

## **PRAYER**

### **READINGS**

Genesis 18:20 – 32

Colossians 2:6- 15(16-19)

LUKE 11. 1 – 13

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Everyday is Christmas day – Christ born within us. Everyday is Easter day – Christ risen among us. Everyday is Pentecost - the spirit poured out upon us. Lord, give us buckets of faith, big enough to contain such generous outpourings. Amen

May I speak in the name of the living God.....

“In understanding the true nature of prayer, it is a mistake to draw too rigidly the frontier between prayer and life” Michael Ramsey

Prayer is very simple. It is talking to Jesus. Jesus promised that he would be with us until the end of the world. Jesus is within each of us all we have to do is turn to him. If we want to see Jesus we see him in the faces of friends or strangers. The frontier between prayer and life is transparent and permeable. We see amazing signs of God’s goodness in our everyday lives. We gaze in wonder at Gods gift of life.

I have a beautiful rose. It is a rambler with hundreds of tiny bright red orange and vermilion flowers. It grew in a large wooden tub and spread over the wall of our house. It gave us much joy and pleasure. Last year my sister was with us and I said the wooden tub is rotten and it is amazing

because I do not water it much. She laughed and said its roots have gone through the path below. There is a drain just there so I was a bit worried. As biologists or gardeners we can explain how plants grow flower and produce seeds and fruit. However much we know and understand it is still the miracle of life that starts things growing.

When the tree surgeon came round I asked him to re-pot the rose. He did a good job. The roots had not penetrated the path but grown into the wall of the house through the brickwork. He re-potted some roots and just five bare, dead looking sticks. He cut off the rest. He said: "I hope I have not killed it, it may recover and if not, you will just have to get another."

That was in January, this year. I was a bit sceptical - 5 dead sticks in the ice and snow! Gradually lots and lots of tiny buds appeared, out of the bare wood. Then they became shoots and by June There were lots of shoots several feet in length covered with flowers. Better than ever

That is the miracle of life. Much more so is a tiny child new born: a miracle of love in one year she develops into a replica human being, a personality able to move and express its needs.

The earth is teeming with life. Life given by God! Jesus came to be part of that life. Jesus lived among us to show us the 'WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE'.

He is here with us and we can turn to him and talk to him. Each part of Gods world we encounter is Gods creation. Prayer is being part of that creation talking to Jesus asking his help and thanking him. God likes life. He invented it. Our very existence is a gift. It is free. It comes to us free like the air we breathe, the soil we till, the seeds we sow. They all come from God.

It comes to us by grace. God gives us grace freely; we cannot earn it. Grace enables us to follow the way of Jesus. Grace, the free gift from God that powers us to do his will.

We need to connect with creation to be aware of what goes on around us and offer God our praise and thanksgiving. If you spend your working life in a big city and travel by train or underground there is still life around you. Plants in the cracks in the pavement! London! Planes! Trees! What a miracle they are and people! God's people! God's creation! People are made in God's image. God's creation! We can pray on the underground, it is teaming with God's creation.

We must rediscover each day God's presence, God's activity in the world. Perhaps there are times when we are not aware of God's presence. But God is present even when we are not aware. We are God's creatures. So each day we can pray in the morning whilst shaving or cleaning one's teeth, offer the day to God and offer ourselves to do God's will.

Prayer is practising God's presence, that is our part of prayer discipline. Sense of God's presence is God's gift to us. We will not always sense God's presence but as we practise God's presence we will sometimes get a wonderful sense of God's presence. That is the gift of God.

Gerard Hughes says: "Christian tradition recognises that it is difficult for busy people to be still, and that is why many traditional methods of prayer are repetitive, the repetition being designed to still the mind."

Jesus' Prayer is: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. The art is to repeat it so often that it is written on one's heart. 'I am chosen in your grace, accepted in your love, made complete in Christ.' Repeated over and over in little moments or whilst doing something that does not need mental concentration e.g. walking to the shops, mowing the grass, waiting for the computer to respond!

Our emotions, too, are a resource for prayer and for practising the presence of God. Anger motivates us to do something about what's happening. Tenderness makes us gentle when some one is sorrowful, or in pain. Fear helps us find escape or a way to deal with a situation. Emotions result in talking to ourselves. If we turn up the volume, thus talking to God, we can sometimes see things differently.

The 'Great Prayer' which Jesus taught us is another one that we can imprint on our hearts and it is the Gospel reading for today:

Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.

It might be helpful to say just one line that meets the present situation. This is all about private prayer, practising Gods presence with us. But we also pray together and proclaim Gods presence with us here and now in public worship. We do it loud and joyfully and give God his worth.

We celebrate the four-fold action of the Eucharist the centre of our spiritual life week by week. We follow Jesus who:

TOOK bread, BLESSED bread, BROKE bread, GAVE bread to his disciples: 'Do this as oft as you shall do it in remembrance of me'. When we join in that sacrament we receive God's Grace as a free gift, instituted by Jesus at the last supper. As we practise God's presence, we can recall his most holy Gift of the Sacrament to us.

When it comes to prayer, none of us feel we have arrived, and some of us know we are stuck and feel guilty. Take heart God Loves you. Jesus is with us so we can talk to him. AMEN