

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 10 October 2022
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Hallowed by your name
Passage: Matthew 6:5-15
Title: Our Father in Heaven
Outline: We see prayer's
1. Context
2. Challenge
3. Potential

our brains have an incredible capacity don't they? - or perhaps I should speak for myself?

- * what I mean is this - sometimes you can find yourself thinking of something entirely **different** to what you are actually **doing**.
- * if you drive, you know those times when you've driven home late at night - your mind on the meeting or concert you've been to, or you deeply engrossed in conversation with your passenger, and when you get home, you suddenly realise you've basically been driving on auto pilot and you can't remember which way you've come or which lights you've stopped at!
- * or you're ironing // - **guys** - you know what it's like - and you're watching TV and thinking about the program and suddenly you've finished what you're ironing without thinking about it?
- * or at church - I don't know about you, but I find I can sing a hymn or say the creed and my lips are moving, and the voice is coming out, but my mind is elsewhere - on the events of the day or what's for lunch!
- * and it's because of that, that I want us to spend a few weeks exploring the depths of that prayer we have come to know as the "Lord's Prayer" - because I think it's very easy to mouth the words without giving a lot of thought to what the prayer actually means. //
- * this prayer is full of great insights and correctives - and full too of great joys - and I hope you'll come back each week to tap into the riches of this prayer.
- * the sad **irony** of this prayer, is that we have taken what Jesus meant as a **pattern** for prayer and turned it into something we quickly rattle off.
- * Just two verses before the prayer in v7 Jesus sternly warns his disciples - *do not keep babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*
- * The way we use this prayer sometimes, I think we are in **danger** of **babbling like the pagans!** //
- * How careful we must be in praying the words of this prayer - and perhaps saying them **less** often is more helpful - that we might **know** what we **mean** and **mean** what we **say!** ////
- * well enough introduction // - **three** aspects of prayer to see in the opening words of Jesus' pattern this morning – prayer's **context**, prayer's **challenge** and prayer's **potential**

1. Prayer's context

- * the two opening words tell us clearly that the context of prayer is **relationship**.
- * how do we address our prayer to God? - '**Our Father**'
- * and as its only **your** children you call you father (if you're a father) and **my** children who call **me** father - so it is only those who are **God's** children who can address God in prayer.

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- * and although plenty of people may send up the odd prayer now and then, it is only those who are God's **children** who have access to God in **prayer**.
- * Christians are of course, children of God by adoption - *as many as received them* says John in his gospel - *he gave the right to become children of God*.
- * Have you received Jesus? - welcomed him into your life? **Then you are a child of God!**
- * **Rejected** him or **ignored** him? Then the privileges of prayer and relationship with God and his help and strength will not be **yours**, until such times as you **do** come into the family!
- * but once you are **in** the family - the privileges are **enormous!**
- * calling God "Father" is just one.
- * John in his letter wrote (1 John 3:1-2) - *see what love the Father has lavished on us - that we should be called children of God*. What great love indeed!
- * for the disciples who first listened to Jesus, calling God "Father" would have been revolutionary – God for them was someone distant, far away - holy, too above them to relate to personally - you needed a priest to mediate for you – which is why the Jew hardly dared to take his name on their lips!
- * but if God is our **Father** and we his **children**, our understanding of prayer itself changes.
- * we are not trying to **twist God's arm**, nor do we have to work to get his **attention**, nor do we need anyone else like a **saint** or **Mary** to pray **for** us - you are his **child** - he is your **Father**.
- * **because** Jesus' **death** has dealt with your **sin** - **because** he has **mediated once** and for **all** - you can come into **God's presence** and **God** - the **perfect Father** - is all ears!!
- * in fact we are **reminded** that he is more **ready to listen** than we are to **pray** and wants to give us more than we either **desire** or **deserve!**
- * so this is the **context** of prayer - a **loving relationship** of **Father** to **child**. //
- * now that has got to be an **encouragement**, hasn't it?
- * We have a **Father**, waiting for us to **come** and **speak** with **him**. He **cares** for us. He **loves** us.
- * We can be **certain** if he has given us his **Son**, he will not fail to give us all **measure** of good **things**. //
- * but **secondly** this morning, here's is prayer's **challenge**:

2. Prayer's challenge

- * children **hate** to admit when they need help.
- * remember what it's like with a **two-year-old** determined to put say their own **singlet on?**
- * And they get their head through the **sleeves** and scream in frustration because they can't get it **right**, and if you try to **help** them, they have to take it off and start again because now **their** effort has been rendered null and void because you dared to reach out just to **help** them get it over their **heads!** //
- * we tend to be like that when it comes to **God**.
- * that is, I'm sure one of the reasons that we do not pray as we **ought**, is because we don't like to admit we need **help**.
- * **part** of prayer is to the **challenge** to **admit** we need **help**, and to seek it in the **only place** it can be **found**.
- * Our Father - **in heaven**, we pray.
- * that is, not only do we have someone who is our Father and **willing** to help - we have someone who is

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King - enthroned in the **heavens** and **wonderfully able** to help. //

