

**Sunday 2nd June 2019 Prayer: our place, posture and passion for prayer.
Acts 16:16-34 John 17:20-26**

Intro:

I want us to think about prayer this morning.

A few weeks ago in our service I asked you to share, with someone sitting near you, the first thing that came into your mind when you thought of prayer. There were all sorts of great, & honest answers. I can remember the person I was speaking to said that for them, prayer was a comfort.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians (6:18) urges us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions. To be praying constantly. Prayer has no boundaries. The words of the song of an 80's advert for Martini said 'Any time, any place, any where... that's Martini'. I think those words are better suited to prayer. We have access to God at all times and we can pray to him any time, any place, any where. But the danger can then be that we don't. Because we can pray freely to God, and because we have unlimited access to him, we don't pray as often as we could or indeed should.

I don't know about you but I have lots of good intentions of spending time with friends. Having moved around a lot, most of my friends are dotted all around England. Sometimes it is months and months before I speak to, or meet up with a friend. When we finally get together we say, with all sincerity and good intention "Mustn't leave it so long next time"

If we then put a date in the diary we manage to get together sooner the next time. But if we leave it and assume that, with our diaries pretty clear a few months in advance, we will fix a date nearer the time, the weeks and months inevitably roll on and far too long passes before we meet up.

I wonder if there is some parallel with us and our prayer times with God? Because we know that we can pray to God at anytime, do we leave it to 'another time' to pray and then the other time doesn't come for quite a while?

This leads me to the first of 3 P's to help us think about prayer today.

1. Place - for prayer

Our reading from Acts starts with Paul & Silas going to the place of prayer. Penny mentioned this in her sermon last week.

They went outside the city, expectant of finding a place or prayer.

Paul was in Philippi which was a Roman colony in what is today Northern Greece. It was prohibited for any unrecognised religion to be practiced in the city and, inscribed on the arches outside the city, there were notices informing people of this. So those followers of Jesus who wanted to pray had to make their way out of the city and knowing this, Paul & Silas went to meet the local believers as they gathered.

Those who wanted to pray had to make an effort. They had to be intentional and go to a place to pray.

How would it help us to have a specific place to go to to pray? Yes - we come to church and we pray together here. But what about on our own, in our personal prayer times with God. Where do you / could you go to pray.

I want to suggest that it is helpful for us to have a specific place that we can go to, set aside, maybe even made a little special, where we can go specifically to pray.

It could be a specific chair where we have a good view into the garden

It may be in our bedroom

Perhaps we could have a candle or special picture to help us focus

We can pray anywhere and it is good to know that wherever we are we have access to God

But I want to encourage us all to develop a specific place that we intentionally go to, regularly, to spend time in prayer with God

Matthew 6:6 says

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you

Jesus taught this and assures us of a reward, a blessing when we do so

2. Posture - of prayer

Reading from John 17. The whole chapter is about Jesus spending time in prayer and the chapter tells us that Jesus *'looked up to heaven and prayed'*

Our second P is for Posture

What posture do we adopt when we pray?

As children we were probably taught to put our hands together and close our eyes

Helpful things to reduce our distractions and help us concentrate.

There are some well know pictures of children knelt beside their bed to pray and DL Moody once said 'Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure

Posture of heart as well as body....

3. Passion - to pray

Paul & Silas were in the innermost cell and stocks after a severe flogging

Inner cells were reserved for dangerous and low-class criminals - not a good place to be

The stocks could be for security... to keep the prisoner even more secure than being locked up but they were also used as a form of torture

Despite all this they still had such a desire and passion to worship and praise God that they still managed to pray

How is our passion for prayer?

On Thursday we celebrated Jesus Ascension. We were thinking about how that meant Jesus absence from us here on earth but it was also, for Jesus, His homecoming. Jesus is now re-seated at the right hand God. Back in His throne room.

And, through prayer, we have unlimited access to Him. We can go to Him at any time with whatever is on our hearts

The third P could have been purpose... Do we have a purpose to our prayers? Because when we have a clearer purpose it increases our Passion.

Jesus is there in the throne room of heaven interceding for us (Romans 8:34)

Why wouldn't we want to spend time with Him, with our almighty heavenly Father?

Conclusion:

Place

Posture

Passion

Let's PRAY !!