



Heacham Parish Church

7th June 2020 Sunday Service – Heacham Parish Church
at home

EXPLORING PRAYER PART 1 – ASKING GOD

As it is Trinity Sunday Adrian plays one verse of 'Holy, holy, holy' to the JB Dykes traditional tune 'Nicaea as we gather'

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you **and also with you**

As we gather in our homes, together yet apart, we pray:

Lord, we seek to meet you through praise and prayer.

Let our praise be prayer and our prayer be praise.

In our worship, may God build up our faith

and strengthen our resolve to pray and to wait for the answer.

Today we begin a series on Exploring Prayer in our services, which will continue for the next 5 weeks. They link in with the exploring prayer video series from The Archbishop of Canterbury, this week we are thinking about asking God (find the link for this video at the end of service)

Song: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God sung and played by Penny, Colin, Rosie, Sue, John Hilary, Lesley, Jean, Terry and Karen!

**Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
And His righteousness,
And all these things, shall be added onto you,
Alleu, Alleuia**

**Man shall not live by bread alone,
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Alleu, Alleuia**

**Ask and it shall be given unto you,
Seek and ye shall find.
Knock and the door shall be opened onto you.
Alleu, Alleuia**

Bible Reading: Acts 1: 6-14 read by Lynda Swain

A Reflection from Simon Wilson

It is a privilege to be virtually with you as we start this series of sermons focused on prayer. This first week explores how we “ask God” in prayer.

If you ask any group of Christians, however senior they may be in the church or however long they have been part of the Church, what they find hardest about the Christian life, prayer will always feature. There have probably been more books written or courses designed about prayer than any other aspect of faith.

Unfortunately, if you are expecting any easy answers from me, you will be disappointed. I too find it really hard to pray-I have tried many different things from Ignatius to celtic, from silence to noise and from candles to rosary beads. Spiritual directors have helped and certain wise faithful prayerful Church members have

set good examples, but especially when times are hard, when anxiety is high, prayer does not come easily to me.

When we think of prayer, the sense of asking God for things, is a natural starting point. It is easy to find ourselves approaching prayer with a "shopping list" of requests, some worthy, some personal, some a little off piste. Praying for Norwich City to avoid relegation may seem the only way out but unlikely to work!

Prayer is about asking for God's intervention in situations that concern us, in the lives of people we care about and those who suffer, for the corporate life of the Church and for the needs of the world. Things we do every day, on our own or in a group and in the form of formal intercessions. I often resort to "arrow prayers" throughout the day when something stirs my consciousness-maybe news of someone ill, the sound of an ambulance or fire engine or something in the news-it is impossible to watch the sickening footage of the death of George Floyd without crying out to God for justice.

This approach is not wrong, far from it but prayer is so much more than that. God knows our needs and wants before we can begin to articulate them let alone settle down and pray. God hears our prayer the first time but that does not mean that it is wrong to continue to place the same situations and people before him. Prayer is about deepening our relationship with God. When we pray we are doing theology. There are times when I have been in so much pain and distress that all I can do is cry out and other times when I have literally wrestled with God. He is big enough to take our anger.

When we pray, we can be confident that God hears us and that he will answer us, though often in ways we least expect or ways that only become clear years later. Prayer is a two-way process-do we leave space for God to speak to us? The starting point of asking is silence. Sometimes no words are necessary.

The Bible sets out the themes that have influenced the prayers of Old Testament prophets, kings and judges, Jesus himself and his disciples, apostles and early Church leaders and throughout Church history and it is these themes that God is concerned with today: justice, hope, reconciliation, transforming unjust structures, those in poverty or excluded. Our prayers can be a form of practical solidarity. Theologian Karl Barth used to pray with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. Try setting aside a quiet space and time and sit with God, praying and listening. The paradox is that whilst prayer, or to be precise starting to pray can be really hard, once we get going prayer is actually very easy. It is a privilege to be able to converse with a God who knows everything about us and still loves us. It is a space for honesty. For whatever works for us. Remember that for many prayer is not a luxury but a necessity-the last resort of the desperate crying out for peace. God hears them all from the big global metanarrative to the practical concerns of everyday life.