- * how **important** that we understand the God to whom we pray. //
- * the fact that God is 'in **heaven**' reminds us that he is **great, eternal, infinite, almighty** - **more than able** to deal with all the **needs** we bring to him when we **pray**.
- * and the **challenge** of prayer is simply this - that in prayer **we acknowledge our total dependence on Him**.
- * **he is not our equal, and we are not self-sufficient**.
- * isn't it true that we can be very successful in **business**, or in our **profession**, very successful in setting up **home** in a nice **suburb** or **property**, with 2.5 kids and a dog etc; live **good lives**, contribute to **society** etc; and life is **good**....
- * ...but it's **hard** for us to come to **God** in **prayer**!
- * It's hard to start the day with God and say – "*Father in **heaven** - I need your **help today***".
- * ...because we can appear to have everything at our fingertips and be managing very **nicely** thank you!
//
- * but the things we need help for aren't necessarily the **trivial** things like getting our **work done** and pulling off the next **business deal** or getting the next **crop off**, or making it through the next **lambing season**, but the **really hard** job of living for **God**.
- * no – it's he really **hard** job of getting our **priorities** right so he is the most **important part** of our **lives**.
- *the **really hard** job of resisting the **temptation** to **neglect** our **family** for the demands of the **property** or **business**.
- * ...the **hard job** of remaining **honest** in a world where that sort of thing is **frowned on**.
- * **These** are things we need help for!
- * And the Father who is in heaven, is wonderfully **WILLING** and **ABLE** to help us to get our life in to order and keep it that way.... ///
- * I want to ask whether later today... you may sit down and **talk** to you Father in heaven – your **wonderful Father** – who is **utterly for** you – who loves you so much – and spend **unhurried time** with **him**...?
- * will you say to him – "I need your help to **live for you**, to **see things your way** – **DO** things your way; to **love** like you **love**... to resist **temptation**... I need your help to put you **first** above everything **else**."
- * That's the very real and great **challenge** of prayer – to come in **humility** and **admit** we need his **help**... that we can't live **his way** // **without him**... ///
- * we've seen the **context** of prayer, and the **challenge** of prayer, finally we need to explore:

3. Prayer's potential

- * we could look together at a lot of things here....
- * but I want to highlight just three
- a. **Prayer can build intimacy and trust**
- * my dad is with the Lord now... but you know it was only in his latter years that I started to share with my dad what was on my heart and to seek out his wisdom.
- * and of course, it's only natural that when I did that, our relationship grew... it deepened

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- * that is exactly what will happen as you spend unhurried time with God in prayer
- * ... as you share the desires, and longings, and joys and regrets of your heart...
- * ...you will grow in your relationship... your trust will grow... so much so that when the hard times come, you won't panic or quickly enter into despair – you will automatically turn to the one with whom you've grown close!
- b. **Prayer will change the way you see things....**
- * more of that over the next couple of weeks as we look at *hallowed be your name and your kingdom come...*
- * but suffice to say at this point – that the more you come to God in prayer, the more **your desires, longings, plans and passions** will align with **his**. /
- * as you pray that he will be **honoured** in the world and his will, will be **done**... do you know what will **happen?** – you will find yourself working towards the **honouring** of his **name**... and you will **want** to do his **will!**
- * so prayer will change the way you **see** the **world**.... You'll see it much more through **his lenses**...
- * **your desires** will align with **his**...
- * prayer will **change you**... //
- c. **Prayer will change the world**
- * I love it when Paul says in Ephesians chapter 3, that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we **ask** or **imagine**...
- * more than all we can **ask** or **imagine**!!
- * now I imagine that those watching here today are able to ask for a **lot** and imagine a **lot**!!
- * but he is our Father in heaven!
- * and he is able to do **MORE** than either we can ask or imagine
- * **nothing is too hard for him!**
- * what is **impossible** for us // is **possible** with **God!**
- * friends – this means in approaching our Father in heaven – we need to **think** big... **ask** big... **imagine** big...!!
- * have you asked him to **change and transform you?**
- * have you asked him to **bring help and hope to those you love?**
- * have you asked him for **healing?**
- * for **peace?**
- * for **wisdom?**
- * have you asked him to **grow your church?**
- * to draw men and women and boys and girls to **himself?**
- * to have **mercy** on people across **central and western NSW?**
- * **think** big. **Imagine** big
- * and he is able to do **more** than we can **ask** or **imagine!** ///

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- * Let's **conclude**
 - * are you a child of **God**? You've welcomed Jesus as the most precious part/person in your life? Then this pattern of **prayer** is for **you**.
 - * we are privileged to call the God of the universe "**Father**".
 - * He deeply **cares** - he knows you as a father knows his child - because he **IS** your Father, and you **ARE** his child!
 - * and he is in the heavens - he has **all** power at his disposal and is able to help you in ways you haven't dreamt of!
 - * got a **problem** today? - something **troubling** you - a **worry**, a **decision**, a **temptation**?
 - * take it to your **Father**. Your Father who is in **heaven...** and **wait on him to answer** and **help** you...
 - * for the **context** of prayer is **relationship**
 - * the **challenge** of prayer is to give up our **self-sufficiency** and to **depend** on **him**
 - * and the **potential** of prayer – is – well – it's more than either we can **ask** or **imagine**!