

Sunday 25th Sep, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Call to Worship

The Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice. Let the many coasts and islands be glad!

Song – Heavenly Father, Beautiful Son

VERSE 1 Father, You loved me, sent Your Son to redeem Jesus, You washed me, by Your blood I am clean Spirit, You've opened these blinded eyes And brought me to Christ

CHORUS Heavenly Father, beautiful Son Spirit of light and truth Thank You for bringing sinners To come to You

VERSE 2 Father, You gave me to Jesus to keep And Jesus, You love me, as a shepherd, his sheep Spirit, You've given me faith in the Son And made our hearts one

VERSE 3 Father, You're waiting to hear my requests Jesus, Your loving open hand is out-stretched Spirit, You're in me, You intercede And help in my need

Bible Reading – Matthew 26:36-45 (NIV)

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." **37** He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. **38** Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. **41** "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. **44** So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?"

Announcements – Sunday 25th Sep 2022

Focus for September – Devotions. This month we have been looking at how we might spend quality time with the Lord on a regular basis. We have talked about reading the Bible and prayer but this time might also include singing worship songs, walking in nature, journaling, meditating on a verse of Scripture, Bible memorization, and many other ways of growing in your dependence upon God. Often some things work for a season and then need to be changed up. Other times you hit the right formula for you and can keep going. But it would be good for all of us to consider how we could improve our time with the Lord.

Next Term: Please keep Tuesday 11th & 18th October (6:45 BYO meal, 7:30-8:30 training) or Wednesday 12th & 19th October (12:15 BYO lunch, 1-2pm training) free for our ministry training options. Hopefully there will be something for everyone as we consider running sessions on Sound/ Welcoming/Reading the Bible in Public/Praying in Public/Visiting on behalf of the church/ Connecting with missionaries/ leading a small group/Family & catechism/ Personal Evangelism. More details a bit closer to time.

School Holidays: NSW school holidays begin this weekend. That means that our regular church activities go into recess for two weeks while schools are on holidays.

Kids Spot:

Dates for your diary

- Complementarian Seminar – Sunday 23rd October 2:30-4:30
- Parsons visiting us – Sunday 30th October ~ Thursday 3rd November
- Gala Mission concert – Saturday 5th November
- Men's Breakfast – Saturday 19th November
- Moderator's visit – Saturday 19th November
- Gather Round Christmas Celebration – Saturday 10th December

Christmas boxes (Operation Christmas Child. Samaritans Purse). (if room) There are again three options for boxes this year; fill a box yourself, or, collect a box and a \$8 pack and provide some extras, or, pay \$10 to have a box filled on your behalf. Each option also requires \$10 postage per box. For payment, please transfer to the church account (BSB 062 829 Acc 10194850) with the description Christmas box. Info – Kathryn O'Callaghan or alternatively visit Samaritans Purse <https://occ.samaritanspurse.org.au/>

Song – All Glory be to Christ

Verse 1

Should nothing of our efforts stand
No legacy survive
Unless the Lord does raise the house
In vain its builders strive
To you who boast tomorrow's gain
Tell me what is your life
A mist that vanishes at dawn
All glory be to Christ!

Chorus

All glory be to Christ our King!
All glory be to Christ!
His rule and reign we'll ever sing
All glory be to Christ!

Verse 2

His will be done
His kingdom come
On earth as is above
Who is Himself our daily bread
Praise Him the Lord of love
Let living water satisfy
The thirsty without price
We'll take a cup of kindness yet
All glory be to Christ!

Verse 3

When on the day the great I Am
The faithful and the true
The Lamb who was for sinners slain
Is making all things new
Behold our God shall live with us
And be our steadfast light
And we shall ere his people be
All glory be to Christ!

Pastoral Prayer Points

Psalm 32:2 “Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no inquiry, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

Pray for Jordan: Pray for current religious freedom to remain despite increasing pressure to suppress it. Pray for the multitude of refugees who have crossed into Jordan to clearly hear the true gospel. Pray for Christianity to be held in high regard so that God's work in this strategic part of the Middle East would not be thwarted.

Pray for King Charles III: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it wherever he will” (Prov. 21:1). God save the king!

Bible Reading – Ephesians 6:10-20 (NIV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **13** Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. **14** Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **16** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **18** And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. **19** Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Sermon by Jon Brown

The Secret Weapon: Prayer

When do you pray? Most people pray during a crisis. Google searches for “prayer” surged worldwide during 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our church started a Zoom prayer meeting. And we had solid numbers coming for months. But as things eased, less people started showing up. And eventually we stopped it. When trouble comes a knockin’, people start a prayin’. Times of crisis have a way of waking us up to reality don’t they? But no sooner has trouble passed than we nod off spiritually.

