

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
30th June 2020

READINGS

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Jeremiah 29:11-14

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:26-28

Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.

Max Lucado



REFLECTION

Why do we pray? For some, prayer is an adult version of a child's letter to Santa – a list of things we want! For others, prayer is a set formula of words that must be remembered and repeated. For many that I know, prayer is a source of guilt – “We are not very good at it”, “We forget to pray”, “We don't know how to pray or what to say”.

One of the consequences of lockdown has been a discovery of new ways of communicating with one another. Despite being isolated, folk have carried on talking to one another. Meeting online through Facebook or Zoom or Facetime or some other platform. Letters have become fashionable again. Telephone calls have become more common. Even knocking on someone's window and waving or chatting through the glass. We have gone out of our way to try to make sure no one is left out. Banks have been telephoning folk who might be isolated 'just for a chat', organisations like Aberdeen Football Club have been calling season ticket holders not to sell anything but just to make sure they are OK. And as lockdown eases, the one thing most folk are looking forward too is being able to be with loved one and friends. Coronavirus has taught us again the importance of talking.

Why do we pray? For the same reason as we have gone out of our way to talk with others during lockdown. Prayer is communicating with God. Prayer is opening our hearts to God. Prayer is connecting with God. And, as our readings show today, the kind of words you use don't really matter. God does not judge the prayers that you make, or count against you the times you have not prayed. God loves the sound of your voice. God relishes the time spent with you. And God always responds to your prayers – though not always in the way that you expect. God's response to your prayers is always borne out of a divine love for you. Prayer is talking to One who always has time for us. Prayer is time spent with One who always welcomes us. And prayer makes a difference. It changes us. It brings peace. It brings hope. It brings forgiveness. It brings challenges and changes our outlook.

PRAYER

Great and holy God
Maker and Saviour.
God who is defined by love.
We come to you in prayer.

We come knowing that you enjoy our company,
That you delight in our prayers.
When we don't know what to say,
When we can barely express our emotions,
When we cry out or when we rant,
Lord, you listen like a devoted parent
Like a dearest friend.

So, Father God,
Call us to prayer often.
Deepen our closeness to you through our times of prayer,
Open our hearts to honest expressions,
And open our eyes to recognise your loving responses.
In Jesus name, Amen

