

Sermon series for Autumn 2015

Prayer – The great adventure

6th September: The Importance of Prayer

1 Chronicles 13:1-8,14:8-17 / Acts 2:42-47



Why does prayer matter? Lots of reasons, of course! But the contrast between David and Saul in the Old Testament is striking. David was ‘a man after God’s own heart’ because he knew who he was; he was secure in his identity as one of God’s people. But what did that look like in practice? 1 Chronicles 13 and 14 demonstrate that (in contrast to Saul), David praised, and he prayed. David was a man who knew God intimately and this reflected in a life of praise and prayer. And so, like David – and the early church – we need to devote ourselves to prayer to truly know God.

13th September: What is prayer?

Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus himself taught us how to pray, and the Lord’s prayer teaches us 2 very simple, but profound things:

The heart of prayer is relationship: God is our Father! And he knows what we need before we ask him. So it is not first and foremost an activity, but a way of being, a relationship to develop.

The chief activity of prayer is request. The Lord’s prayer is basically 7 requests: the first 3 for God’s glory and kingdom, then 1 about our practical needs, then 3 about our spiritual needs. Prayer can be done in lots of different ways; and of course, silence and study is vital – the best talking requires good listening too. But every reference to prayer in the bible is about talking to God, and so exercising our faith and humility to talk to God directly and – let’s be blunt – ask him for things, still, and always, lies at the heart of prayer.

20th September: Praying the prayers of Scripture

Colossians 1:1-14

The bible is full of prayers, and using these prayers is an obvious start-point in our own journey of prayer. We can pray God's Word back to Him! This week we'll be focusing on one of the great prayers of the Apostle Paul, one which he prayed for the small church in Colosse, and we'll discover what it can teach us about our own priorities in prayer.

27th September: Praying the promises of Scripture

Psalms 103

The bible shapes our prayer life as much as the rest of our walk with God. In this second week focusing on how to use the bible in prayer, we'll be thinking about the promises of God as a key part of the language of prayer, and particularly how to use the psalms to inspire and fuel our prayer. 'Forget not all His benefits': God is faithful to His promises – how can we pray in the light of that this week?

4th October: HARVEST Prayer and creation

Deuteronomy 8:7-18 / Mark 4:26-32

For Harvest we'll be thinking about how God's creation inspires our prayer: how it shows us the majesty of God, reminds us of the blessing of God and also teaches us about the nature of God. So many of Jesus' parables used images from the created world: may creation also inspire us in our relationship with God.

11th October: Persevering prayer

Psalm 13 / Luke 18:1-8

When God appears not to answer a prayer, what do we do? There's no easy answer to this, but this week we'll focus on a challenging topic: persevering in prayer. Like life in general, prayer is a gift, with times of great excitement and amazing blessing... and also times of hard work and apparently little reward. How can we, as our main passage says, 'always pray and never give up'?

18th October: Unanswered prayer

Isaiah 58:1-4, 59:1-2 / James 4:1-6

There is a mystery to this, and last week's passage reminds us that sometimes God appears not to answer to encourage us to persevere: it's not a 'no' but a 'slow' or even a 'grow'! However, there may sometimes be issues which get in the way of our prayer life, and we need to examine ourselves regularly to understand if we are guilty of making wrong requests, or having wrong motives or a wrong lifestyle. God is gracious, but 'the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective'.

25th October: Prayer in the dark places

Psalm 22:1-11 / Matthew 26:36-46

What do we do when God seems absent? Or when a crisis is looming? How do we pray in those moments or seasons of life? This week we'll examine how Jesus faced his toughest test and reflect together how to pray in 'the dark places'.

1st November: ALL SAINTS Praying for the church

John 17:1,6-23

This Sunday we celebrate the worldwide church and the generations who've gone before us. It is often a moment to recognise that hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters suffer for their faith, even today. So it's a good moment to reflect on how to support them in prayer, using Jesus' prayer for his people in John 17 as our guide and inspiration.

8th November: REMEMBRANCE Praying for the world

Isaiah 2:1-5 / 1 Timothy 2:1-7

As we gather to remember the millions who have suffered (and still suffer) as a result of war and conflict, it's a good opportunity to reflect on what that means for our prayer life. In the face of such 'big things' what and how should we pray?

15th November: Prayer and mission

Acts 4:23-31 / Matthew 9:35-10:1

The great irony about prayer is that it is one of the most 'active' things we can do! Prayer is vital to achieving God's purposes here on earth: He has limitless power and authority, but it seems that God often chooses to wait for prayer to unlock His purposes. And so this week we'll see how Jesus and the early church linked prayer with mission. Where is God calling us to go? And how should we pray for it?

22nd November: Permanent prayer

Psalm 63 / 1 Thess 5:16-18

Prayer is a way of being. God is with us always and we can talk to Him anytime we want. As we grow in prayer, it moves from being something we do to something we are. How can we begin to live a 'life of prayer'?