**St Martins C3 – November 5, 2023**

**Following Christ’s example**

**Praying like Jesus:**

**Key scriptures:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 & Philippians 4:6-7

We can learn a lot from observing the life of prayer that Jesus displayed in His ministry. Jesus prayed in all circumstances and in all situations. Jesus prayed at his baptism. He prayed all night before choosing his 12 disciples. He gave thanks before feeding the 5000. He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. He prayed to give an account of His ministry to His Father. He prayed and wept in the Garden of Gethsemane. He even prayed for others as he was being crucified. After His resurrection, He prayed with and for the disciples. **If Jesus needed to pray, because He needed His Father to work through Him in all situations, surely we need to pray in all situations as well.**

**God will transform us as we pray.** Praying isn’t just about getting God to intervene on our behalf, it is about God drawing close to us as we wrestle with the issues of life. We may get an immediate response from God, or it may be delayed, either way, we learn something more about ourselves and God as pray.

Therefore, let us be diligent in our prayers and pray in all situations. Let us pray when we are alone, pray with your connect group, pray for others, just keep at it just like Jesus did. Jesus didn’t stop praying when things were good or bad, even at His worst moments, He still prayed. Let us pray, like Jesus prayed.

**Extend forgiveness like Jesus:**

**Key scripture:** John 8:1-11

The victim in this situation is a woman who has committed adultery. The religious leaders are supposedly doing their civic and religious duty in dragging her into the street in order to stone her to death, as the law of Moses commanded. However, they use this opportunity to trap Jesus as well. They want to show those who are watching on that Jesus is too gracious.

As expected Jesus does show grace. Jesus doesn’t join the mob to condemn her, but rather focuses on the Pharisees and asks them the now well-known line: “Le him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” This is a powerful reminder that our judgements and condemnation can melt away when confronted with our own imperfections. So, Jesus highlights that we need to examine ourselves first. **None of us are without sin.**

**With the awareness of our sin in mind, we ought to show mercy and compassion to others.** We are called to extend grace, even to those who have wronged us. In this we are not condoning their sin, we are acknowledging that we are all in need of God’s grace and therefore extend compassion and forgiveness to each other.

Christlike forgiveness is at the very heart of our faith. It starts with acknowledges our sin and need for grace. **It includes extending that grace to others and then freeing that person from our judgement.** Lastly, Jesus says to her, “go and sin no more.” **The freedom of forgiveness, ought to lead to a life where we are empowered to turn from our sin.**

**Be humble like Jesus:**

**Key Scripture:** Philippians 2:3-9

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul gave the challenge to live with the same humility as Christ. **This is more than just a call to "be humble," it's a call to see the needs of others and serve them, putting their needs above our own.**

Christ humbled himself to the point of death, made himself low for the needs of all those he loves. He gave up the beauty and majesty of Heaven to be a servant among us on Earth. There has never been and never will be a greater example of humility.

There are countless ways we could serve others and put them before ourselves. However, for that to be Spirit-led, rather than just a determination of our will, it is best that **we ask God to lead us in how we serve.** We can pray, as Christ teaches in 'the Lord's Prayer', "your kingdom come" or "what does your kingdom look like in this situation." Specifically, “what does displaying your humility look like in this situation?”

**When we partner with God and humbly serve others, we get to see His kingdom established here on earth, just as it is in heaven.** So, let us put our faith in action this week and look for opportunities to put others needs before our own. When those opportunities come up, pray that God would direct your words and actions to reveal His love to them.

*(Questions for Connect Groups on back cover – Please turn over)*

**Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

*Which attitudes or actions of Jesus do you find the difficult to implement in your life?*

*What challenges you, when you consider the types of prayers that Jesus prayed or the frequency of His prayers?*

*Where in your life could you incorporate a more intentional prayer focus?*

*What were some key understandings that Jesus wanted His disciples and the Pharisees to grasp in his forgiveness of the woman caught in adultery?*

*Who are some people in our lives that we could be more compassionate and forgiving towards?*

*What did Jesus need to give up in order to serve us?*

*What might we need to give up in order to serve others?*

*How might we seek God’s empowerment and guidance to serve others with humility in a given situation?*