

Sunday 3rd March 2019 Prayer
Luke 9:28-43

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

Jesus went to pray... as well as our passage today in Luke we can read

Luke 5:16 He went to a deserted place

Luke 6:12 He went to the mountain to pray and spent the night in prayer

Luke 11:1 He was praying and a disciple asked Jesus to teach them to pray

Luke 22:39 He went to the Mount of Olives to pray

Prayer was important for Jesus and he even took his disciples up the mountain to pray

Not sure which mountain this is

Maybe Mt Tabor 1900' 575m

or Mt Herman 9000' 2814 m

Snowdon = 3560' 1085 m ...

But it took effort and was very intentional

In a moment I would like you to turn to someone sitting near to you and tell them, in one sentence, how you feel about prayer. I'd like you to be honest with each other but that means that what the person shares with you is not repeated to anyone else. It is between the 2 of you.

Take a moment to think... How do you feel about prayer?

Share with someone sat near to you

We pray in various ways when we meet together in church

Some of us pray in different ways when we are at home

Some people, who may not call themselves people of faith, pray - often when times are tough

But we can all find prayer really difficult, at least sometimes.

We don't know what to say

We find it hard to make the time

We feel inadequate when we hear others pray

We wonder if God even hears our prayers

We feel we just keep repeating ourselves

We find it hard to stay awake

These are just some of the things we find hard

But because prayer was important for Jesus I'd love for us all to try and pray a little more and it seems to me that Lent is a good time to set aside to do that.

Read a little from Richard Fosters book on Prayer extracts from P.1-3

Now there are all sorts of different forms of prayer. In our Sunday service we have prayers of confession, of adoration, of intercession, of blessing to name just a few.

We could have a long series of sermons on different forms of prayer.

But I want to encourage us to use the season of Lent to focus on our personal prayer.

Lent is the season of the church year that, for various reasons, became characterised by self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study and preparation for Easter. Almsgiving has also been added to that long list.

Being over 40 days it is a reminder of the 40 days that Jesus spend in the wilderness.

We often associate Lent with being a time of fasting, one form of self-denial, but do we also think of it as a time of preparation or a time of study? or even a time of self-examination?

I'd love for us all, this Lent, to commit to spending some time each day in prayer; time that could be used to come to God, whose arms are out-stretched and whose heart is enlarged, waiting for us to come to Him.

There are all sorts of ways you can do this

If you are not used to praying on your own at home then maybe you could commit to 5 or 10 minutes each day. Find a quiet place where you can sit somewhere comfortable. It may mean turning the TV off or getting up 5 minutes earlier or going to bed 5 minutes later.

And try praying the Lords prayer slowly, thoughtfully, pausing after each line to let God's Spirit prompt you. If it is a dry day maybe try it outside in the garden.

If you already spend time praying at home then maybe make a real commitment for 40 days to prayer EVERY day. Maybe commit to setting more time aside than usual

Maybe you could even find a book on Christian Prayer and commit to reading a little of it each day to study and learn more about prayer.

If you are up for a real challenge then you could try this prayer wheel. At the beginning of 2018 Georgie made this prayer wheel for me. It is to help me pray for 60 minutes and is divided into 5 minute sections. There are some plain photocopies outside on the table. If you would like a coloured one ask me and I will happily make you one this week.

To help all of us there is also a small booklet outside on the table written by Bishop Steven.

There is a double page for each day which includes a reading, a reflection, a prayer and an action.

I really encourage you to commit to using this booklet each day.

Each booklet costs £2 and if you would like to contribute towards the cost of one then please add it in to the collection but even so... please take a copy and use it.

But a word of exciting caution. Prayer will change you.

While Jesus was praying... he changed; his face and his clothes

Prayer is about meeting with and sharing with God.

Whether that be God the Son, Jesus Christ - our Saviour and Teacher or

God the Father - our sovereign King or

God the Holy Spirit - our Empower

Meeting with God, encountering Him, through prayer will bring about change in us.

But it will be good change. We CAN trust God and in our meeting with Him will may be transformed by Him more and more into His likeness.

I don't imagine that our faces will be changed, or our clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning.

But I do imagine that our hearts will be softened and our habits re-formed so that we gradually become more like Him in our thinking and more attuned to Him in our listening.

And that EXCITES me :-)

So please, this Lent may we all commit to praying more

PLEASE speak to me if you would like more help in how you may do this

And PLEASE share with someone you know and trust how you get on. Maybe even ask someone you know well to hold you accountable for what ever you commit to this Lent

And let's be excited and expectant about what God may do in each of us and in us a His body in this place.

Amen