**Morning Praise @ Home 22nd September 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 Matthew 7: 7 – 12

### Reflection from John *Prayer as asking*

When a familiar number and name (even a picture of the caller) comes up on my mobile phone, I am so much more eager to answer than if the number is unknown or hidden.

Our human relationships find expression through communication and the same is true for prayer to our Heavenly Father. Knowing God as our Heavenly Father also reminds us of the relationship we have with all of his other children. Not only do we say “Father” but we say “Our Father.” We don’t come to God alone but we come connected to all who also belong to him. Like children at the dinner table, we share in a family conversation with our heavenly parent.

So as we think a little more about Prayer today think relationship every time.

Thanks to Ruth Abbot we are doing this series not to become experts on prayer but to enhance and deepen all our relationships with God as the foundation for strengthening the life and ministry we share in as a Church and as individuals.

Last week Sue said at the end of her sermon that our focus needs to begin with God OUR FATHER before we move on to ASK – That’s how it works out in the Lord’s Prayer. TODAY we are exploring what it means to ask in our prayers.

Firstly, we pray ……OUR Father in Heaven Hallowed be Your Name. Then we ASK BOTH FOR OURSELVES, which is called PETITION, and as we pray for others that is called Intercession.

At its simplest prayer is about asking God for help. Those sometimes urgent requests are made significant by our being dependent and being relational to the Creator of the Cosmos.

We are encouraged to ask God in prayer because we have a relationship with him and we are encouraged not just to ask God on our own. We pray to OUR FATHER and that’s plural and so we are encouraged not just to pray on our own but to pray with others.

When life is tough – perhaps in times of sickness and personal suffering – it’s hard to pray and especially to pray for yourself SO the Letter of James encourages us to ask others to pray WITH AND FOR US. James 5:14 says **Is anyone among you sick…………..? Let them call the elders of the Church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.**

James also said in James 4: 2-3 **You do not have because you do not ask God.**

Certain things may not come about because we do not operate from a relational dependence on our Heavenly Father.

So, all asking prayers are to be encouraged because they are tied into relationship and we need to learn to ask consistently and persistently.

When Jesus was approached by a man called Bartimaeus, something very instructive happened.

In Mark 10: 46-52 Bartimaeus had an obvious need in that he was blind. Jesus could see that but he asked Bartimaeus a question……what do you want me to do for you? That was a relational question and one of the outcomes of Bartimaeus being healed was that he from then on started to follow Jesus. It wasn’t a condition of his prayer being answered but it shows there is a strong link between relationship and asking prayers.

People sometimes ask whether we actually need to pray and ask God – surely God knows our needs better than we do? My best understanding of that is because God partners us in his world. He works in our lives and longs for us to see him at work and to share in his work.

Beyond this relational link to prayer the second reason for asking prayer is that it shows that we are vulnerable.

To make a request is to show that we are in need. It’s not grovelling but it does denote a life of trust…….so in all its forms asking is an expression of faith - however shaky or tentative. It’s also a way of opening our hearts to believe and our hands to receive from another person.

Thirdly asking prayer is intentional. It involves the activation of our wills. God respects us too much to ride roughshod over us and our free will. He comes when he is welcomed. Asking God for ourselves and others is an exciting consequence of human free will. It means our fate is not fixed. Things can change. We have a part to play.

WE are God’s partner in the great project of Creation. WE can imagine new possibilities and make sensible interventions that transform a situation. Prayer is a part of all that.

BUT, BUT, BUT there are some provisos.

Asking is essential if we are to partner with God. So when Jesus says in Matthew 7: 7-12 *ASK anything in my name and I will do it*……that is not a blank cheque. It doesn’t turn God or prayer into a slot machine

To pray in the name of Jesus means asking for things which are consistent with his character and aligned with his purpose.

When my prayers line up with God’s will he says yes and when they don’t he says no…….and I find that a relief….. God is God and I partner him but can’t control him.

Praying in Jesus’ name means wanting what God wants.

Sometimes as we are seeking God for His direction in our lives, or when we are interceding for a specific child, friend or even a city, He grants us an ‘epiphany-like’ moment. This is where God gives us a window into what He sees for our lives, a person we are praying for, or a particular situation. This can come in a word, a picture, an inner sense or a scripture and should result in giving us a preferred future, ‘a vision over visibility.’

The point is God wants us to see something we can’t currently see and then pray it through.

Can I encourage you not so much to remember this sermon but to try out what it is saying about partnering with God and being a part of fulfilling his will….not by anxious frantic actions but by prayerful trust in our Heavenly Father.

Then see God at work…………………..in small ways to begin with and then in more significant ways which truly start to see his kingdom come. **Amen**

### 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 Ron**

Holy God, your law is perfect and your statutes are trustworthy and so we pray to you knowing that you will hear our prayers and answer them in your way.

We pray for all people who seek to follow your way in their lives. Let your church speak your word of truth with confidence and in unity so that those who are searching and listening will be able to see and hear clearly your message of love and peace.

Creator God, we recognise our part in the tensions and injustices of the world: heal the resentment between people and intervene in the world’s conflicts.

Help us to walk humbly with you at our side when we come to the crossroads and must choose which way to go lead us to the path of justice and righteousness whilst steering us away from the road that leads to selfishness and sin.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the love we share with our families and our friends. We recognise that they may have faults, and they love us in spite of ours.  Help us to be flexible and adaptable in all our relationships and also capable of accepting constructive criticism.

Mighty God we pray for those who you have called to the study and practice of medicine, healing and to the prevention of disease and pain. Strengthen them as they follow Jesus’ example, that through their ministries the health of the community may be promoted and your creation glorified.

We now name before you those who we know and love who need healing in their lives. . . . . . .

Loving God, you sent to earth your son Jesus Christ so that in your power and love we might also have the gift of eternal life; bless those whom we love that have departed this life with the gifts of your all-encompassing love and life eternal.

Lord we also ask you to lead us into the coming week, Help us to believe that you are close by us, keep us from making mistakes and help us never to 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**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**