

'Lord, teach us to pray' Luke 11:1
Sunday 24th July

Intro

I wonder which is the most frequently prayed prayer?

It could be 'God help me!' sometimes prayed in a less than reverent way and often subconsciously
But I suspect that it would be what we have come to know as 'The Lord's Prayer'

It is prayed in most church services. In some of the old Book of Common Prayer orders of service it was said more than once. And, it is a prayer that many people can pray, off by heart, whichever version it is they have learned... and sometimes a combination of the 2 ! :-)

When I was on community at Lee Abbey, where there were people from different countries speaking 15-20 different languages, when it came to praying the Lords Prayer, we were all encouraged to pray it in our own first language. It was a beautiful sound.

The Lords prayer is known and prayed across cultures, languages, ages and denominations
And here we have just read it as Luke recorded it in his gospel.

Notice how it came about

'Lord, teach us to pray...' Vs 1

Lord, teach us to **pray**...

I love this. One of Jesus disciples, one of his close followers, one of his students, knows that John had been teaching his disciples to pray. He has seen Jesus pray in different places and in different ways, and he wants to learn to pray and so asks Jesus to teach them.

The disciple had seen and heard Jesus praying... for Jesus prayer was an integral part of his life... and so the disciple asked this experienced and wise teacher how to do it, how to pray.

2 things are interesting about this

- observing Jesus praying was not enough... the disciple wanted specific teaching on how to do it
- he recognised the importance and significance of prayer and wanted to learn more

So what does Jesus say? How does He respond?

'Jesus said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father...' vs 2 and then a bit later 'Suppose one of you has a friend...' vs 5

The first thing that Jesus teaches them about prayer is that it comes from a place of relationship

Relationship

The Jewish people were used to praying to Yahweh God, God of the exodus, God of liberation who set them free from slavery and led them in to the Promised Land and whose promised new Kingdom they awaited.

But here Jesus teaches them to pray to Abba, Father - a very different relationship from that of liberating God

And then, a few verses later in the parable, Jesus uses the relationship of friends to teach more about prayer

The relationships of father and friend are intimate and close. Praying to someone with whom you have this sort of relationship can be more relaxed and understanding and 2 way.

Philip Yancey, in his book called PRAYER - does it make any difference? says
'Prayer based on relationship and not on transaction may be the most freedom enhancing way of connecting to God'

I am still working on understanding the depth of this in reality but Yancey is basically saying that if our prayer is based on transactions with God - you do this for me then I will do that or Lord - if you would only help me get through this and then I will **always**.....

prayer based on transactions like that with God tie us in to commitments and obligations that don't enhance us or God

But prayer that comes from relationship, a longing to connect and communicate with God as He does with us, then that form of praying creates & enhances freedom and honesty and openness.

If we look briefly at the Lords Prayer, we can see that Jesus teaches us to pray for

- our personal need of food -Give us each day our daily bread - bread which is a staple food in every culture. He teaches that we should pray for our individual life needs
- And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us - praying for the inter relationships between ourselves, praying for good communal life together that is dependent upon loving and forgiving one another
- And do not bring us to the time of trial - this final line is asking for help with our life and connectedness with God

So the disciple has asked Jesus to teach them to pray and Jesus has responded by teaching them the need for a relationship with God their Father and friend and then that they should pray for their own life needs, for the healthy relationships that make up the life of the community, and then for a safe life with God.

Then Jesus immediately tells a story that is meant to extend their understanding of prayer even more.

Parable

There is all sorts we could say and ask about this story, this parable

Why was it all happening at midnight?

Why hadn't the person got provisions of his own to give his friend?

Was it that important that he should be able to offer food at that time of night? ...

But I want us to focus on the fact that Jesus said one friend would help the other because of what? Because of his PERSISTENCE 'because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs' vs 8

Jesus is saying that in our prayers we need to be bold, insistent in our asking, refusing to give up, being shamelessness in our requests. Are those words that describe your prayer life? or the prayer life of us as a church?

Sometimes it is all too easy to give up in our prayers.

Sometimes we pray, asking God for something and then once we have asked that's it, we stop. We've asked once and no more.

Or maybe we ask a few times, we pray for the people on our prayer list for a week or 2 and then we stop and move on to something or someone else.

I wonder why that is? Why do we find it hard to be persistent in prayer for something or someone?
Maybe we find it tedious to persist?
Maybe there is so much to pray for that we move on to the next thing?
Maybe we think of it as irreverent to keep asking for the same thing? Maybe we feel as if we are nagging?
But here, in this parable, Jesus teaches us that we need to be persistent.
Persistence can demonstrate a genuine desire, it shows God that we are serious about whatever it is we are praying for.
Because of his persistence the friend received the bread that he was asking for
Because of our persistence, God will answer our prayers.

But then Jesus says that we do actually have to ask!

Ask Seek Knock

We have to actually ask God for the things we need for ourselves, for our community, and for our relationship with God because God is good and wants to give us good things but we have to take responsibility and ask for them in the first place!

'For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.' vs 10 Jesus promises

The disciple asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus did. And we are still using his model of prayer 2000 yrs later. I wonder what we would pray each service if the disciple hadn't asked that question?
! :-)

And Jesus reassures us that God will always give us the things that are good for us, drawing upon good human experience between human father and child.

Interestingly here Jesus promises that the heavenly Father will give us the Holy Spirit if we ask.

We have been thinking a bit about this on Wednesdays at Bible Study and it is something we will look more at together as a whole church, but Jesus that God will always give good things to us that we need and ask for, including the Holy Spirit.

2 important words to remember there

Good gifts - and these are things that are seen as good by God who sees the whole world from a different perspective to ours and He really does know what is ultimately best for us and His Kingdom Gifts - may not just be our needs, God is generous and sometimes gives more than just our basic needs

Summary

When the disciple asked Jesus to teach them to pray Jesus taught them that

- prayer comes from a place of relationship that He equated to that of Father and Friend
- We can pray for our daily needs for life, for good relationships within the life of our community, and for a safe life with God
- Persistence in our prayers bears much fruit
- Those who pray will have their prayers answered by God who knows and loves us and wants to give us good things.

I wonder how you would describe your prayer life?

I wonder how satisfied you are with it or if you give it much thought?

I wonder if you have a prayer hero? Someone who you know who prays persistently?

Helen - a lady at Lee Abbey who persuaded our Life Group to get up early once a week and pray...
saw lots of great answers to prayer

Film - The War Room

Do you want to see Gods transforming love poured out into our world?

Do you want to be someone, through whose prayers, Gods love is poured out into the world?

Wouldn't that be exciting?

Wouldn't our families, and local community, and country, and world be a different?

Hearing answers to prayers is a real encouragement that prayer does make a difference.

We have had specific answers to prayer here in our church family over the past few months.

We don't always share them.

But hearing how God answers encourages all of us in our faith and in our prayer life

So please - if you have answers to prayers that if is OK to share, please tell me and then I can share them with others as encouragement to build our faith

And remember that Paul assures us that when we don't know how to pray, if we ask, the Holy Spirit is interceding for us and helping us to pray

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

At the beginning I said that there were 2 interesting things about the disciples request for Jesus to teach them to pray

Watching someone else pray helps, and we have the Lords prayer but as we recognise the significance of prayer, let us ask Jesus to teach us to pray So that together we become even more a people through whose prayers, God's love is poured out into the world as we see His Kingdom come.

Amen