The reading we have just heard, Paul talks about presenting requests to God in prayer:

1. As intercession where God is asked to intervene to be a peace-maker, mediator or helper.
2. As petition where we ask for things we, or others, lack.
3. As thanksgiving where we approach God gratefully. Do we thank God for answering our prayers).
4. As requests: specific needs-such as healing or rites of passage

Jesus provided us a model of how to pray in the words of the Lord 's Prayer. If stuck, there is no better starting point.

So, if we pray, we are promised that we will receive that peace of God which transcends all understanding, that is dependent on nothing more than who Jesus is with us. We ask that God's will be done and that request in itself can bring us a sense of peace in times of anxiety. Indeed, we are assured that no matter our situation, if we pray as we are, coming to God in honesty and openness, we will know peace. Amen

Song: Just as I am sung by Sue Bird

**Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**Just as I am - thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down -
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!**

Prayers of intercession written by Judith and Terry Clay

Heavenly Father, You know our fears and worries, you know all our concerns and troubles we face day to day and so, we bring before you now the anxieties we all have over the corona virus.

Your word says, "*ask anything in my name and it will be done*", Lord we know it will be done according to your will and so Lord, we praise and thank you for all the answers to all our asking, we wait on your perfect timing for as yet unanswered requests. Heavenly Father we ask you now, Give wisdom to the policy makers and skill to all our healthcare professionals and researchers.

We ask you to comfort those in distress, come close to those who suffer with the symptoms of this virus, we ask that you put your ever loving arms around those who have lost loved ones, protect and uphold them in their time of great sadness.

We ask that, as our Government enters a phase of relaxing the lockdown measures, we are all able and willing to comply, help us to act responsibly, helping to aid the return to a more normal way of life.

This we pray in your precious name Amen.

Heavenly Father, We pray against the unrest that has swept across the United States of America in response to the dreadful event in Minneapolis. Give guidance to the authorities in the way they respond and may a peaceful protest bring about change that will encompass all races and lead to resolving deep rooted problems that have existed for many years.

This we pray in your precious name Amen.

Lord we pray for those who are ill and in hospital. Give those caring for them wisdom and grace. Take away the fear, anxiety

and feelings of isolation for those receiving treatment. Give them Your healing and comfort.

We pray for those bereaved and ask for Your peace and presence when the loneliness is even more acute because of the isolation. Help them to know You heal the broken hearted and are always there to listen.

Lord at this difficult time we thank you for all those people working so hard in the NHS, for those keeping the country running and for those reaching out to people in need. In that love is our hope that from this lockdown time we can review how we live our lives and understand the values that really matter to us. To understand that life can be lived simply without the things we may have felt were important but now see only took our time and created pressure in our lives. It has been so good to connect with people and share, giving and receiving support. Help us to continue to give that time to reaching out to one another recognizing our shared vulnerability.

Lord we ask that you would answer these prayers in your timing and according to your will. **Amen**

We pray together the **Lord's prayer**

Final Prayer

Be bold in prayer, and courageous.

Be gentle in prayer, and compassionate.

Be silent in prayer, and speak out.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness,

protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors. **Amen**

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Adrian plays the final bars of John Rutter's 'Toccata in 7 as we finish

Veronica will be hosting on Sunday 7th June from 10-10.30am an EXPLORING PRAYER MEETING, we will have a time of prayer focussing this week on asking God. This is the link

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9960936343?pwd=TIerVHp3UHBzZHNTSm16QzdCNUY0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 996 093 6343 Password: 150936

Everyone is very welcome, if you can't or don't want to zoom, you could join us at home by praying at that time... together, yet apart.

For those without access to the internet:

The telephone worship service: **Daily Hope**, offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind. This is a freephone service.

Also The Diocesan weekly podcast **Sunday Hope** can be listened to via your phone by calling **01603 537577**- calls for this are charged at a local rate.