

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**  
**'Church at Home' - Sunday 3rd May 2020**

**Welcome**

*"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service for the 3rd May. This week we continue our 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 34:1-3**

*I will bless the Lord at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;  
let the humble hear and be glad.  
O magnify the Lord with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.*

**Opening Prayer (Based on Philippians 1:9-11)**

God our Heavenly Father,  
May our love overflow more and more  
with knowledge and full insight  
to help us to determine what is best,  
so that on the day of Christ we may be pure and blameless,  
having produced the harvest of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ  
for your glory and praise. 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.

## **Reading – Hebrews 4:14-16**

14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

## **Sermon - 'Why Pray'**

There are 650 prayers recored in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures are filled with stories of God's people giving him thanks, seeking his forgiveness, and crying out for his help. Prayer was central in Jesus earthly ministry, he would often get up early in the morning to go and spend time alone with his Father.

Most people will pray at some point in their lives, even atheists. Prayer is the most important activity of the Christian life, so much so the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to, *"Never stop praying."*

As a church we always want prayer to be our first response and not our last resort, especially at times like this. So to help us grow in our individual prayer life we are doing a series of sermons exploring the essential questions we have about prayer. Last week we looked at the question of '*what is prayer?*' and we saw that prayer is simply talking with God. This video will be trying to answer the question, '*why pray?*' As we begin to think about this, let us read again from Hebrews 4:16, "*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Prayer connects us with God. It connects us to his throne and to his transformation. God is a personal God; he has names and attributes, he thinks, and loves, and speaks. Just like with our earthly relationships the more we talk, the more the relationship grows. One of the last events I was at before the lockdown began was a marriage preparation class. What do you think is the one essential ingredient that said is needed for a successful marriage? It's *communication*. Prayer connects us to God. Through prayer our knowledge of him who is grows, our love deepens, and our faith is built up.

Of course prayer is not like any other conversation, because prayer is a conversation with *God*, the creator and ruler of the universe! Prayer connects us with God's throne.

It's very easy at the moment to feel powerless. But as we sit on our couches helpless, know that God sits on his throne able to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Through Christ's death on the cross we are justified and by the Spirit we have been adopted which we means we have access the King of kings, and call him 'Abba, Father'. Prayer gives us a direct line to heaven's throne room and we can bring all our requests and worries to God.

Prayer connects us to God's throne and God's transformation. Prayer brings change. When you read those 650 stories of prayer in the Bible you see the how their lives and circumstances were transformed, and the amazing even miraculous, ways that God answered their calls for help. Prayer brings change, but the mistake we sometime make with prayer is what we expect to change. Some people think that we pray to change God's mind or his plans, but we don't pray to try and change God, we pray to allow God to change us.

At times in my life I have found it helpful to write about my prayers. I have these journals that go back about 15 years, and I was flicking through them during the week and was reminded of how prayer connects me to God's transformation. Generally it's during the difficult times that I would write the most, and as I read back over them now I see how God has answered all of my prayers. I can testify with the Psalmist who wrote, *"I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears."* (Psalm 34:4)

But as read through the years of these prayer journals the greatest change has happened within me. My attitude to trials, my concern for others, the ambitions for life have all been transformed as I talk with living God, because prayer connects us with God. "Prayer involves transformed passions. In prayer, real prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts after him: to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills. Progressively, we are taught to see things from his point of view." (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline)

Now I know some of you may be thinking, 'but I've been praying about something for years and seen no change at all.' That's a really important question, so there will be whole sermon later in this series dedicated to looking at that exact thing. But God does always answer prayers, though not

always in the way we are expecting. Jesus himself taught his disciples to always pray and never give up, because prayer does bring change.

*Why Pray?* Prayer connects us with God, with his throne and with his transformation. “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

A way you might find helpful to connect with God this week is to write out a prayer. Maybe this afternoon take out a piece of paper and write a letter to God; tell him what you’re feeling, share your worries, ask your questions, off load your frustrations. Since the beginning of time the men and women of God have been seeking his face in prayer. Add to that number today by giving him thanks, seeking his forgiveness, and crying out for his help. Let us pray,

Father God,

Thank you that you sit on Heaven’s Throne. Thank you that your love is changing this world. Jesus teach me to pray, and help me to trust in you.

Holy Spirit transform my life. Have mercy on me and show me grace, Amen.

### **Hymn 257 - “What a friend we have in Jesus”**

*What a friend we have in Jesus*

*All our sins and griefs to bear*

*And what a privilege to carry*

*Everything to God in prayer*

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit*

*Oh, what needless pain we bear*

*All because we do not carry*

*Everything to God in prayer*

*Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged  
Take it to the Lord in prayer  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness  
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

*Are we weak and heavy laden,  
burdened with a load of care?  
Jesus is our only refuge,  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In his arms He'll take and shield you;  
you will find His comfort there.*

### **Final Prayer (Based on Ephesians 3:14-19)**

Heavenly Father,  
From you every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. We pray that out of your glorious riches you will strengthen us with power through the Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And we pray that we will be rooted and established in love, and may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen.