

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

Prayer is your most important conversation of each day

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the coronavirus crisis. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message

Reflection

Prayer

I wonder how you are feeling about praying during lockdown? Perhaps prayer is so natural to you, lockdown has not really made any difference? Or, has lockdown made you anxious or depressed in some way, so prayer is more difficult? Or, maybe you are somewhere in between? If we are honest, we all have difficulty with prayer at some time or other in our lives.

Ulysses Grant was President of America during the Civil War. He left the presidency a financially broken man. He had trusted the wrong people, and they had stolen all his investments. His family had nothing, so he wrote his memoirs and paid back all his debts, so that the family would be secure after his death. But, during these hard days of writing, and trying to keep going financially, Grant developed cancer of the tongue that would eventually take his life.

The battle that General Grant fought against cancer is a story of great courage. One day, his friend, General Howard, came to visit him. He had hoped to cheer up his friend, who was very ill at that time, and so he began to talk to Grant about the great battles they had fought together.

However, this was not helping Grant and he continued to sit there, feeling depressed. Finally, he shook his head and said, "**Howard, tell me something about prayer.**"

I am sure there are many people, including some church members, who could echo the words, "*Tell me something about prayer.*" We all experience times, when we really do not know how to pray.

Some people feel they need to be taught, just like Jesus taught his disciples. Others, feel that there is something about prayer that they are missing, or they do not understand. Even during lockdown, some people may feel there is too much happening, they have too much to do each day, or there are so many thoughts in their minds, that prayer is put on the back burner. So, this morning, let us think about this word, "prayer."

First of all, let us think about **what prayer is not**. We know prayer was very important to Jesus. He spent time alone, in prayer with his Father every day, and he was very critical of the religious leaders of his day.

Bible reading

Matthew 6: 5 - 8

Prayer

5 And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not

keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

The first part of this passage, could be entitled, “*How **not** to pray.*” Prayer was extremely important to the Jews. But certain faults had crept into the way they prayed. It was not that they forgot to pray, but their prayers tended to be far too formal.

The Jews had special parts of their daily prayers. The first was the *Shema*, which consisted of three short passages of Scripture that were recited each morning and evening. The Jews loved the *Shema*, and repeated it with great reverence and love; but there were others who just said the words as quickly as possible.

The Jews had to recite 18 prayers every day. They were lovely prayers, and prayed with great sincerity by many Jews, whereas others just raced through them. But, before we criticise them, how much thought do we give to the Lord’s Prayer, when we say the words?

The Jews had a prayer for every occasion. There was a prayer for every event in life, everything was brought into the presence of God. But many Jews just quickly repeated the right prayer at the right time, without any real thought to what they were saying.

There was also a tendency among the Jews to have very long prayers. A prayer was judged by its length, but Jesus said, as we read in Matthew 6: 7, “*And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*”

Jesus also said that certain Jews made sure that they said their prayers in places where they would be seen by others. It was easy for one of the religious leaders to stand at a street corner, so everyone could see how devoted they were.

Jesus laid down two rules about prayer which are still true today. First, he insisted that all true prayer must be offered to God. These Jews were really praying so other people could see them, and not to God.

Secondly, at verse 8 Jesus says, “*Your father knows what you need before you ask him.*” Jesus reminds us that the God to whom we pray, is a God of love, who is more ready to answer than we are to pray.

Having thought about what prayer is not, let us now think about the question, “***Why** do we pray?*” We are created to pray. We are the only creatures, created by God, to have within us the capacity to respond to God in thanksgiving and prayer.

Prayer is an instinct within us. The majority of people pray at one time or another in their lives. We will never know how many prayers are said, especially during these past months, when so many people have been in hospital, in the ICUs, some on ventilators, or at the bedside of someone who is dying.

One reason why we pray is **to help us to stop worrying**. When we hand over our worries to God in prayer, we feel much better and life takes on a new meaning. In these unsettling days, it is so important that we bring all our worries and concerns before our heavenly Father.

In the 1st letter of Peter 5: 7 are the words, “*Cast all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.*”

We are gradually being led out of lockdown, but in some ways that can increase the anxiety we feel, so let us make time every day to speak to God in prayer, to tell him honestly how we feel, and then we will know in our hearts, the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Amen.

Prayer

Let us pray,

Almighty God,

despite all the difficulties of our lives in the past months, we know that when there is blue sky and when the sun is shining, we feel up-lifted. Especially when we are walking outdoors, we want to praise you, for the wonder of your creation.

We thank you for each beautiful flower, plant, bush and tree, for the waves breaking on the seashore and the loud singing of the birds. We praise and thank you, Lord God, for the numerous beautiful sunsets that have led us to worship you.

