

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**  
**'Church at Home' - Sunday 26th April 2020**

**Welcome**

*"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service for the 26th April. This week we begin a new series exploring the essential questions about prayer. I hope it will be an encouragement to you and help you to grow in your own prayer life." - Rev. Andrew Gill*

**Call to Worship – Psalm 116:1-2**

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;  
    he heard my cry for mercy.  
Because he turned his ear to me,  
    I will call on him as long as I live.  
Praise the Lord!

**Opening Prayer**

Dear God,  
silence all voices within my mind but yours.  
Help me to seek and be able to follow your will.  
May my prayers be joined  
with those of my sisters and brothers in the faith,  
that together we may glorify your name  
and enjoy your fellowship forever.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Reading – Luke 11:1-10**

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

*"Father,*

*hallowed be your name,*

*your kingdom come.*

*Give us each day our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins,*

*for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation.'"*

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

### **Sermon - 'What is Prayer?'**

As people we have this great need to talk. It is so essential to our relationships that during this time when we can't meet face to face, we are employing every form of communication available. We phone, email, text, and hold up signs outside windows, doing whatever we can to talk to our friends and families.

Maybe you've had to get used to new forms of communication like 'Zoom' or 'House Party'. Or maybe you've been rediscovering old mediums and have put pen to paper and written a letter.

As people we have a need to talk to those we love. Some of us may do it with more words than others, but all of us have this desire to tell someone who cares for us all about our day, even when we've been doing nothing. We are built to talk and to have relationships.

This is the first part of a series of videos looking at the topic of prayer. Prayer is simply a spiritual conversation with God. The question we are exploring this morning is '*What is prayer?*' Prayer is taking with God.

The God of the Bible is not an object or thing, he is not some kind of abstract force. Our triune God is a living and personal God; he has names and attributes, he thinks, and loves, and speaks. He has made himself knowable, and through Christ we can have relationship with him.

When Jesus was teaching his disciples how to pray he said to them, "*When you pray, say: 'Father...'*" (Luke 11:2) Prayer is speaking to our Heavenly Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit.

God is a personal God, and he is present. When the Apostle Paul was encouraging his friends to pray about their worries he tells them that, "*The Lord is near*" (Philippians 4:5) God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, but he is not distant or far away from his people. In his love God promises be close to us.

Maybe your house is very full at the moment, and you are feeling the stress of everyone living on top of each other. Or maybe you've been alone during these weeks of lock down and you are feeling the loneliness that that can bring. But remember that the Lord is near. Wherever you are reading this right now God is there with you.

The God of hope is beside you and you can talk to him about your worries. The God of wisdom is close, so share your problems with him. The God of strength and power stands with you, ask him to help you with your challenges. Your loving heavenly father is with you and wants to hear about every detail of your day.

But some of you might be thinking, 'where do I begin, how do I start this spiritual conversation with God?' But a really important thing need to remember that prayer is not a human idea, prayer is God's invitation.

When we start to listen we will realise that God is always speaking to us, through creation, through circumstances, through reading something like this, and above all through the Bible. Prayer is a response to who God is, what he has done in the past and what he has promised for the future. In Psalm 27:8, the great King David says as he prays, *"My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'"*

God starts the conversation. In the Bible he has told us of his love, revealed his goodness, and spoken his will for our lives. So what will you say in response?

Over the next few weeks we are going to be looking at some more common questions about prayer, and thinking practically about what we can do to connect with God in prayer. But before we finish this I want to make two suggestions.

First is to listen, what is God saying to you this morning? I'm not expecting you to have heard a loud audible voice, but what has stood out to you from this sermon or the other elements from our 'Church at Home' service today? Is there something you've learned about the character of God, or have you been reminded of a promise, or maybe you've been convicted of a sin, or been encouraged by some eternal truth. Listen to what

God is speaking to you, and then respond with a short simple prayer of your own. It can even be just one or two words, like saying, 'Thank You' or 'Sorry'.

Secondly, over this week you might like to join with us as we read through the New Testament letter of Ephesians (there is a copy included with this transcript). Each day there are some verses to read, and then the question to help you think about how you can pray as a response.

God is inviting you to talk with him today. So let us respond as we pray together;

*Almighty God,  
You are my light and my salvation,  
so help me not to be afraid.  
Lord Jesus, be my fortress,  
and protect me from danger,  
cover me with your wings when I begin to tremble.*

*Lord, at times it can feel like I am surrounded by a mighty storm,  
but the one thing I ask — the thing I seek most—  
is to live close with you all the days of my life,  
to delight in your perfections and meditate on your word.  
For you will conceal me when troubles comes;  
you will hide me in your love.  
You will place me out of reach on a high rock.  
Then I will hold my head high above the waves that surround me.  
In your presence I will worship with shouts of joy,  
singing and praising your holy name with music.  
My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."  
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."*

*God of my salvation,  
even when I am all alone,  
I know you hold me close.  
Teach me how to live, O Lord,  
lead me along the right path.  
Do not let me fall into temptation.*

*Yet I am confident I will see your goodness  
while I am here in the land of the living.  
Help me to wait patiently for you;  
To be brave and courageous.  
Yes, help me to wait patiently for you.  
Amen*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.