

PRAYER: SERMON

SERMON: PRAYER

Aim:

To endorse the importance of prayer emphasised through the teachings of Christ;
the example of the early Church;
our call today to praise God that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is calling us and the world to know Jesus, to recognise that in life and all that it embraces in the widest sense, we have a great partner who calls us to Come to Him. He wants us to help him change us and the world through the power of prayer. Walk His Way.

Text: Acts 4:31: 'After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness'.

Readings from which to choose in relation to the Sermon: Psalm 77; Jonah 2; Matthew 6:5-14; Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:23-31; 1 Timothy 2:1-6

Sermon outline with points from which to select, perhaps using Jonah as an example that God wants us to run to Jesus and not away from Him. Walk the Way of Christ.

[a] Unpack The Lord's Prayer in a way which emphasises the key components.

Jesus teaches us how to pray. We need His teaching which draws attention to the importance of our relationship with Him and which rejoices in:

[i] Walking Christ's Way through praising God who is our Father in heaven, whose name is to be hallowed as we pray Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[ii] Partnering with God in trusting him for that which we need and praying for others.

[iii] Asking for forgiveness for our mistakes and asking God to help us to forgive those who have done wrong to us. Asking God to protect us from succumbing to temptation and for deliverance from evil.

PRAYER: SERMON

[iv] Praising God that we believe that he has and is the power and the glory for ever through His everlasting kingdom.

[b] Through the example of the early Church what is God saying to us, individually and corporately? As we corporately worship God in small groups, in mid week services and on Sundays as well as through all the other things we are engaged in through the days and weeks, how do we reflect the early Church arising from its prayer life? How can we build on its example?

Christ's teaching modelled the pattern of praying in the lives of the early Christians. 'All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing meals including the Lord's Supper, **and to prayer.**' Acts 2:42. The other aspects of their devotion are for another time but their devotion to prayer is our example today. 'Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved'. Acts 2:47. A healthy Christian community will attract other people to come to know Jesus because the community knows what it is to saturate in prayer all whom God loves as cited in John 3:16.

[c] In all that we are witnessing in the world, in our own lives, the lives of family, friends and neighbours, in our local community as well as in the wider world, we see much that causes us to pray: deliver from evil. Walk the Way of Jesus. Living by faith realises that prayer demands boldness and persistence - Luke 18:1. Answers to prayer can inspire us all to 'preach the word of God with boldness'. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to give us courage to look for opportunities to talk about Jesus, to be ready for others to ask questions of us about our story and the power of prayer which we know. How are we, individually and corporately, encouraging others to discover what it is to pray and to come to Jesus? Prayer and action go hand in hand.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 encourages us to pray because God wants his people to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9. This does not mean that all will be saved but that no one is beyond the reach of salvation. Therefore we must pray for all people the world over and believe. Acts 4:31. Through all that is happening in the world surely God is saying COME TO KNOW JESUS and WALK HIS WAY.

PRAYER: SERMON

In our own strength we cannot witness effectively. Through prayer and by the power of the Holy Spirit God is able to work and that is why he calls us into relationship with him. Refer back to the Lord's Prayer and to the days of the early Church. Acts 4:24-31 – all the believers lifted their voices together as they praised God and prayed and, of particular note, they did not ask God to remove their problem but to sustain them through it. What does that say to us about God wanting to 'grow us' and increase our faith? What does it say about us and those for whom we are praying? Heed Christ's invitation - Matthew 11:28, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'

Walk His Way - enjoy the Holy Habit of Prayer and encourage others to do likewise.

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