We thank you too, Loving God, that in Jesus Christ, we are set free, free from the bondage of sin and death. We know and we believe, that through Jesus' death on the Cross and his Resurrection, we are yours, now and for evermore.

Living God,

we thank you that you are a God who answers prayer. You know all that we are going through, and how it affects each of our lives. You are always there to help and strengthen us, when we feel weak or unsure of the way ahead.

Compassionate God,

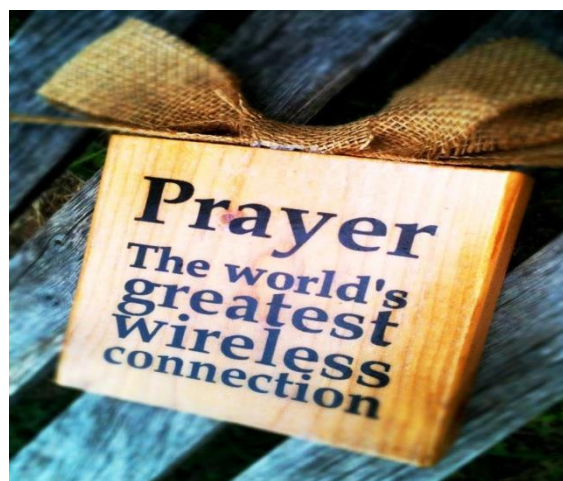
we pray you will continue to be with the medical profession, with all those everywhere who are caring for others, often at a risk to their own health. We give you thanks for everyone willing to take part in a test to find a cure for Covid -19.

We pray now for all those facing difficult times – those who have been bereaved, whose lives are changed forever, here on earth. Loving Father, comfort them we pray, and be close to those who are ill or at home or in hospital. We pray for those who have heard news that is difficult to accept, and for everyone anxious about the future.

Teach us, we pray, the power of prayer, the blessing of prayer and the potential of prayer. May we be strengthened and upheld by you, as we speak to you, and discover your will for our lives.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, Amen.

Rona



Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mrs Ann Shaw	Mrs Edith Gray
Mrs Christine Martin	Mr John Cassells
Mrs Aileen Alexander	Mr James Alexander
Mrs Ellise Wilson	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Heather McLeod	Mrs Jessie Rennie
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Cath Lindsay
Mrs Jean Hamilton	Mrs Alison Wilson
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Mary Ferguson
Mrs Catherine McDonald	Mrs Helen McGill

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital, please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenahunter@hotmail.com

Difficult times While these are times of worry and hardship for many people, the Church is also struggling financially. If you are able, we would be most grateful if you would consider making an extra donation (according to means) to help cover ongoing bills etc.. Please contact Janis Meredith whose details are on page 6. Anyone wishing to donate to Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church online can use this link:- <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/support-your-local-church-with-our-new-online-donations-system> Thank you. *John Bell*



on 19th June
to
Gillian Bruce and Christine Tierney

Remember Streaming of our morning service conducted this week by Christine Tierney and next week by Rev. Rona Young will commence at **11.00am** then our **prayer time** starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by personal prayers. This helps bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically. Please join us for the service if you can and take part in the prayer time which many are finding valuable and some find comforting.

Salvation Army Foodbank A big thank you to all who have donated on the past six Sunday afternoons. Please note that donations will be accepted between **2.00** and **3.30pm**. Only leave your car when the person before you has gone and, if possible, please place your contribution directly into the boot of the receiving car.

While any donation is great, the foodbank has expressed particular needs for the following:-

Small Jars of Coffee	Tinned Vegetables
Tinned or Packet Potatoes	Tinned Cold Meat
Tinned Mince or Stew	Tinned or Packet Custard
Tinned Creamed Rice	Anything that is long life!

Additionally they accept -

Toiletries - soap, shampoo, toothpaste	Carrier Bags, particularly robust bags
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Everything is distributed to those in need in our area and Newton Primary School which is also a centre for collection for other schools with vulnerable families.

Prayer quiz Tick what you believe to be the correct answers then check in next week's Extraordinary Times.

1. To whom was Jesus talking when he taught the Lord's prayer?

a) Pharisees b) Multitudes c) Disciples d) John and Peter only

2. At which battle were the Israelites defeated because Joshua didn't pray first?

a) Gideon b) Ai c) Heshbon d) Jericho

3. How many times is the word 'prayer' mentioned in the Bible (KJV)?

a) 50 b) 114 c) 176 d) 497

4. Into what did Jesus say the priests had turned his house of prayer?

a) A house of evil b) A place of rogues c) A den of thieves d) A temple of drunkards

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear-
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

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