Prayer.

I want to take you to one of the most familiar passages in the bible and teach on the most familiar and probably most repeated prayer of all time. A prayer that has been called 'The Lord's Prayer' and in my bible headed 'The model Prayer'.

This is a prayer so familiar that, there was a time, perhaps not now that most children in this country could recite it from memory. But let's not treat the familiar with contempt this morning. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to quicken truth to our hearts as we meditate on this model of prayer.

Read Matt 6:5-13

Luke 11:2-4

Disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

Even though much of our prayer life is hidden, you never actually pray alone, do you? If that were the case who or what are you praying to. There are always at least 4 persons involved. We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit, so including yourself, there's 4 persons involved for a start!

Your private, personal prayer life is vital but there is also a particular power in prayer that comes when you come together in agreement before God.

Matt 18:18-20 NLT

I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

"I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.

For some people, not used to praying out loud it can be difficult. I find in my personal prayer it sometimes helps to pray out loud. I often find my mind wanders and I stray all over the place in silent prayer, but as soon as I begin to pray out loud, it helps me focus and to hear what I am saying.

When you get used to praying out loud even when alone, it helps you to pray aloud with others. You get used to the sound of your own voice.

Father and son - silent prayer.

A father takes his small son with him one weekend to run some errands. At lunchtime they call into a cafe for something to eat. The father sits at one of the stools and lifts his son to sit beside him. They ordered lunch and when the food arrives the father says; "son, we'll just have a silent prayer." Dad got through praying first and his son remained sat with his head bowed for an unusually long time. When his son finally looked up, the father asked; "what in

the world were you praying about all that time?" With a child's innocence and honesty the child replies, "How do I know? It was a silent prayer."

We need to be saying something in the silence!

Jesus starts his master class in prayer therefore by teaching us to "say", speak to God.

I believe there is a **deep seated instinct** in people, even those who are not religious, to pray. Would you agree?

For some people it comes out with a look heavenward and the exclamation "thank You!"

People find themselves wanting to cry out to a mysterious somebody or something. Whether it's a cry for help or just saying 'thank you' out of pure relief that the disaster didn't happen.

Prayer is not meant to be formal and dull. It's not a set formula that we have to say to get God to do something. It's not just repeating something someone else has written or said. **Prayer is about a personal relationship** with a living, loving Heavenly Father. A Father we come to in and through Jesus Christ. We have no other means of access to the Father except through Him.

"But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Eph 2:13

Also in Eph 3:12 it says

"In Him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

So although Jesus is not mentioned by name in the model prayer, it is Jesus himself who introduces us to "Father". A name we can only use because we are made sons of God through Jesus.

When you go Israel you can't help but notice when children say the word "Abba". They are talking to their "daddy". Jesus was teaching his disciples to talk to God in the most intimate and personal way, as their "Abba".

You've got to realise just how astonished they must have been. Jews would not even say the name of God because it was considered too holy to utter. Even if we think about this for a moment we can and should start to see the gravity and shear wonder of this.

We have recently done a series of bible studies where we have considered the attributes of God. It is **difficult for us to grasp in human terms the magnitude of God.**

Stand on a mountain and look at the greatness of God's creation, we are tiny insignificant dots in a vast range of mountains, look into the sky and feel the warmth of the sun from millions of miles out in space. Look into the night sky

and see the billions of stars and then reflect that there are billions more Galaxies with billions more stars in them. "And God made the stars also"!

The bible teaches He is "**omnipotent**" in other words he is able to do anything. There is no power shortage in God!

Luke 1:37 "for nothing is impossible with God."

Jer' 32:27 "I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?"

NLT

He is "**omniscient**" or he knows everything. **Ps 139: 1-4, 16,**
God knows even the very words we speak before we utter them!

"Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed. And in your book they all were written. The day's fashioned for me, when as yet there were non of them."

Isa 46:10

"Only I can tell you the future before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish." NLT

You really don't have to look too hard in scripture to understand God knows everything. He even knows our thoughts before they come to our minds! These truths can be quite mind blowing when you start to think deeply about them, as we did in the bible studies.

He is "**omnipresent**" or everywhere. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **Psalms 139: 7-10**

It's also amazing when we begin to consider His great love, his holiness, his glory, his justice and mercy. God is truly too wonderful for comprehension, yet Jesus says we have free access to him as "Our Father".

In the Greek translation **the prayer begins with the word "Father"** not the word "our". The first thing Jesus wanted us to realise is when we pray we don't come to some impersonal force or energy. He is not a program, a self help system, a positive thought, a higher power, if that's what you believe, go and pray to a plug socket, there's power in that! but no, God is a person. We come into his '**presence**' and prayer is about a relationship with Him.

If we know Jesus as our Lord and saviour we become part of the family of God and as such are given the Spirit of adoption and cry out "Abba, Father. (Rom 8:15).

