

7th June 2020 6 pm Healing and Refreshing

Service led by Ann Gibbons

Meditation and intercessions by Lynda Howells

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Notices

[Ann Gibbons:]

Welcome everyone to this Healing and Refreshing service from St John's Church Kenilworth – Sundays at 6pm. My name is Ann, and with Lynda we co-write and lead these services on the first Sunday of each month. Lynda will once again be reading one of her inspiring meditations, tonight leading us through the Lord's Prayer.

Shall we pray before we begin.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we pray for this time together and ask that You will meet with everyone at their point of need, leading us to be open to your love and care for us all.

In these times, Lord, we sometimes don't know how to pray. So we come to You to guide and show us the way.

Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Last month, we looked at Psalm 23, a Psalm that takes us through the days and seasons of our lives, until we go and live in the House of the Lord forever.

So tonight we are looking at the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples, when they asked Him to teach them how to pray. This prayer also ending in 'forever and ever'. We shall look at a different way of praying in our Prayer Activity. More about that later.

A few years ago now, nurturing a new Christian, following a mission held at our then church, we got chatting about prayer. And although the person was praying, they sometimes found it difficult to know where to start. So we chatted some more, and we decided to try saying the Lord's Prayer as a way of leading into and concentrating on prayer. Meeting next time, they had found this a helpful way of starting their prayer time.

The thing with the Lord's Prayer is that it can be said at any time, really: beginning, end, on its own. We say it in part at the beginning of a communion service, and again at the end of the service, the full version, as we are cleansed with receiving the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and the wine.

But in saying, "Our Father in Heaven," we are acknowledging that we are coming into God's presence, that He is our Heavenly Father, and we want to be with Him. Many of us are following the Lectio 365 daily devotion. Through this we have followed a five-week series, leading up to Pentecost, on how to pray. The book that went with this is *How to Pray* by Pete Greig. I can really recommend this book, whether you are a new Christian, further on your journey, or just searching.

In a few moments, I will pass you over to Lynda for her to read her meditation. After this, there will be a short time of quiet for you to reflect on the words, and there will be some music playing.

Meditation

[Lynda Howells:]

Prayer: why? Praying brings us into relationship with God.

Think about Jesus. When He lived on this earth, His ministry was underpinned by a lifestyle of prayer. So if that is how Jesus lived, who was perfect without sin, the Son of God, how can we live any other way, if we want to serve our Lord, here and now? The disciples sensed the Father-Son relationship Jesus had with God, which sustained Him through everything. He was totally reliant on God, for daily strength and direction. He relied on the Father's presence and power being there for Him. And in Luke 11 verses 1 to 4, we read that watching Jesus pray was such a new revelation for the disciples that they asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." As I said before, the prayer life of Jesus revealed His absolute dependency on His Father for everything. And it is this Father-son/daughter relationship that God wants for us. Jesus gave us such a gift when He gave us this prayer.

We're so used to saying the Lord's Prayer, but now I suggest we read it slowly as a prayer. Make yourself as comfortable as you can. Close your eyes. But that's entirely up to you. The purpose of this is for you to relax.

Let your imagination take you to a special or favourite place for you to be there with your Heavenly Father. Think about your breathing - slowly. Breathe in God's love for you. And breathe out all that robs you of the joy of receiving God's love and His acceptance of you. Let God's Holy Spirit bring healing to you to free you from painful memories, physical pains, emotional hurts, to free you from anything you know is not of our Lord. God knows your needs.

So we read:

Our Father, who art in Heaven.

Thank You God that You long for us to call You 'Father'.
We are all your children.
We can come to You knowing that You are perfect.
You love us and long for us to love You.
You are omnipotent, holy.
The world is yours.
Yet, You want, You choose to be our Father,

Hallowed be your name.

So often, all we hear is your precious name used as a swear word.
This hurts so much.
Help us to be proactive, where possible, and to pray against this blasphemy. And to pray for those using your name this way. We need to show honour and glory in our lives.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Are we bold enough to take up this challenge?
To help build the kingdom now,
To be obedient to do the will of God,
Just as Jesus did, and still does, praying for us in Heaven.
Are we willing for God's will to be done in our lives?
To serve as Jesus serves
On His terms, not our own.

Give us today our daily bread.

When we say 'us' what do we think or mean?
Ourselves?
Our families?
Or do we take bold, trusting steps and include those who are starving,
those without choice or hope,
those who have no one to pray for them.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Where does our forgiveness for others start and finish?
This goes beyond personal relationships to world situations, governments,
the unfairness of life for so many.
Should this lead us to pray for unity, respect for each other?
For our Father's unconditional love to flourish,
to free us to live and work to the well-being of all?

Lead us not into temptation.

Can I pray "lead not into temptation" if I choose to remain or put myself
into situations where I'm likely to be tempted?
Search me, Lord, and know my heart. I pray.

Deliver us from evil.

We are in a spiritual battle.
We need to recognise this and arm ourselves with the Word of God, and
prayer.
Every day
to deal with the evil one

For Thine is the Kingdom, ...

Do I live as if I'm living in God's kingdom?
Am I an obedient, loyal subject of the King?

... the power ...

Do I live worried, anxious and fearful?
And does my life reflect my trust in God's power to always take care of me
and guide and carry me through the good and the bad times?

... and the glory, ...

My actions, my intentions, whose glory is most important to me and all I
do?
My glory or God's glory?

... forever and ever.

What effect, if any, do these words have on me?
Are they a comfort, assurance, bringing freedom from worry and anxiety, a
Heavenly Father's perfect promise and commitment to each one of us?

Amen.

Commit this prayer to yourselves and have the freedom to personalise and make it
your own.

Amen.

[Music]

[Ann:]

As we come out of our meditation time, just become aware of your breathing again, and slowly come to.

