

Thursday Prayers. June 17th 2021. The number for zoom is 849 5365 2866

Welcome to Thursday prayers on this lovely warm June day.

We start by saying the Thursday prayer together.

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in the world wide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers, we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Teach us, good Lord to serve thee as thou deserves. To give and not to count the cost,

To fight and not to heed the wounds, To toil and not to seek for rest,

To labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will. Amen..

Today we are thinking about the work of the Faith in Action team and in particular working with families.

The reading is taken from St. Luke`s Gospel Chapter 1 beginning to read at verse 20. (and finishing at verse24)

Before I start I would like to share with you an extract from Beryls` book. I call it Beryls` book because this book was handed to all the dads on the Relationship Course at the last session in Littlehey prison way back in March 2020.

Written by an American author, Jim Butcher born 1972. "There`s nothing that makes you more insane than family. Or more happy. Or more exasperated. Or more secure"

In a world of broken relationships, the passage from the bible teaches us a lesson of deep love and hope and I can take the point that there is always hope for reconciliation.

The Lost Son is the last of three parables. In this one, the father represents God and the son, the people on earth who have lived in a way that ignores God`s wishes.

Now why is this son compared to a pig, you may wonder? To be compared to a pig was to be godless. So the listeners of Jesus` parable would readily recognise that the prodigal son had sunk to the lowest depth of morality by feeding pigs raised by a Gentile.

Well the prodigal son was an abuser of grace. Grace is often defined as unmerited or unearned favour. He had a loving father, a good home, provision, a future and an inheritance, you would think he had everything , but he traded it all for pleasures. We are the prodigal son.

As he did every day, the father walked from his home to the small hill where he could look down the road and see for several miles. He always thought and hoped that he would see a familiar figure heading his way. And one dayhe did.

Families! There is a well known saying that you can choose your friends..... but not your family but you know we should know our families, same upbringing? Same genes? Same values instilled from birth? And yet these reasons could well be the reasons why we don`t.

The father in the verses just read, exhibits what all parents feel unconditional love.

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And his Brother? Just what you might expect? Jealousy? We don't know the ending of the story. Do they manage to overcome their differences and learn to live and work together in harmony? Or are they at loggerheads for the rest of their lives-----with their father in the middle? I always like a happy ending to stories..... so you know which one I am going for?

Families? Really complex units, and not always as simple as mother, father, and children.

In relationships you would hope that things would run smoothly, any niggling differences ironed out but two people from different families and their relatives have not only to adapt to each other, but to things happening from both sides in their wider families.

If something happens and breakdown of a family occurs and there looks to be no possible solution, then it's possible that, the mother runsand takes the children with her. These desperate women see their chance..... and go. No wonder when they reach a safe place ie the refuge..... their only belongings are the clothes they are wearing.

Now when the Refuge Support worker from one of the refuges is passing ,usually on her way home from work she often collects things from my garage, which have been collected from Mothers` Union members and their friends-all concerned..... and desperate to make a difference to folk in need. Now I like to chat to this lady while we are filling up her car and emptying my garage .She is very guarded in her answers and will only go as far as she wants to, in the conversation, so as not to breach confidentiality. I don't know where she works except that the Refuge is within walking distance of a well- known supermarket, because when I handed over vouchers at Christmas she said `good` because the women can walk there. I learn a little bit more each time I see her.

I know her car is `Tardis` and no matter which things I have lined up for her, if she needs them she will somehow fit them in, cots and a dressing table, being the largest. Before Lockdown they had a storage area on site. During the first lockdown no-one from the refuges was able to move on, nothing from my garage was passed on And I was not collecting. A full stop.

As soon as we were all able..... things got moving again very quickly. That was May, June time and the residents were being re-homed and household items were desperately needed..

Some of the women coming to the refuge take their rooms last thing in the afternoon. They have a bed and a cooker, you can see where our vouchers come in so useful!

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One evening late she was obviously on her way home the doorbell rang, and there she stood, the Refuge Support Worker,.. announcing that she had become a grandma!" Grandma" I thought, "You don't look old enough to be a grandma!" And then we laughed as she showed me a picture on her phone of the puppies in her house! She definitely knows how to cheer people along! But you can tell that she is also very sensitive, even though (in her own words she has been likened to an opened box of live frogs!) arms and legs,but perhaps that is her way of dealing with the women and their plight.

There are two refuges which work closely together and what one has and the other hasn't they are able to sort between them. I know at Christmas the vouchers were passed between them when one ran short.

I have only mentioned two of the 5 refuges we support; we have not forgotten the others!

Finally,thankyou to all members and their friends who have given a thought to the needy families and donated items to go to the refuges. To those who have knitted clothes and blankets for the baby banks and given baby equipment and to the sweaters and blankets knitted for Christian Hope international. Your donations are always very much appreciated, and please keep going!

And I shall finish with another extract from Beryls` book. "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass.....it`s about learning how to dance in the rain" The late Vivien Greene. Wife of Grahame Greene.

Intercessions.

Let us pray.

Today we pray for the world wide work of the Mothers`Union. remembering our links in Lusaka ,Shyogwe, Sokoto and Ikka and Karimnaga and our Diocesan links with Kigali and Vellore.

We pray for Sheran Harper our World wide president, For Beverly Julienne our Chief Executive and for all who work in Mary Sumner House and for our Provincial President Kathryn Anderson.

In Ely we remember Hazel Williams our Diocesan President and our Board of Trustees. And all our members in Ely Diocese.

And in moments of silence, we make our petitions to Almighty God bringing before Him, our own concerns.

Father, we pray for those known only to you, who have no-one to pray for them.

May our prayers be acceptable to Christ who suffered and died for us . Amen

Let us say together the Mothers` Union prayer.

Loving Lord, We thank you for your love so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers`Union as we seek to share your love, Through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life. Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus name. Amen.

Lord, we hear your word ,let us be doers of your will. Christ our Lord, you saved the world you love, through acts of mercy as well as words of life. Your practical deeds of kindness are ours to emulate. Your loving model of servanthood is ours to follow. Heavenly Father, help us to follow your ways to enable our work to flourish. May the love of God be seen in us as we live out our faith through actions. Amen.

Dear Lord we pray for all the outcasts of our world,

Those who have been cut off from their families, those who have been rejected by society and lost all hope of return. Those in prison, the homeless and the lonely; bring comfort to them, O Lord, and restore them to the full dignity of their humanity. Let them grow into new life. Amen.

I only know one hymn which is suitable for our Faith in Action service, this morning :- a favourite of mine.....

Please join in singing all verses of “Brother, Sister, let me serve you”.

1. Brother, Sister ,let me serve you

Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey,

And companions on the road,
We are here to help each other,
Walk the mile and bear the load.

3. I will hold the Christ-light for you,

In the night –time of your fear,
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.

4. I will weep when you are weeping,

When you laugh, I'll laugh with you,
I will share your joys and sorrow,
Till we've seen this journey, through.

5. When we sing to God in heaven,

We shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together,
Of Christ's love and agony.

6. Brother, Sister, Let me serve you,

Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.

And we finish our service by saying the Grace together.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all,
evermore. Amen.