**Morning Praise @ Home 29th 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 6: 5 – 8

### Reflection from Philip *Yield*

We are nearing the end of our series of talks on Prayer.

We have used an acronym – that is, we have been spelling out the initial letters of a word to help us remember important aspects of it.

We started with ‘**P’ - *Pause!****.*

Then an **‘R’ *– Rejoice***!

and then an ‘**A’ – *Ask!***

And today a ‘**Y’ –** that will then spell out - ***PRAY***

So what might Y stand for? Well it’s not a word we use much everyday. **Yield.**

In our ***PRAY*** *acronym,* ***Yield***refers to the act of our **giving way** to God in prayer.

We yield to God when we pause, when we contemplate Him, when we listen to him.

In our busy lives this can be a real challenge! Firstly, let’s be honest; many of us find setting aside some personal prayer time every day challenging enough as it is.

Sometimes we struggle to know what to say, or how to say it. I have always found it fairly straightforward to write prayers to be read out in church – what we call prayers of intercession. Prayers that are presented on behalf of the congregation. But personal prayers about things – what John last week called ‘*prayers of petition*’ – I have always found these much harder to put together.

It’s these personal prayers - that are perhaps part of a daily **quiet time**, that we are thinking about today. So how do we Yield to God in our quiet time prayers?

First we need to go back to P – Pause!

We need to be quiet for a minute, and empty ourselves.

**Put radio on – distracting noise - !**

It’s hard to empty ourselves when there is a distraction. Sometimes that distraction might be external noise, but sometimes it can be noise from our own heads!

**(turn off the radio)**

Sometimes we just need to start our prayer with a pause, with some silence, both from outside and within. And quiet….

This is **contemplation**, and it is a form of prayer without words.

We re-centre ourselves. We seek calm.

We enjoy His presence.

We listen to God, in silence.

Don’t throw words, requests, lists, etc to God!

Avoid ‘religious stuff’!

Silence – yes, but it is actually ‘presence’. You, yielding to God.

If this sounds a bit ‘New Age – hippy stuff’, it isn’t, it’s one of the oldest prayer traditions.

So you might think, ‘Hang on, if I’m not praying, how will things get done – if I don’t **Ask** for them?! Well Our God is a great big God, as the chorus goes – He knows our thoughts better than we do, before we manage to put them into words.

Focus on God, sense His presence and you can then carry that presence with you during the day.

During the day, you can repeat this – you can pray ‘in real time’ If something occurs to you, just instinctively pass it on up to the Lord. Don’t wait until that supposed holy moment of prayer time later, just do it. Then your whole day becomes more holy.

When I walk my labrador, Sandy, I find the act of walking and being out in nature really helps clear my mind. Thoughts do pop out that I can – well, just leave with God as thoughts. I don’t always put them into words – I don’t think I mumble prayers as I walk in the woods! People would probably give me a wide berth if I did!

This form of contemplation can be prayer at its deepest and most personally transformative.

Imagine looking at the night sky and just soaking up the majesty of all those stars – just appreciating the glory of creation. I love astronomy, but this is just stargazing and it is wonderful. This is sometimes what we need to do. See the bigger picture. Pause, and Yield to God.

**-Radio back on-**  With that radio on, it is difficult for you to hear what I am saying. Or for me to hear anything God might be saying.

**-Radio off- Pause-** But when we yield to God, in silence, in contemplation,then we can listen.

When that radio is playing, all we can do is hear it. But prayer isn’t just a one way thing like listening to the radio. It’s a 2-way conversation.

**Gets out walkie talkie:**

**On walkie talkie** – *Hello X, how are things at the back of the church this morning, Over*

**X Replies *–*** *OK, thanks, but how much longer is this sermon going on for? Over*

**Me:** *Not much longer – nearly on the last page, Over*

**X:** *Thank goodness for that! Over!*

Prayer is a 2-way conversation. How can we ensure we get that 2-way conversation going? How can we hear God? Do you remember the story of Old Eli and the young Samuel? Eli was hearing a voice at night…So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, `Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening’. We can say that too.

Now maybe you **will** hear a voice in your head, or a thought in your mind, maybe there will be a nagging thought you just can’t get rid of.

For most of us, reading the Bible is God’s way of starting a conversation with us. Prayer is our response to what we read. Bible reading and prayer go together like bread and butter.

Just look at a bible passage, read it slowly, perhaps a few times. When words or phrases catch your attention, pause. Linger on them.

So for example – that famous verse, John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his only son….*

Maybe you focus on the word ‘so’. It’s there for a reason.

You can almost imagine the Apostle Paul underlining it in his draft manuscript or notes! How much did God love the world? A lot!

Imagine the Lord saying to you – I love you ***so*** much. That’s what you mean to Him…. A conversation has begun, that can lead to prayer.

We can also hear God in advice from others, sometimes in what at first just seems like common sense.

Not sure if you have heard God or have an over active imagination? Pause. Stop thinking about it. Walk the dog, wash the dishes. Or wash the dog, walk the dishes…(!) Over-thinking rarely helps!

The Apostle Paul was a tent maker. Yes, maybe it helped pay the bills while he was out ‘discipling’. But maybe it was also a good way of having some quiet space for contemplative reflection. Maybe that’s where many of his words of scripture were first formed…

**Sense Check –** if in doubt, ask if this sounds like Jesus, and also ask what’s the worst that could happen if you went with what you were thinking or hearing?

Finally, **Confession and reconciliation**

We need to get right with God – Jesus taught us - ‘*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us…’*

Of course God knows we have sinned, but until we admit those sins to him, until we ‘confess’ them, they come between Him and us. Confessing our wrongdoings builds a bridge between us and God.

It’s said not forgiving others is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. That’s why we need to forgive. It helps us with them, it helps us with God, and it helps us with ourselves.

So some thoughts there for our Quiet times. And other times during the day and night. An approach to prayer involving a pause, quiet contemplation, listening. Using scripture to start a conversation with God. Then getting right with God by confession and reconciliation – forgiveness of others.

We have the chance to speak directly to our God, and we can prepare ourselves to listen. God wants a 2-way conversation with us… **Amen**

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**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 Tony**

Heavenly Father, you promised to hear us when we pray in faith. We bring before you now those things on our hearts as we open ourselves to you.

We pray for our world. For those who seek to find peace, for those who work to protect our environment, for those who run into troubled areas as others flee from them.

We pray for the many people whose lives have been torn apart by conflict in Gaza and Israel and in Ukraine. We pray especially those who are grieving, the injured and those now without food, shelter or medical supplies. Strengthen and support the work of all relief organisations.

We pray also for those who have the power to bring peace. May they be touched by a spirit of compassion and kindness.

We pray for our community here in Burton and Puddington; for those who call this place home and for all who visit or pass through. May your face be seen here in the works and actions of all Burton and Puddington people, in acts of kindness, hospitality, friendship and love.

We pray for those whose lives are blighted by debt, addiction, poverty, anger and all the things that make it difficult to feel loved by you. We ask that as members of this church we stand as beacons of hope in an uncertain world for many.

We give thanks for all our interactions with our schools and for everything we attempt either in groups or as individuals to reach out to others in your name. Today we especially ask your blessing on St Nic’s Nippers, our new pre-school group meeting tomorrow for the first time, and their leader Sheila Dennison.

We pray for those who are facing health issues or who are worried about loved ones, especially those who are waiting for a diagnosis or who are awaiting treatment.

We pray for all who mourn the loss of loved ones. We especially pray for Joyce and Ruth Chesworth and the whole family. Be with them, Lord, as they remember John.

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**