

Coach House Church BEACONS

PRAYER PART 1

20TH MAY 2020

What is the one thing you have missed the most during the current lock-down? For most of us it is likely that it is just being with others and having conversation. Having the opportunity to just chat with friends is a very important part of our lives, it helps us to function as human beings and it keeps us sane. People starved of conversation quickly develop problems, especially with their mental health.

I'd like to try a little experiment this morning, in a moment I am going to ask you to hold your breath. Please, if you have health issues and you know you shouldn't do this then you are excused but for everybody else take a deep breath and start to hold it.

Whilst conversation between people is important, as Christians, conversation between ourselves and God is even more important. We call this conversation 'prayer' and prayers feature in many places in the bible. We even copy some of these prayers, reciting them exactly as they are written in the bible. The most well known of these is called 'The Lords Prayer' and can be found both in Luke's gospel and in a slightly longer version in Matthew's gospel. Luke's gospel also contains 5 occasions when Jesus prayed either for himself or for other. I want to look at these examples and see what we can learn from them.

Oh, if you are still holding your breath I suggest you stop now before you pass out. Lets read The Lord's Prayer from Luke chapter 11 and I an reading from the New Living Translation so this doesn't have the familiar ring to it you may be used to. This should help us to focus more easily by removing familiarity. Jesus said "Father, may your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come soon. Give us each day the food we need, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation"

Jesus spoke these words in response to one of his disciples questions "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John the Baptist taught his disciples" You would think that the disciples would have known how to pray, after all prayer wasn't something new, so you might think that they would have been able to pray as a result of their upbringing. Some of Jesus disciples had been with John the Baptist before meeting Jesus and we have seen John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. If that wasn't enough you might also assume that they had seen Jesus pray on previous occasions and could follow his example. So the question isn't so much about the actual speaking out of the prayer, or even the way we need to structure the prayer, but is about the heart and intent behind the prayer. Sadly, this is where many Christians fall down. Learning to recite The Lord's Prayer at primary school won't be of any use to you, no matter how many times you say it, if you don't understand the heart behind it.

Before we look in more detail at what the prayer teaches us lets answer another pressing question. Why did I ask you to hold your breath? Hopefully it will help you to visualise the importance of prayer. Prayer is often said to be the Christians vital breath. If you don't breath – you die. If you don't pray – you will die as a Christian. So what are the important points to note?

Firstly the opening word, "Father" or in older versions "Our Father who art in Heaven" This establishes our relationship with God. He is the Father and we are but little children, we are totally dependant on Him. We are still here on earth, He is, and always has been, in heaven, If you approach God without a right relationship you will be ineffective as you won't be praying in accordance with God's own will and purpose but you own.

"May your name be kept Holy" reminds us that God has absolute sovereignty and is supreme. His name is enough to tell us that He is Holy, set apart, sanctified. There is nothing or no-one that can compare to Him, and we have no other response to this other than to give our whole life as a sacrifice.

"May your Kingdom come soon" The objective is, and always will be, for God's kingdom. We are saying that we are ready for this to happen and are prepared to do all He requires of us to bring this about. With this we also pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" When we pray this we are asking to be a participant in God's plan. We are asking to be aligned with God's plan, we are making ourselves vessels by which God will bring His plans about. This makes us totally obedient to

God. If we pray this prayer in sincerity we will be unable to disobey God and will be always ready to answer His call.

"Give us each day the food we need" reminds us that we are totally dependant on Him for our every need. This is not just a 'one off' prayer but ongoing, "every day" it has no end, and reminds us that God will supply our needs (not our wants) at the time we need. But it goes further, it also reminds us that we must trust the Lord for His provision. It builds us up in faith and strengthens that relationship with Him.

"and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" now we are moving into the fruit of that right relationship with God. Putting our lives into a right perspective through the preceding verses will manifest in our lives a gentle spirit, full of mercy, one that sees past others wrongs preferring instead to see the desire that God has for other peoples lives.

"And don't let us yield to temptation" This verse does not seek to transfer responsibility for our shortcomings onto God, it isn't His fault if we do something wrong, rather it reminds us of our own need to stay on His path. This brings us back to the need to take a breath. Our commitment to Him is found in our regular breaths, our prayers, our time spent with Him. When we put Him first and seek Him first we will find it much harder to "yield to temptation" This prayer has very little to do with asking God to sort out our problems, which seems to fill most prayer times in churches, and a lot to do with our own relationship with Him.

Jesus follows this up with a parable to reinforce the teaching that we should pray regularly. It reads as follows and speaks for itself

"Suppose one of you went to a friends house at midnight, wanting to borrow 3 loaves of bread. You say to him 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit and I have nothing for him to eat'. And suppose he calls out from his room 'Don't bother me, the door is locked for the night. I can't help you' But I tell you this – though he won't do it for friendship sake, if you keep knocking long enough he will get up and give you whatever food you need because of your shameless persistence"

Next week I will look more at those occasions I referred to earlier when Jesus prayed for himself and others, hopefully you will be able to join me for that but in the meantime pray the Lord's prayer and ask God to teach you just as the disciple did. Oh, and each time you take a breath, give thanks to God, just because you can.



STEVE ADSHEAD



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604
the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn