**Morning Praise @ Home 13th October 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Bible Reading** **Revelation 21:1 – 4 Matthew 26:36 – 46**

### Reflection from John A SERMON ON UNANSWERED PRAYER

I believe it was Keats who described Autumn as the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. Even now in Autumn you must have noticed that the days are getting shorter. It’s darker. Winter is coming and that’s a season where growth and light are rarely seen. In matters of faith there is a season of Winter. Nothing much is happening. It is dark and the light is low. One of the outworkings of this is when our faithful prayers are unanswered.

Pete Grieg one of the founders of the 24/7 Prayer Movement tells of times when he has seen God answering major prayers – even miracles, but goes on to tell the story of his wife Sammy becoming seriously ill with a brain tumour. She received treatment and has survived but with serious health challenges and with a young family to care for. Pete has had to wrestle with unanswered prayer whilst passionately believing that God does answer prayer but not always in the way one would reasonably hope for. Some years ago Pete wrote what has become an absolute classic book called GOD ON MUTE which has been translated into many languages and has resulted in online courses to help Christians grow in prayer while also facing the times when our prayers remain unanswered.

He also points out that the Bible is much more honest about this than the Church is. The Psalms are full of praise and admiration for God AND AND AND full of lament – complaints directed to God when life seems so cruel. That’s not because of a lack of faith but a faithful honesty among those who believe in a God who came among us in Jesus - as a God who suffers and went to the Cross.

He also points out that Jesus had and has to live with unanswered prayer.

***In John 17 Jesus prayed for his Church to be One. TO BE UNITED IN ORDER TO BLESS THE WORLD.***

***Now, the last time I looked that prayer remains unanswered to this day!***

Not only are denomination divided, Churches are also divided and individual Christians are locked into profound differences and conflict.

The prayer was a good prayer but we are free agents and WE can block the way to Jesus’ Prayer being answered every day by how we live in disunity. And how we react to one another. We can block the way to God’s best.

Then, our Gospel Reading for today takes us directly to the story of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in MATTHEW 26.

He takes his close friends with him to this garden – probably an olive grove and tells them he feels overwhelmed at what is to come and then moves away to pray.

Verse 39 says he didn’t then kneel down to pray, **he fell** to the ground – feeling overwhelmed. ***Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.***

And while this was going on the disciples simply fell asleep…………….he was alone.

And a second time he prayed ***My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.***

***Bottom line here is that Jesus didn’t want to die at that moment…..and his prayer was not answered.***

In the same prayer…Jesus affirms God as powerful and loving – he calls him MY Father and a loving relationship lies at the heart of that. He believes God can do extraordinary things YET he is faced with facing death itself.

People often and understandably ask how a God of Love can allow suffering to continue when if He is so powerful he can surely do something.

This relates to how God operates in his world. Theologians call it THEODICY.

Pete Grieg - without asserting it’s a complete answer cites three areas to consider.

He speaks of GOD’S WORLD – GOD’S WAR AND GOD’S WILL impacting how our prayers may be answered or hindered.

In terms of **God’s world** He points out that the created order works according to patterns and norms. Gravity works so that if something falls on your foot it will damage you. In line with CS Lewis Pete says God can exceptionally act outside the norms of nature. But miracles by their very nature are exceptional. Our prayers must normally accommodate the natural order of things.

Secondly he speaks of God’s War. Along with all Christians he asserts that dark forces are at work to thwart the best of human existence and indeed do harm. When we pray we are engaged in what is sometimes called Spiritual Warfare and war is always tough and damaging. Jesus himself did battle with these dark forces and ultimately overcame them BUT BUT BUT they were set against him and us. We need to pray for protection but must accept that there are casualties in a broken world.

Thirdly is God’s Will. When a Christian prays they do so in Jesus’ Name. Praying in Jesus’ name is not a lucky charm to get God to answer my wants but a commitment to wanting what God wants for us…what is God’s will. We may not know what God’s will looks like but we trust him to give us what is best even if it takes time and even if its fulfilment comes beyond this life in God’s future. That’s why we have our other reading from Revelation 21. It’s a picture of a different future. God’s dwelling place is now among the people…………He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

Jesus himself – having prayed in Gethsemane – still had to go through Good Friday before Easter Day and the fullness of resurrection changed everything.

We started by thinking of a Winter season……paralleled in our experience of God……..will this darkness ever end, when will the warmth of summer return????

In the words of the Psalmist (Psalm 30:5) Weeping may endure through the night but joy WILL COME in the morning. And in those amazing words – often overlooked in Corinthians 13….in the old King James Version it says: *Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face, now I know in part but then I shall know fully.*

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by John MB**

Faithful God, sometimes our faith feels weak. The trials of life test our faith and we find it hard to rejoice.

Help our faith to grow and help us to realize that it’s the most important thing in our lives.

Show us how to rise above our human weaknesses and to grow stronger in our Christian Faith.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord, help us to see that things which seem completely impossible become possible, if they’re approached with faith.

Help us to see that if we approach a thing saying, “It can’t be done,” it won’t be; but if we approach it saying, “It must be done,” the chances are that it will.

Help us to remember that we approach no task alone, but that You and all your power is with us.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Creator God, we pray for your world.

Forgive us when we are ungrateful, when our lack of faith and spiritual blindness prevents us from appreciating the wonders of your creation and the endless cycle of nature.

Forgive us for taking without giving; and reaping without sowing.

We pray for the farmers of the world many of whom still use those methods described by Jesus and we especially pray that they may be treated with fairness for their labours.

We especially remember those who work with the land here in Britain and around the world, suffering so badly from climate changes.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Father God, we pray for our communities here in Burton, Puddington and Shotwick, that each of us will be open to the opportunities to give of our individual talents, enabling each of us to flourish as a witness to the “One Body” of the church.

We pray that each baptized Christian may develop more fully his or her response to all the gifts which the Spirit bestows for the service of the Body of Christ.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

We pray for the hungry and the homeless, the broken and bereaved. For all for whom this day brings sadness and little joy, for the sick, lonely and the helpless, for those whose hope has been shattered and their faith destroyed.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

We pray for those kept fresh in our memory and for those long forgotten.

For all who ever took the breath of life at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews.

We pray for mercy and forgiveness for the dead and those who mourn them, may they find rest in the Spirit’s embrace and we commend them to your keeping for ever.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord of Life and Love we ask you to lead us into the coming week.

Help us to know that you are close by us; keep us from making mistakes and help us to never disappoint you. When we face hard decisions or difficult work, when we enjoy ourselves and have fun with others, may we know that you share these times with us.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**