

Rooted in Prayer

Prayer is one of the deep mysteries of the Christian faith, also one of the deepest challenges. For myself, and I suspect for many, we are sure we do not pray enough, we ache for a more intimate relationship with Jesus, and we know this will be achieved through prayer, and yet we constantly allow other things to take priority over our prayer time. Jesus gently chiding Martha to get her priorities right (Luke 10: 38-41) too often prompts my guilty conscious.

Read Psalm 37: 3-7 and 39-40

This Psalm, taken as a whole, is about the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, 'who will enjoy the blessings of the Lord in the promised land?' In a fallen world, this is an ageless question, but perhaps extremely relevant with the current state of the world. *In the verses we have read, what comforts or cautions do you draw? How do you see this linking with prayer, perseverance, and relationship with Jesus?*

What do these verses say about the huge domestic and global issues our country and the world is currently facing, which we individually can hardly influence? In what ways should we address this in prayer? What actions, if any, should we take?

Read Acts 4: 12-16

I understand (v 23) 'Peter and John went back to their own people' as back to the 'first church'; the first believers were gathered together (could already be as many as 5000 people gathered - see V4). *How many elements to their prayer do you find recorded here? Do you think they were praying more in certainty or in hope that God would answer? Does this challenge us in any way about how we pray?*

Prayer can be simply summarised as talking with God. As Christians, we believe that God created all humanity to be in relationship with him, and he wants to be talking with us as often as possible; how else can that relationship develop? So, to be '**rooted in prayer**', the first necessity is to make prayer central to all we do, as individuals and as church. As individuals, most of us find the talking element of prayer much easier than the listening, but for any relationship to blossom all parties must both talk and listen, so let's focus on the listening. *How do you create an environment or mind space where you offer God a listening ear? In what ways have you heard from God. Share some examples. Do you think sharing with a Christian friend what you believe God is saying to you can be helpful?*

Another element of relationship building is to have 'an open heart'. There is no question that Jesus has opened his heart to us, the challenge for us is whether we truly reciprocate. I can certainly recall times when I didn't want to hear what I suspected Jesus wanted to say. *So, how do we get to the place where we are truly open hearted with Jesus? What do we need to do/say/believe? What can we then expect to hear from God?*

'No prayer!—No faith!—No Christ in the heart. Little prayer!—Little faith!—Little Christ in the heart. Increasing prayer!—Increasing faith!—Increasing Christ in the heart!. Much prayer!—Much faith!—Much Christ in the heart! Praying always!—Faith always!—Christ always!' Alexander Whyte

Prayer Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for lovingly listening to me. Thank you for wanting to help me follow in your perfect ways. Help me not to get distracted by my activities when my focus should be on listening to you. Amen