

# St Martins C3 Church – May 26, 2024

## Prayer for Life – It's Personal

### **Sermon Summary:**

God is drawing His People to pray. God is drawing His People to be in His presence. God is drawing His People to know Him in a deep authentic way. When Jesus taught and modelled prayer to His disciples, He revealed to them, that prayer isn't so much about doing a religious practice, but a space where we meet with God.

As we saw last week, Jesus taught His disciples to find a private quiet place where they could meet with God. Now, Jesus teaches them the type of prayer that is appropriate to pray.

### **Matthew 6:9**

*"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name."*

Starting with the words, "Our Father," was a radical way to start a prayer in a Jesus' time. The religious leaders in Jesus' time would never use such a personal name when praying to God. The Pharisees were willing to kill Jesus for praying like that.

### **John 5:16-20**

This passage highlights the close relationship Jesus has with His Father. A relationship which we can also have. Where we can know God deeply, and He gets to know us. Prayer is supposed to be a deeply meaningful and personal experience, where we get to know the very heart of God. The point Jesus is making here, is that time in prayer with His Father changed Him. Likewise, as we spend time in prayer, God will transform us.

Then Jesus goes on to pray, “hallowed be your name.” Jesus encourages us to engage in prayer to God at a deeply personal level, but also at a deeply respectful level. Our prayer life ought to start with worship.

Why does Jesus teach us to approach prayer in a worshipful way? Because, worship connects us with the reality of who God truly is, not who we want Him to be. Getting to know who someone truly is and accepting that, forms the foundation of any genuine personal relationship. (1 Corinthians 13:12) When we come to pray with an attitude of worshipping God for who He is, we are letting God be God. We are aligning who we are with who He is. We are worshipping in Spirit and in Truth. (John 4)

Prayer is not about imagining some made-up God who will meet your every need. Christ-centred worship and prayer is all about God revealing who He truly is to us, so that we encounter the one true and living God in a life-changing way.

#### **PERSONAL PRAYER:**

- Find a quiet place where you are not distracted and have blocked out a time to meet with God.
- Start your prayer time with WORSHIP and LISTENING, rather than a list of things you want God to do for you.

#### **PRAYER WITH OTHERS:**

- Commit to regularly being in a place of worship and prayer. God says and does some unique things when His People are gathered together and seeking Him.

## Notes and Questions for Connect Groups:

**Main Point:** Praying to God is meant to be personal and worshipful. So, let us approach God with our full attention and be changed by who God is, not who we want Him to be.

### Suggested discussion questions:

*How was the style of prayer Jesus was teaching His disciples different from the way the religious leaders of the day were praying?*

*Why did Jesus teach us to refer to God as “our Father?”*

*Why is worship an important part of our prayer life?*

*What is worship?*

*What helps you stay focused in times of worship or prayer?*

*Have you tried, or are you willing to try, spending the first part of your prayer time in worship and listening, rather than starting with the list of things you need from God?*

*How might this approach change how you engage with God?*

## Monday's Devotion – God and His Purposes

### John 17:1-2 & 4-5

*After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:*

*“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

As we explored on Sunday Jesus has a deep and honouring relationship with God, which He encourages us to also have. The prayers of Jesus give us some insight into that relationship. John 17, is a record of the longest prayer that Jesus prayed and gives us some insights into how we are to relate to God and how He relates to us.

We read from these first few verses that this is a “sign off” prayer. Jesus is reporting back to His Father that He has completed the work that God called Him to do and is now looking forward to returning to Heaven. Jesus does several things in these few sentences. He acknowledges God's authority and His submission to that authority. He submits to God's timing. He submits to God's purposes.

Consider how often we want life to go the way we want it to go and for it to be in the timing that works for us. An important part of prayer is our hearts coming to a place where we embrace God's purposes, God's timing and God's will. When considering what you are doing in life at the moment, is that true for you?

## Tuesday's Devotion – Kingdom revealing work

### John 17:6-8

*"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."*

Keeping the end in mind, helps us with our priorities in the present. Consider what you would like said about you at your funeral and how that might change how you treat those around you now. In regard to our relationship with God, knowing what "well done good and faithful servant," looks like in the future, shapes how we live our lives for Christ in the present.

Jesus was able to confidently report that he had completed all that God had given Him to do. Imagine that! Imagine being able to stand before God and say that! What was this work that God had called Christ to do? It was to reveal God and His Kingdom, primarily to the disciples. So, that they in turn, could do the same for others.

The outflow of a prayer life where we have a close connection with God, is a PARTNERSHIP with God, where we take His life into the world around us, through the people God has placed around our lives. This is a work that God has called us to do and empowered us to do. Are we living our lives in such a way that we are keeping that end in mind?

## Wednesday's Devotion – Protect from evil influence

### John 17:14-16

*I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.*

Jesus was well aware of how ensnared the world is. Sin dominates the thinking of people in the world. As well as that, Satan and his army are doing all they can to oppose Christ and His Kingdom. Jesus had to battle with this Satanic pressure and His followers are going to face the same battle. That is the reality of the situation until Christ will return again in the future. So, in the meantime, Jesus prays that God will protect His followers from this evil influence.

What Jesus is modelling here is an awareness of the spiritual battle and confidence in God to win that battle. Likewise, we need to be aware of the battle we are in and have our confidence anchored in the One who holds all authority in heaven and earth.

How do we do that? – We do that in prayer. Like Jesus, we remind ourselves of the authority and power that God has. That He has ultimate and full control of all powers and authorities. We also, in prayer acknowledge our need for God's protection. Praying that God will protect our minds and hearts from falling into temptation and the traps that Satan will put before us. *“Lord, let us be more aware of your authority and the battle that we are in.”*

## Thursday's Devotion – Unity

### John 17:20-23

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

Praying for unity may seem a little of a surprise addition to an important prayer of Jesus. However, that may be because we don't value the need for unity as much as we should. It obviously is really important to God and therefore, ought to be important to us.

This passages highlights three aspects of Christian unity:

- 1) Our unity is based on who Jesus is and what He came to do. Every Christian around the world is unified by what God has revealed in Christ and is unified around that common purpose.
- 2) That unity of belief and purpose is a witness to the world of how true and important the gospel is. We witness to the fact that God loves us and we share that love with each other. This witness will lead the world to seek God.
- 3) The natural overflow of all this is that we love each other and seek to live in harmony with each other. That may seem difficult at times, but with God's help, very possible.

## Friday's Devotion – Primarily about relationship

### John 17:3 & 24-26

*“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”*

The main thing Jesus prays for in regard to those who have chosen to follow Him, is that they would come into a deep personal relationship with God.

The interesting thing here is that Jesus describes eternal life, not in terms of a length of time, but in terms of a relationship. Eternal life is knowing God. Truly living requires us to be in right relationship with the God who is the source of all life.

Jesus also uses language of God dwelling with us. This is an important theme that runs throughout scripture. God is IN us. He makes His home in our hearts. There is no one who will be closer to us than God is.

Let us keep in mind that abundant life flows from being connected to the source, which is God. He is the One who dwells in us. Therefore, we will experience His love and will be able to extend His love to others, when we stay “in” Him.