God is a perfect parent. Human fathers and mothers have faults. Often those failings give us a distorted view of our Heavenly Father. As vast as the universe is, so vast is the perfect love of God toward His children. We don't even come close to understanding the love of the Father.

He is a Father who will embrace even the filthiest child, prodigals who decide to come home. Covered in the filth of the sty, yet through Christ he washes, binds up the wounds, pays the outstanding debt and adopts us as his very own child. He leaves nothing undone and if forgiveness and restoration were not enough, he even gives us a very great inheritance.
Glory to God, our Father in heaven!

If we see prayer as no more than a duty or a discipline, we are religious. **Prayer is the greatest privilege.** Through Jesus the veil is taken away and we may approach in freedom and confidence, as innocently as a child who embraces his father. Yet also as boldly as a son or daughter who make their requests without fear by way of their place in the family.

I am sure there are many employees who tremble at the authority of their boss, who would be equally astonished if they got a behind the scenes look at the boldness of his or her family members!

When Moses met with God, the scriptures tell us that he had a tent, called 'the tent of meeting', that was pitched far away from the camp.
Exodus 33: 7-18

I believe Moses **wanted** to meet with God, don't you? It is here that he gained the strength, wisdom and power to do all God had given him to do. It was here the living waters were renewed and he knew the presence and glory of God. The others stood at the entrance to their tents and watched as Moses went in and the cloud of God's glory came down. They too, worshipped at the entrance to their tents as the glory of God came down.

V11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, **as a man speaks to his friend.**

I don't think Moses prayed religious 'thou art' prayers. It was honest dialogue between two friends. **Are you a friend of God?** Or are you stuck in a mindset that has not allowed you to be honest with Him?

The young Joshua also loved the presence of God and would stay behind after the prayer meeting. He wanted more, he wanted to be up close and personal with God too. He enjoyed the presence of God. I believe this is recorded for us in scripture so that we understand that practicing the presence of God was Joshua's primary training for his future calling in God.

Hold on a second. We are talking about prayer, the most boring meeting in church, the least attended meeting, the thing only old people with more time do!

If that's your view of prayer, you've not experienced prayer in the presence of God. I believe the **need** to pray, that deep hunger and desire for prayer, is something God does when we truly open our hearts to Him.

What was Moses prayer?

I need you to bring up the people. In other words **"I can't do it!"**
Show me your way - **direct my path, or "I don't know where to go!"**
Consider these people, 'your' people - **"I can't carry this load, they are your responsibility!"**
I'm not going without you - **We need your presence. "I am not budging unless you lead the way!"**

Have you ever said prayers like this? I'm sure most of you have when you've got real with God. Do these prayers sound religious to you? No. We are earwiging an honest heart to heart conversation; God and a man speak to one another as friends.

Was God angry with Moses honesty? No. God answered and blessed him with even more than Moses asked or could have imagined.

Prayer is about presence and is a privilege not a religious duty!

If we stopped our morning prayer meeting and didn't have seasons of prayer. If we failed to pray for our family, our friends, neighbours, work colleagues and failed to commit our ways to God, what would happen?

Nothing!

Nothing would change, or if it did change, it would not be for good. This is the point. Are we okay with the way things are? Are we content to carry on as we always have? Or is there a sense within us that God has more, loves more, wants to reach more, heal more, restore more etc?

Spurgeon's prayer meeting - 'the power plant'

Five young students were spending a Sunday in London, Mao they went to hear the famed C.H.Spurgeon preach.

While waiting for the doors to open a man greeted them and said, "Gentlemen, would you like me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of the church?" They weren't particularly interested, after all it was a hot July day. Not wanting to offend the stranger, they went along. They young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened and the guide whispered, "hears the heating plant."

Surprised , the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking the blessing of the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above.

Softly closing the door the man introduced himself. It was C.H.Spurgeon himself.

Be in no doubt, we are in a spiritual battle and we wage war, not with flesh and blood, but real spiritual powers.

2 Cor 10: 3-5 NLT

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds

of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

The weapons of our warfare are mighty weapons. Prayer brings out the big guns against the enemy.

Our prayer strategy, to mobilise every believer in this church to pray is not just a good idea, a fad, a phase, an interesting concept or for someone else. I believe we are in a war! I believe the future of Kingsway depends on it, I believe our community depends on it, I believe there are lives at stake and the very presence of God in our midst is at stake. Could we have any higher stakes than this?

Why Pray?

Do you think we are beginning to understand why?

Jesus was a man of prayer. He set the example for us to follow. It was so important in His life that his disciples were challenged to ask Jesus to teach them.

Mark 1:35 Jesus rose early to pray.

Mark 14:23 alone on the mountain praying.

Luke 6:12 spent the night in prayer.

John 17: Jesus prayer for himself, the disciples and those yet to believe.

The scriptures record Jesus special times of prayer before he made major decisions or performed miraculous signs. Jesus demonstrated a lifestyle of prayer.

We cannot live one way and then switch on a prayer button. Prayer should become part of our lives and be as natural as breathing.

