

St Martins C3 – April 27, 2025

Prayer

Sermon Notes:

This week and next week we are using the Prayer Course to encourage us to engage with prayer in a new way. At the beginning of this year we sensed that God was calling us to lean into prayer. As we grow as disciples we need to turn to prayer more than ever before.

As well as watching a compilation of videos we will spend time in prayer together. Check out all the videos and other material at prayercourse.org.

Session One: What is Prayer

Bible passages

Luke 11:1-4, Matthew 6:6-8 - Message translation, Romans 8:26-28

Summary points

- We can ask Jesus to help teach us to pray.
- Prayer is like a toolbox - there are lots of different ways of praying.
- Keep it simple. Keep it real. Keep it up.

Session Two: Adoration

Bible passages

Acts 4:24-31

Summary points

- Start by recognising God is God.
- Worship puts things back into perspective.
- Use P.R.A.Y - Pause, Rejoice, Ask, Yield.

Session Three: Petition

Bible passages

Matthew 7:7-11, Matthew 18:19

Summary points

- The Father loves to give good gifts.
- Traffic lights: Yes, Wait, No.
- Sometimes we need to “stack dominoes” and persevere in prayer

Having seen what we have seen we will commit to praying:

- 1- Quietly wait on God and ask Him to come and meet you. Then say a prayer of rejoicing, giving adoration to God for all He has done and what He means to you.
- 2- Talk about or write a “right now” prayer need. Pray about it remembering to pray incrementally, and pray God’s promises.
- 3- Talk about or write a long term prayer that you have been praying. Pray about it.
- 4- Spend time yielding to God asking him to speak. If you feel that God is speaking then share it with your group or write it down.

Thoughts and Questions for Connect Groups:

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

What do you find difficult about prayer? What do you find easy? Why do you think prayer can often feel hard?

What do you mostly talk to God about?

Share one way you'd like to grow in prayer.

Why do you think that we most often associate prayer with asking, rather than worship and adoration?

Do you enjoy spending time with God? When are the times that prayer feels most enjoyable?

Pete says that prayer is primarily about relationship with God: "It's relational, not transactional". How does this change your perspective of coming to God in prayer?

Take time to pray for one another's prayer requests. Remember the following as you pray:

Pray incrementally: Pray for a specific next step, rather than jumping to the top of the staircase

Pray the promises of God: Is there a specific promise that relates to the situation?

You also might like to follow the P.R.A.Y model – start by pausing and welcome the Holy Spirit, then rejoice and give thanks before asking. Remember to yield and surrender everything back to God as you finish.

Devotional Exercise: Pray the Psalms

For our devotions this week, we encourage you to pray the Psalms as a way of connecting to God with adoration. What follows is the information from 24/7 Prayer about praying the Psalms.

Prayer Tool: How to Pray the Psalms

What?

The Bible's 150 Psalms can be used to help us pray in many different ways. This prayer tool outlines how to use the Psalms each day to worship.

Why?

"Prayers train us in conversation with the God who seeks us out – the God who speaks and we must answer." Eugene Peterson

Bible reference:

"From east to west, from dawn to dusk, keep lifting all your praises to God!"

Psalm 113:3

A quick introduction to praying the Psalms

The most mature and proven way we can learn to worship consistently is to use the Bible's 150 Psalms – the Prayer Book of Jesus – for the purposes that they were originally intended: to train us in a 'conversion of language' where instead of talking about God, we talk to Him.

One of the most powerful things about actually praying the Book of Psalms (as opposed to merely reading them) is that they can hijack your day in a really good way. Instead of just praying out of the emotional overflow of your own personal circumstances, the Psalms bring your feelings into line with the reality of faith experienced by countless people down thousands of years; including Jesus Himself who memorised and recited these prayers even from the cross.

For the Psalmists, all of human emotion – indeed all of life itself – was brought under the rule of God in prayer.

Do it: How to pray the Psalms

Systematic Reading

The simplest approach to the Psalms is to work through them systematically, and there is great benefit in this approach. You could start by praying two Psalms a day – out loud – allowing the ancient, sacred words to become your prayer.

The Psalms equip us to bring our total selves and truest conditions before God: every emotion 'under the sun' is included in the Psalms, and we can incorporate them into our lives.

- Monastic communities pray five Psalms a day, covering the whole Psalter every month.
- The 'Daily Office', of which there are a number of forms, model their reading of the Psalms on the daily rhythms of sunrise and sunset, and usually follow the church's annual calendar from Advent to Pentecost and beyond.
- If you are just starting off, aim for just one Psalm a day. If you split a few of the longer ones up over several days, you will cover the whole Psalter twice each year.

Thematic Reading

Alternatively, it can also be helpful to pray the Psalms thematically. A helpful schematic for a thematic approach to the Psalms is suggested by Walter Brueggemann in his book *Spirituality of the Psalms*. He suggests 3 categories: orientation – disorientation – new orientation.

Brueggemann suggests that understanding the Psalms within these three categories can guide our prayer life as it helps us find a prayer language that corresponds with the different seasons of our soul:

1. Psalms of Orientation describe those seasons that evoke gratitude for God's faithfulness and steadfastness. They

therefore speak about God's character, creation, and the unchangeable nature of God's love and favour.

Examples of Psalms of orientation include Psalm 1, 8, 19, 33, 119. Other Psalms of Orientation include 14, 15, 104, 131, 133 and 145.

2. Psalms of Disorientation are a response to seasons of the soul that involve heartache, pain, grief, complaint, disappointment, loneliness and suffering. Psalms of disorientation are plentiful and while many of these laments are personal, interestingly quite a few are also communal.

Examples of personal Psalms of complaint include Psalm 3, 6, 55, 88.2

Examples of communal Psalms of Lament include Psalm 60, 74, 126, 137.

3. Psalms of New Orientation express a type of surprised joy which has broken through the season of pain and despair; we have become aware of a 'fresh intrusion' – a gift of God's grace and healing that has brought us into a new place.

Examples of Psalms of new orientation include Psalm 18, 30, 40, 138.

Dusk and Dawn

The rhythm of morning and evening prayers is a common and enriching way to read the Psalms, and many of them seem to be written with the intention of being read at these two ends of our days.

Dawn Psalms prepare us for action, waking us up to what God is doing in the world and how we can join in with Him, allowing His will to work its way in us for His purposes.

Examples of Dawn Psalms include Psalm 5, 46, 90, 139, 143.

Dusk Psalms mark the transition from daylight to the sleep of darkness where in our passive state of sleep we relinquish control of ourselves and others, trusting our whole lives (not to mention the running of the world!) to our Heavenly Father who 'gives His beloved sleep.'

Examples of Dusk Psalms include Psalm 4, 42, 63, 77, 91, 141.

Whatever type or rhythm of reading the Psalms you chose, the main point is to allow these words to shape your own praying life, giving you permission to pray not what you think God wants to hear, but what is inside of you.