



TALKING WITH GOD

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“Do not worry about anything”

Those who joined our Prayer Meeting earlier this month will be aware that I have recently been studying St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians. I shared this with the group as I invited them to consider Philippians 4:4-7 as we began our time together.

As we continue to hear about the shocking number of deaths in the UK due to covid-19; as so many people worry about their jobs; as many struggle with their mental health; as people face delayed medical treatment or tests; as we all wonder how much longer this pandemic will last, St. Paul’s words in verse 6 of this passage may sound laughable, “Do not worry about anything”!

However, St. Paul’s words are worth some attention: He was not writing at a time in his life when all was comfortable. He was not living a life of luxurious ease at this point (if he ever did). He was actually in prison, facing the very real prospect of execution. It is from his own precarious situation that he writes to the church in Philippi, “Do not worry about *anything*”. He then gives them the antidote to worry:

“but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”. Paul teaches these Christians that, no matter what they may be facing, they can commit *everything* to God in prayer. (Note that he adds that their prayers should also include *thanksgiving*. When we take time to remember the good things which God has done for us, this gives us faith in what he will continue to do for us, in this life and in the life that is to come).

Paul goes on to tell the Philippians what happens when we commit *everything* to God in prayer: “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). Paul does not promise that our prayers will always lead to some sort of miracle, but he does assure us of something that he himself experienced, an overwhelming peace. Others, and we ourselves, may not understand how, despite all that surrounds us, we have a sense of absolute peace, in our hearts (the seat of our emotions), and in our minds (our thinking), but that is what prayer can do. As this great man of

faith faced an uncertain future: continued imprisonment, possible death, he calls his fellow Christians to follow his example, his teaching, “Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

(Rev. J. Pratt)

Doing Prayer

“Saying grace”

One of the ways in which I was taught to pray as a child was by “saying grace” before meals, simple prayers of thanks for the food we were about to receive.

This is a practice which continues in my younger brother’s family, with family members taking it in turns to say grace. They actually have a Prayer Dice



(similar to my own - see photo aside) which someone can choose to use if they wish: you simply roll it, and whatever face turns up, that’s the grace you

pray!

Last Christmas, when my mother and I were at my brother’s, my then two-year old niece, Naomi, took it upon herself to decide who would say grace at each meal. When she picked me for one meal, she was somewhat shocked when I sang a version of “Thank you for the world so sweet. Thank you for the food we eat....” a version to which my godparents had introduced my family and I many years ago. My niece didn’t ask me to say grace again for a couple of days - she obviously prefers the dice!

(J. Pratt)

Sharing Prayer

O Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

Oh, let me see Thy footmarks,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
Oh, guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend.

(John Ernest Bode - 1868)

Contributions for future issues of “Talking with God” are welcome from all members of the church family, and that includes children and young people. You might want to write an article about prayer, share how you pray, or how you teach your children to pray, or perhaps you might want to share a prayer you have written, or an ancient prayer you love. All contributions should be emailed to Julia Pratt (curate@stpeters-woolton.org.uk), with “Talking with God” in the subject line.



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