Jesus did not teach "if you pray" but "when you pray".

The second word in the Lord's Prayer is "our"

He is "**Our**" Father

We need to remind ourselves that it's not all about "me".

Bless me, help me, provide for me, poor old me. We are not an only child! We are part of a family. We are family here but also part of a worldwide family. The early believers, in the vital, growing church, met together continually to learn from the apostles teaching, for fellowship, breaking bread and to pray together. The simplicity of their gathering is wonderful.

What do you do with 3,000 people saved on the same day?!!

Fellowship together, learn together, break bread together and pray together. Seems like a pretty good strategy to me!

Acts 2:42

When there is life, there's no need to complicate things. Our problem is perhaps **we allow ourselves to become stale**. We need to keep ourselves fresh in our prayer and devotional life. We need to gather to worship and encourage one another.

We need to be honest with God: **Ask Him "What are you saying saying to me?" and ask yourself "what am I going to do about it?"**

Or even **"What next Father?"**

Great questions, aren't they?

The fact we ask questions like these, shows a deep desire, a hunger for more of God and willingness to seek first the kingdom of God.

Who are the most influential people on earth?

Let me tell you, it's people who pray!

Why do I say this? Let me answer by asking a question:

What can prayer achieve?

Answer: 'Anything, that God can do'

What can God do?

Anything!!!

Matt 21:22

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

The promise comes with one condition. "Believing" or faith.

John 15:7

"If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

What's the one condition here? "If my words remain in you"

1 John 5: 14-15

"Now this is the confidence we have in Him, that of we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

So what's the one condition?

Ask according to His will.

So we have three promises that God will answer our prayers and we know God has the power to answer, yet there appears to be a big "BUT" that could let God off the hook and leave us wondering why He didn't answer. Actually there are **3 big "Buts" in the way!** We don't like big butts do we?

1. Asking in Faith, or believing

2. Having to ask right, according to His word
3. Is it His will?

Rather than seeing these as "a get out for God" we need to see them as they are intended. **They are conditions, which when met, wonderfully release the abundant blessings of God.** They are keys to effective praying, unlocking the omnipotence of God.

The three are linked. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God revealed by His Spirit. His word, is clearly His will. So if we pray according to the revealed will of God, He will answer.

If the request is wrong, God says, "no."

If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."

If you are wrong, God says, "Grow."

But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, "Go."

I come back again to His presence and our relationship with Father.

This is the real key to understanding. We are given a measure of faith and need to pray according to that measure. Be honest about the measure you have rather than trying to impress others.

If you want to see your next door neighbour turn to Christ and you have faith to believe that God will give you an opportunity to talk to your neighbour about Jesus, start there, if it's that God will soften someone's heart, begin there. Then when that happens you will have faith for the next step.

It's very practical, isn't it. I have sometimes felt I should pray for big things to happen. Have I believed they would happen? Not always. So maybe I need to learn to start, where I'm really at and go from faith to more faith. An honest journey that ends up where God wants me.

The Lord's Prayer starts with relationship and then two petitions that again are a key to answered prayer.

"Your kingdom come"

"Your will be done"

I think it's a pretty safe bet that God would answer these two petitions!

What's happening? We are aligning ourselves with His purpose. It's His plan to establish His kingdom on earth.

So if we are praying for Righteousness, holiness, justice, peace, mercy, humility, forgiveness, repentance, wisdom, healing, right living, right attitudes, honour to His name etc do you think we might just have His ear? These things are examples of His revealed will for us. Whatever is made clear in scripture can be prayed with confidence, He will answer.

When we pray these things "in the name of Jesus" we pray with the full power and authority of God's name. "Yahweh is salvation" with the promise of His word.

I think praying "Thy will be done" is also a safe bet!

But I know this prayer is not just a cop out. It's not resignation and 'whatever will be will be' praying. It is a deep inner conviction that with all our heart, we long for His will, knowing it is the best and safest outcome possible. Longing to be in His will and about His business.

His will is perfectly done in heaven. How wonderful to know we can experience the same heavenly outcome on earth. His perfect will here also.

If our will does not line up with His. We have a decision to make and we need to chose His will, if we are to experience His blessings. There is nothing better than His will, but only faith tells us that is true.

We need to embrace God's will without any reservation. If you and God are out of harmony, who has to change?

There comes a time in every believers life when you must give your will over to God. It may be a difficult choice and painful but you won't ever look back, when you have made that choice.

Romans 12:1,2

Present your body.....

Have you ever presented your body to God. Unreservedly?

God is the source of every good thing!

Prayer changes things but just as importantly, it changes us too.

Prayer is the most powerful force at our disposal on earth. We are privileged to have access to the Father through Jesus.

We can together say "Amen"

A powerful word of agreement, a definite, deliberate endorsement of what has been prayed, releasing the Matt 18 promise of that which is bound or released on earth is bound or released in heaven.

In other words our "Amen" will seal the deal and release the unstoppable power of God to act.

Amen!