Thank you, Lynda, for your meditation. Your words are always so moving.

Song: Shout to the Lord

Verse:

My Jesus, My Savior
Lord there is none like You
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love
My Comfort, My Shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Chorus:

Shout to the Lord, all the earth
Let us sing. Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You!

Repeat Verse

Repeat Chorus

Prayer activity

Our prayer activity tonight is looking at a different way to pray. There will be a picture of some blocks of wood, first, to look at.



Normally in church you would be able to pick the pieces up. So in your imagination, pick up a piece of wood. Try it in the hand that you don't write with.

What does it feel like?

Be careful of the sharp edges and the splinters.

And also the rusty nails that have left holes in the wood.

What does this remind you of?

We think of the rough wooden cross used at Jesus' crucifixion.

The next picture is of different-sized wooden holding crosses.



Once again, imagine picking one of these crosses up and placing it in the hand that you write with.

How does it feel?

Feel the smoothness,

the way it's cut to fit your hand.

Whatever the size, the wood fits in your hand to hold with ease.

It's comfortable,

no sharp bits here.

It feels peaceful.

This is what Jesus did in dying and His resurrection.

He took all of our sin on His shoulders to show the wealth of God's Love and Grace.

He fulfilled the promise of His Heavenly Father.

He made everything new.

And yet gave us the promise of eternal life, to all who believe in Him.
Jesus came to obtain for us all things that are good for us.

The holding cross is not decorated or ornamental.
It is a true reminder of the harsh wood of the cross.
Sometimes it's enough simply to hold the cross silently.
This in itself is a prayer.
Maybe you have no words anyway.
And it's through your sense of touch
that you are expressing your love of Christ, and your need for Him.

Holding a cross can also be a way of praying for others, especially those who
are suffering,

Some find it helpful to say that Jesus prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

or whichever version of that prayer that you know.

Sometimes repeating a well-known verse of scripture that means a lot to you, or
a prayer that you can recite without the words in front of you.

So on the one hand, we have the reminder of the rough wood and in the other the
smooth wood of the holding cross to give us comfort, for whatever reason.

We now have a time of quiet for you to think of the Cross and what Jesus has
done for us.

There will be some pictures for you to look at, and some music too.

Before we go into this, I'm going to read some words from a song written by Ruth
Fazal, a Christian musician and songwriter. Regulars at our services in church
often listen to her music, which is very special.

Hide me in the secret place
Where Your love will overshadow me
Keep me in Your tenderness
And fill me with Your grace.....

For I want to dwell on the highway of holiness
And I want to live in the shelter of my King
My heart is set to obey,
And follow in your way
O, hide me in the secret place.

[Music]



I hope you find that time useful. I have shared with our home group and the Mothers' Union groups we have taken this service to within our Diocese of Coventry, that I sometimes find holding the little cross, even under my pillow if I can't sleep, or if I've woken during the night, I find it helps to use it as a time of prayer. And I had this thought, that we all have times when we don't sleep very well, so we could be holding our crosses and praying in the middle of the night. Now there's an amazing thought, let's use the power of prayer!

Lynda will now lead us in a time of prayer, with a blessing and the grace to end this service.

Intercessions

[Lynda:]

As we come now to spend some time in prayer, please use this for your prayers and concerns as you feel guided. But picture your Heavenly Father with you wherever you are sitting or laying down.
You have His whole attention. He's listening to your prayers now.

Father God, first we say Thank You.
Thank You that You are the constant light, shining in the darkness.
You are our hope, especially these days when we are unsure what the future holds for each one of us.
And those whom we love and care for.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We bring to you our words.
May we know in our hearts the reassurance that you care.

Father God, we ask you to deal with our worries and fill us with Your peace.
We bring our sadness to You, which will be different for each one of us.
Meet us where we are, Father, and help us to deal with it.

We bring to You our hopes for the future.
Guide us, Father, to the right path,
And help us as we make plans for when life starts returning to some sort of normality.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for everyone who is mourning for the death of family and friends, either through the virus or some other cause.
May they be comforted, please, Lord.

We pray that a cure will be found to free us from this terrible virus
And we pray for everyone affected by the coronavirus, remembering especially all who are suffering with the virus.
We ask they will know your peace and healing.

We pray for all living alone,
That your Holy Spirit would comfort them at all times.
We pray for those who are mentally affected at this time, that they would be able to receive the support they need.

We thank you for the dedication of so many: the doctors, nurses, carers, the emergency services, the military, the shop workers, the lorry drivers delivering, and all who are helping in the community.

We ask You to protect them from the virus and kill them well.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for our teachers, Lord, that have kept in touch with their children during all this time, all these months. We pray for them, Lord, as some schools will be opening, that your guidance will be with them and keep the teachers and the children safe, Lord.

We pray for our government, that they will be guided by you and have wisdom, knowledge and discernment in dealing with the virus and also about the way forward to ease us out of lockdown. O Father, we pray that your Holy Spirit would come in power to anoint and empower the government to follow you and have wisdom and integrity in all they do and say.

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for the countries around our world that have poverty as a cause the major concern. Please may their people be helped. Send your angels Lord, take comfort healing and hope for the future to all who are suffering.

Finally we pray that when this virus has been conquered, the whole of the world will be united and let him peace, according to your holy word.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour,

Amen.

A Blessing

Your Father God wants you to know how much you are loved by Him.
You are His precious child.
Loves so much.

He gave himself to bring you eternal happiness and life with Jesus Christ, who died for you. Taking your sin upon Himself to enable you to live forgiven and free. Be filled afresh with His peace, hope and joy, and your life's journey through good times and bad, knowing always that your Father God, is by your side.
Amen.

Shall we now share in the Grace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us, and all those whom we love now and evermore.
Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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