



TALKING WITH GOD

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“Lord, teach us to pray”

St. Luke tells us that, one day, as Jesus had finished praying, his disciples approached him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray”. Of course, Jesus’ response was the prayer we know as The Lord’s Prayer.

We read often in the gospels of Jesus praying: taking himself off to pray, praying before he healed a person, and praying just before he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus also prayed the night before he died. He knew what lay ahead: the humiliation, the agony, the separation from his Father, the doubt, grief, and despair which his followers and his mother would experience. So, in knowing all these things, he turned to prayer.

In John chapter 17, we read that Jesus prayed first and foremost that God would be glorified through his sacrifice on the cross, then he prayed for his apostles, before praying for all who would come to faith in him through the witness of his followers, “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message”. Jesus is facing a most awful death, but his prayers are first and foremost for the Kingdom of God to grow through his believers. What an example of prayer - even in difficult

times such as these our prayers should not cease to focus on what The Lord’s Prayer teaches us, “thy kingdom come”; our prayers should not cease to focus on praying that the Church would faithfully continue Jesus’ work.

That is not to say that we should not pray for ourselves: in Matthew chapter 26, we read that, after leaving the upper room where he had eaten the Passover with his disciples and prayed for them, Jesus did pray for himself, as he contemplated with a desperate fear what lay ahead. Yet, what a prayer! Yes, he prayed to God to be delivered from this fate, but he also prayed, “Yet not as I will, but as *you* will”. We can pray to God to help us in any situation, but we must also pray as Jesus prayed, that God would answer our prayers in accordance with his perfect will. Of course, Jesus was not delivered from the cross, for God’s perfect will was done - Jesus’ death achieved unimaginable grace for the world: all who believe in Jesus are promised everlasting life.

(Rev. Julia Pratt)

Doing Prayer

Prayer can be difficult. In this section we will be learning from each other, sharing our ideas as to how we pray; what we have found helpful in our prayer life; maybe new ways of praying which have helped us.

“Music”

At the beginning of “lockdown” I was in Durham, living in a shared house. I quickly found myself missing my church, college chapel, my visits to Durham Cathedral, all places where I easily felt God’s presence. I found it increasingly difficult as I spent so much of each day in one room (a room where I worked and slept) to have any sense of God’s presence. I therefore found it increasingly difficult to pray.



I don’t know what prompted me to try something new, but I introduced music into my daily Quiet Time: as I sat down with my Bible, commentary and my Book of Common Prayer or Common Worship, I listened first to a piece of music, from YouTube or on a CD. Sometimes it was a modern worship song (e.g. “Faithful One” by Robin Mark); sometimes an old hymn (e.g. “Be still, my soul”); and I also found the “Venite”, sung by Lincoln Cathedral Choir, to be a perfect way to draw me into God’s presence. Although I am now back living in a house on my own, with my study being a lovely environment in which to pray, I still use music. A recent find, which really draws me into an attitude of prayer, is a beautiful piece I heard on Radio 4’s Daily Service - “Breathe on me Breath of God” by the Kings Singers (found on YouTube).

Now none of the above pieces of music might be what you would choose, but, if you are finding it difficult to create

that sacred space, to enter into an attitude of prayer, I would encourage you to try music.

(J. Pratt)

Sharing Prayer

Sometimes, it is hard to pray because we are not sure what to say. As with any conversation, when talking with God, especially in our private prayers, we should be able to talk quite naturally with him. Yet, if we are honest, most of us will go through times when words are not easy, when we just don’t know what to say.

So, in this section we will again be learning from each other, sharing old prayers which we have found helpful (we need to be mindful of copyright), or prayers which we have written ourselves.

Here is a familiar prayer believed to be by St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is discord, vision.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.