So this morning I want to give you a wake up call. It’s a call to prayer. Check out verse 18: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and staying alert in it with all perseverance, and intercession for all the saints.”

The context is spiritual warfare. Something that every Christian is caught up in. Check out from verse 11, “Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” There’s no such thing as a Christian civilian, every Christian is a soldier in a battle. There’s no time to no off. Things are too urgent. Prayer is what keeps us vigilant. Prayer the secret weapon in this spiritual battle.

I want to hone in on verses 18-20 with you. And we’ll do it under these three headings:

1. Why you gotta pray
2. How you gotta pray
3. Who you gotta pray for

1. Why you gotta pray

A Christian has gotta pray because they are in a spiritual battle, and prayer is the secret weapon. Prayer connects our weakness to God’s almighty strength. We pray because we are weak, but the Lord is strong. Check out how this section begins in verse 10: “Finally my brothers, be strong in the Lord in His mighty power.” To fight the fight of faith, you need great power. Spiritual power. You need spiritual power to stand against a spiritual enemy. On our own, we got no chance.

We’re like the disciples. On the most important night of their Lord’s life, what were they doing? Praying, watching? No sleeping. And so the Lord says to them: “Watch and pray that you don’t fall into temptation, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Jesus knew they wanted to do as he asked. But they weren’t strong enough. Their physical bodies let them down. Christ on the other hand, overcame the weakness of his flesh by praying. Think about this, if the Lord Jesus needed to pray. And He

prayed a lot! At every crucial moment in his earthly ministry Jesus was praying. If that's the case, then how much more do you and I need to pray! We won't make it if we don't pray. It's physically impossible. We'll nod off and fall into temptation. The flesh is weak.

So we need power, and lots of it! One of God's name is 'The Strength of Israel' (1 Sam. 15:29). The Lord was the strength of King David's heart. Without God's strength David would have bolted at the sight of Goliath. But instead he wrote, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." (Psalm 144:1).

As a believer, all the power you need is right in front of you. The same power that raised up Christ from the dead is available to every Christian. Prayer turns on the tap of God's infinite power. All you need to do is ask.

My kids go hard and play, but they get tired and hungry quickly. So they run to me (or mum) and ask us for a cuddle, or a snack or drink. And then they're back into the fight (with each other). We can do the same thing - as loved children of God. We go to our heavenly Father, and ask him for what we want. And HE gives us what we need. And it might be different to what we ask for. My kids often come running up and asking me for chocolate or lollies. But we give them, not what they wanted so much as what they need. Our heavenly father knows what we want but more importantly what we need to stand until the end. "...His divine power has given unto us all things pertaining to life and godliness..." And "He is able to do way more than we ask or think, according to his power that works within us." (Eph. 3:20).

You gotta pray, because you are weak but Christ is strong. And next let's look at:

2. How you gotta pray

Notice how we're told to pray here? "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Praying in the Spirit. That's not something we talk about much as Presbyterians is it! But we should! Here it is in the Bible. But what does that mean? Here's what it means: you can't do anything without the Holy Spirit. A Christian can't even approach God without the Holy Spirit - It's only through the Spirit we have access to the Father (Eph. 2:18). . The Holy Spirit gives us access to the Father. Without which we couldn't say a peep to God. Without the Holy Spirit - we wouldn't be children of God! Check out what the Bible says in Romans:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship, by whom we cry, "Abba Father." The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God." If you're a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. You're a child of God.

Before we go further. I gotta ask you: Are you a child of God? All of us at some point must become children of God. It doesn't happen automatically. Being born into a Christian family doesn't make you a child of God. Getting baptised doesn't make you a child of God.

Coming to church every week doesn't make you a child of God. How does it happen then? "To all who did receive Jesus, who believe in His name, he gave them the right to become children of God." It happens by receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. And then the Holy Spirit comes into your heart - the Spirit of adoption! And like a new born baby, the Christian instinctually cries, "Abba - Father." Without the Spirit we couldn't pray at all! So nothing but the Spirit can help us pray. We need all the help we can get because we are in a spiritual battle.

Just think for a moment how hard it is to pray! Why is that? Because Satan is never more busy than when a Christian is praying. If the Spirit of God wasn't helping us - we'd have no chance! Again in Romans 8 it says we are so weak, we don't even know what to pray for! But "The Spirit helps us in our weakness - the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groaning which can't be uttered." It has been said, "the best prayers have more groans than words!"

