

Reflection for 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022 Trinity 6  
Rev'd Margaret

Genesis 18:20-32 & Luke 11:1-13

Around 2000BC Abraham and Sarah had been visited by three strangers. They entertained them and provided them with a meal. It turned out that the strangers were actually the Lord and two angels. During the conversation Abraham and Sarah were promised a child despite being very old.

When the visitors got up to leave, Abraham walked with them looking across to the city of Sodom. Sodom was a corrupt city full of sexual immorality, but Abraham's nephew Lot along with his family had decided to live in that city.

In the first part of the chapter Abraham was discussing with the Lord his own personal and family circumstances. Now the conversation shifts to other matters and in particular the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham was regarded as a friend of God and God wanted to share with him his future plans and purpose. *'Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"* " God was going to destroy the cities because of all the evil in the cities.

Abraham was quite prepared to discuss matters with God. He knew God to be a loving and forgiving God. Lot and his family had chosen to live in Sodom. Knowing of the reputation of the city I'm sure Abraham was not happy with this decision but we can't control other people's lives. Abraham had given Lot a free choice of which way to go and that was what Lot had chosen. Lot had made an unwise choice but he was still part of the family.

When God shared his plans to destroy the evil city Abraham hesitantly asked God 'If there are fifty righteous people in those cities will you still

destroy them'. God said no he wouldn't, so Abraham got bolder, What about if there are forty-five? Forty? Thirty? Twenty? Ten? Then God ended the conversation (verse 33).

The men (angels) that had been with Abraham went on to Sodom to warn Lot of the coming destruction and get him and his family to leave. Lot's sons-in-law thought the men were joking and wouldn't go with them. The men grappled Lot and his wife and two daughters and dragged them out of the city telling them to flee for the mountains or they would be swept away. Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. There weren't even ten righteous people in Sodom and the city was destroyed but Abraham's nephew Lot and his two daughters were saved.

There are several things we can take note of from this story

1. God initiated this exchange. God invited Abraham to become involved. Are we aware of times when God is prompting us to pray for something in particular?
2. It was a conversation between God and Abraham. Do we take time in our prayers to listen to God and what he is saying to us? Abraham's prayer changes as he listens to God. He doesn't keep repeating the same request. Do we allow God to change our prayers and move them on?
3. Abraham is not arguing with God, rather he is trying to understand God better and understand his purposes for the world. God does not view the world passively, he hates the evil he sees. God knew all about what is going on in Sodom and Gomorrah as he knows about what is going on in our world. We don't need to tell him. Sometimes we need to listen better to him telling us what the problems are and what it is we need to pray about.

4. God also ended the exchange. He decided it was time to move on. Verse 33 'When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.' When we pray we hand over our worries and concerns to God. We learn to trust God, who has heard our prayers, to answer our prayers in the best way that only he knows. So often we want our prayers answered in a certain way and we tell God what to do instead of trusting him. Even after all Abraham's prayers God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah but he saved Lot and his two daughters.

The passage from Luke is well known. Jesus's disciples ask him to teach them how to pray. Luke 11 v2 *"He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come."*

In our passage from Genesis we saw Abraham as God's friend. Here we see Jesus inviting us to call God, Father. Both indicate an intimacy. Almighty God, creator of the whole world, is also like a friend and father to each one of us.

We pray to God as Father and Friend but also need to reverence him 'Hallowed be thy name'. Your Kingdom come – we pray for God's kingdom to come here on earth. We then ask God's forgiveness, and promise to forgive others...

It is only once we know God, are right with God and tuned into his plans for the world that he says *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."*

Young children, especially those with loving, caring parents, are not always given everything they ask for because some things will clearly do them more harm than good. As we grow older we learn about the things that will harm us. It is the same for us and our Father God. He

does not give us everything we ask for, he wouldn't be a good parent if he did. But as we grow to know him better and understand more of what it means for his kingdom to come on earth, then we will be more in tune with him, praying according to his purposes and see our prayers answered.

Paul is a good example of someone who listened to God and prayed according to his will. In Acts 23 verse 11 we read *'The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."'* Paul did go to Rome but as a prisoner. On the way he was shipwrecked but during this experience God confirmed his previous message that Paul would go to Rome. Paul was able to encourage his shipmates assuring them that they would not perish although they would lose the ship. Acts 27 verse 25 *'So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. <sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.'*

In summary then, prayer is a two way conversation with God and a time when we can get to know God in a deeper way. We can listen for his prompting through the Holy Spirit suggesting situations to pray for, when to pray and when to leave things with God. As we seek God and learn more of Him we learn to pray according to his will and purpose for his world.

We also need to grow and mature in our prayers. It is exciting to hear a young child say his first words and then to start putting words together in sentences, but we don't expect to have the same conversation with a three year old as we would a mature adult. Prayer is the same, 'God bless mummy and daddy and keep them safe and make me good,' is a good start but as we understand more of God, our prayers will mature too.