

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

'Church at Home' - Pentecost Sunday 31st May 2020

Welcome

"Hello, and welcome to this transcript of our church at home service for Pentecost Sunday. Today's message is the final part of our series exploring the essential questions of prayer, looking at 'Who helps me pray'" - Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Psalm 104:24, 31-34, 35b (NRSV)

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;

may the Lord rejoice in his works—

who looks on the earth and it trembles,

who touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to him,

for I rejoice in the Lord.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Praise the Lord!

Scripture Sentence – Romans 5:5

Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Collect for the Day of Pentecost

Almighty and ever-living God,
you fulfilled the promises of Easter
by sending your Holy Spirit
and opening the way of life eternal
to every race and nation.
Keep us in the unity of your Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

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 – Acts 2:1-21 (NIV)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: *“Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”* Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, *“What does this mean?”*

Some, however, made fun of them and said, *“They have had too much wine.”*

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: *“Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

*“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,*

*blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Sermon - Who Help Me Pray?

Have you ever been lost for words? Maybe you were surprised by some good news, and you were so stunned that you were left speechless. Or maybe you were really embarrassed, and you were desperately trying to think of something to say, but there was just a long awkward silence... Or maybe someone asked you a question you don't know the answer to. And of course we often find ourselves not knowing what to say in moments of grief or tragedy.

This is the final sermon of a series exploring the essential questions of prayer. Prayer is a spiritual conversation with God, but there are times in our life when we struggle to know what to say. We watch the news and see stories of injustice and racism, and we want to pray, but in our outrage we just can't find the words. Or a friend shares an issue they face, and it's so big and so complex that we just don't know what the best thing is to pray for. At other times our passion is too high or our pain is too deep and we just can't get the words out. And it's frustrating because these are the times when we need prayer the most, but we just don't know how we should pray. We feel weak, and so our question we are answering today is *'Who helps me pray?'*

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the day in our church calendar when we remember and celebrate the birth of the Church of Christ as the Father

sends the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer in many ways; he fills us with hope, enables us to understand, gives us power to be witnesses, and he helps us to pray. Listen to these verse from Romans 8:26&27, *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. (NIV)*

The Holy Spirit helps us pray. How good is God? Not only does he give us help when we pray, but he give us help to pray!

To put this verse in the context of the rest of the chapter, the Apostle Paul is comparing our present suffering to our future glory. Like when you take a cheap flight on your holidays, the journey might be unpleasant, but the destination is worth it. So there is future glory coming when Jesus returns, but now our lives are filled with weakness. We need help, so God sends us the Holy Spirit to be with us on our journey.

Verse 26 says that the Spirit intercedes for us, which means he prays for us. If you have been following this series you will remember that in the act of prayer we seek to align the desires of our heart to the will of God. But sometimes in our weakness we don’t even know the desires of our own heart, never mind the will of God. But the Holy Spirit knows and understands both, so when we are lost for words he help us by making requests on our behalf.

Just let that truth settle in for a moment. As you pray, the Spirt of Christ prays with you, and for you. And even though we stop praying, he never

ceases. And if that doesn't encourage to pray, then I have done a bad job of explaining it because this is amazing!

The Holy Spirit gives us help to pray to God, but I feel right now that we also need to know that He also gives us hope in the plan of God. Right after those verse that we've been looking at in Romans 8, Paul says this, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (v.28 NIV)

Not everything that happens in life is good, but God uses everything that happens for good. God hasn't called you to life of misery but to a life of joy. He hasn't called you to slavery, but to freedom. His plan for you is peace, not fear, glory, not suffering. So right now if you are in a place of difficulty, then something amazing is going to happen! I have learned that sometimes the most beautiful destinations are at the end of the most difficult journeys.

As with most of these sermons there is a sheet included with some suggestions of how you can pray this coming week. There is a list of some bible verses about how the Holy Spirit works in our lives, followed by a simple, ancient, yet powerful prayer *"Come, Holy Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray to God, and he gives us hope in the plan of God. So, let us pray!

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit

Help me in my weakness. Thank you that you intercede for me when I do not know what I ought to pray for. Search my heart, and pray for me in accordance with the will of the Father.

Fill my heart with hope, Amen