Each of my kids cry out when they are hurt or need help. They don't need words for me to come to them. And each of them has a distinct cry. When Barnabas cries I know it's him. And we come straight away to help. Praying isn't about saying the right words. It's about your heart. We need to hear that as Presbyterians. We can get so caught up in doing the form of things. We craft our prayers don't we? But we gotta be careful not to neglect the Spirit in prayer. Here's some things to take into account before you praying in public. Take your heart to God as well as your mouth. Don't let your mouth go further than your heart. Don't use a prayer voice. Deal with any hidden sin first. If I regard iniquity in my heart - you will not hear me. Praying in the Spirit is praying from the heart. It's praying honestly! You don't need to put on a voice when you talk to your parents do you? Then it's the same with your Heavenly Father. Through Jesus Christ - and His death on the cross, we can come before God boldly - that means freely.

And we pray expecting God hears and answer us! The Lord Jesus was teaching his disciples about prayer. And he tells them to ask seek and knock and it shall be opened to you. And then he says, "Who of you when his friend comes and asks for a fish will give him a rock?" And then He does a drive by on them: "If you you being evil know how to give good gifts to his children. How much more your Father in heaven, give good things to those who ask!" Did you catch that? Jesus called his disciples evil! I'm evil. And yet I help my kids when they cry out to me. How much more God our Father! He is a Father full of perfect love. So when you cry out to him. He hears you!

And notice here we're told to stay alert and persevere in prayer aren't we. Don't wait until you 'feel' like praying. You gotta force yourself to do it. Not waiting until you feel like praying might seem contradictory to praying from the heart. But it's not. Often you start out all cold but by taking a Scripture and sparking a fire with it. You can get into it. Or thinking about Jesus Christ and all He has done for you. That gets your heart going. And anyway if you're a Christian - Jesus our High Priest takes our prayer and perfects them! "Though faint my prayers, and cold my love. My steadfast hope shall not remove, while Jesus intercedes above."

Praying in the Spirit is praying with your eyes on Jesus. The Holy Spirit always points us to Jesus Christ.

Alright. So we pray because we are weak. We pray in the Spirit. And last of all...

3. What we gotta pray for?

What should we be always praying for? A new Ferrari? Becoming rich and famous? Notice what the Apostle Paul says here - we should always be praying for - The saints. Who are the saints? The person beside you. And behind you. This letter opened by saying, "To all the saints in Ephesus." Every Christian is a saint. I know - it's hard to believe! But it's true. It doesn't matter what you've done. We are saints by grace through faith in Christ, not by works (like some branches of Christianity teach)! And we're called to intercede for each other. Why? Because we need each other's prayers. I need your prayers! You need mine! You need each other's prayers.

Remember the Christian life isn't just me and Jesus. You're not a lone ranger. You're a soldier in an army. The salvation of army. God has linked us to each other. So pray for one another. We are to love one another aren't we? That's discipleship 101. But you can't say you love someone if you don't pray for them! What is love but desiring the greatest good for someone. By praying you are asking God to give them the greatest good.

Look, even the great Apostle Paul needed prayers didn't he. Notice in verse 19, "and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel - for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to." Notice what Paul asks prayer for? Not that his life will be easy. And free from persecution and harm. He doesn't even ask that he will get out of prison! He doesn't ask for freedom to get out of prison, but freedom to preach! That's a spirit-guided prayer! Pray that for me, and I'll pray that for you!

I'm gonna finish with a challenge. A Christian is a praying person. In the Bible a Christian is someone who calls upon the name of the Lord. People who aren't Christians are people who don't call on the name of the Lord. In other words, they don't pray. The name Israelite means, "Those who wrestle with God." That's what Jacob did. And all those who are of the true / spiritual Israel pray.

Do you pray? Do you know what it is to be a child of God, and cry "Abba Father"? If you don't. Then I feel greatly for you. You are missing out the most important relationship of your life. Friends don't last. Family doesn't last. Only Christ and His kingdom lasts. Invest in your relationship with God. God is only ever one prayer away. Call out to him, do it now. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved! And no one who calls on the name of the Lord will be put to shame."

Song – A Christian's Daily Prayer

VERSE 1

As morning dawns and day awakes,
To You I bring my need
O gracious God, my source of strength,
In You I live and breathe
Each hour is Yours by wisdom planned,
Each deed empowered by sovereign hands
Renew my spirit, help me stand;
Be glorified today

VERSE 2

As day unfolds, I seek Your will
In all of life's demands
And though the tempter tries me still,
I cling to Your commands
Let every effort of my life
Display the matchless worth of Christ
Make me a living sacrifice;
Be glorified today

VERSE 3

As sun gives way to darkest night
Your Spirit still is here
And though my strength fades like the light
New mercies will appear
I rest in You; abide with me
Until our trials and suffering
Give way to final victory
Be glorified, today; be glorified, I pray

Benediction (Ephesians 3:20-21) - 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.