



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
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Sermon

Pray!

Luke 11:1-10; Philippians 4:15-20

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Last week, I preached on bold and persistent prayer as we saw in the Blind man Bartimaeus. He was loud and insistent – he was heard; he was healed.

In this last week, you will have had a Vestry update from the People's warden and a letter from the Treasurer. We face a financial shortfall as a parish and so last week, I called us to prayer and fasting. Have you been praying? Have you fasted in some way?

Today as we continue to ask God for his provision and help, I thought it would be good to go back to Jesus' teaching on prayer. I want to pick up some relevant principles that may help us as we seek God over the next few weeks.

Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray. In response he taught them to say which we call the Lord's Prayer. How does it help us as we need to pray for the parish's finances?

Corporate Prayer

Firstly, it is corporate prayer and this is a corporate need. All through the prayer it is our, us, we; never my, me, I. "OUR Father. Give US bread. Forgive US OUR sins."

Jesus assumes we will be praying not just for ourselves but for each other. Prayer is not just about "you in your small corner and I in mine." I asked you to pray at home, at homegroups, to use the church and chapel and in particular to come to the midweek prayer meeting on Wednesdays from 11-12. It was good to see an extra ten people come last week. There is room for more – if you are not at work or committed to something else please come along and let us pray together – Wednesday 11am.

So let us come before God praying for our common need and for a generous response from us all.

Relational Prayer

It starts from the bedrock of relationship: "Father." As followers of Jesus, we have a right to call God Father – we were adopted by him when we came to Christ. As our Father, he is committed to provide for us and protect us. We have a right of access to him. In fact the Bible says "Come boldly before the throne of grace to find mercy and help in time of need."¹

So let us come before our Heavenly Father for mercy and help.

¹ Hebrews 4:16

God's will – His kingdom and his will

In this situation, it is good that we pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done. In any situation, he knows what is best and he has promised to work all things together for good for those who love him.²

God's kingdom is where he rules. We can invite him to rule in any situation we are concerned about. So let's ask him to establish his kingdom among us. Regardless of the current financial concern that is something I long for more and more. Lord, let your kingdom come among us, here at St Stephen's.

So let us come before our Father praying for his will to be done among us.

Provision – Daily bread

"Give us this day our daily bread." Jesus told us to pray on the basis that God wants to supply our needs. We do not say "I am unworthy"- God is good and that he wants to supply our needs.

Prayer from a position of security is that of a child who knows she or he is loved. "Daddy, I am hungry. Can I have some bread?" is all we have to say.

In his comment after the prayer, Jesus emphasises this saying that if we would give good things to our children how much more God the Father will give good things to his children. He is not about to be cruel and trick us with something less than the good we need.

In the Epistle reading, Paul writes to the Philippians who have sent money to help him and says that in return, "... my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."³ That is what we need – all of us in our individual lives and together as a parish – that God will meet all our needs. However provision comes to us, it is God who is the ultimate source. How is he going to provide – according to his riches in Christ Jesus! When you consider that God is the creator and it was through his Son that he created all things⁴ – the riches of Christ Jesus are immense – everything there is!

So let us come before our Father praying for his provision according to Christ's riches in glory.

Forgiveness

Last week we looked at that wonderful promise in 2nd Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Here in Jesus' prayer we are led to ask forgiveness. Let us continue to seek God and see whether there are sins from which we must turn. But Jesus links asking forgiveness with forgiving others.

To the measure we want God to forgive us, we need to forgive others. And not just the easy ones. Jesus instructs us to forgive everyone who sins against us. It is a decision we can make at any point in time. It is a matter of obedience. We as the congregation of St Stephens may have work to do in forgiving. In every family there are times when we get hurt. The church family is no exception. There may be things people have said or done that hurt or offended you. There may be people whom we can't freely look in the eye and wish well.

As we deal with past offences by forgiving and letting go, instead of burying or ignoring them, we will be on a very firm footing as we come to pray. It is vitally important – in fact, we cannot keep our fists clenched around wounded pride or anything else and expect to be able to open our hands to receive God's forgiveness for ourselves.

The purpose of The Peace is to allow reconciliation before we take communion. Possibly today, you may need to apologise to someone or endeavour to make peace with a brother or sister.

With the Holy Spirit's help, let today be the time to draw a line in the sand - choosing to forgive any hurts and offences that still linger in our minds. Then we can go forward in unity as a church.

² Romans 8:28

³ Phil 4:19

⁴ Hebrews 1:2

Deliverance

The Lord's prayer is trusting prayer: "Lead us not into temptation," or "Do not bring us to the test." You may wonder why we should ask God not to lead us into temptation when James tells us God never tempts anyone. It is a way of acknowledging our weakness - that if we are to be protected from temptation we must lean on him.

So let us depend on the Lord to keep us from falling into temptation and not allow us to fail when tested.

Persistence = Boldness and shamelessness

Jesus follows his teaching on prayer with the parable of the demanding and persistent friend. I'm sure you know that the duty of hospitality was extremely high in that culture. The host was obliged to provide for the guest. But imagine someone banging on your door at midnight: "Give me some bread!" I would feel awfully like turning over and pulling the duvet up over my ears! "Yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs."⁵

Jesus' parable is to do with our needing to be persistent. He is not saying God is unwilling to give. Our attitude should be to be bold and persevering in prayer, even if we do not see instant results. Boldness in this context can mean shamelessness, defying normal conventions, radically pressing into God for what we need. Just like Bartimaeus last week calling out to Jesus for mercy while the crowd tried to shut him up. Jesus urges us to be bold as we ask God for our needs.

Finally Jesus said, Ask, Seek, Knock. Will you do that this week? Will you keep asking; keep seeking, keep knocking.

Jesus said, "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Ask, Seek, Knock – A.S.K. - ASK!

All scriptural quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*® ©1972, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Societies.

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⁵ Luke 11:8