



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday, July 3rd 2022 at 10:45,
meeting at Bethesda Chapel.**

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our worship today is led by Paul, as Alec is still on holiday in Germany, and continues our theme of Prayer and includes Communion.

Paul begins by welcoming us all, saying " Its good to be with you all - I couldn't have said that 10 minutes ago (no, that's not true!). We've had some challenges this morning, so I've come and stood up here for a rest! We've had some challenges with the technology, but hopefully its working now, so there will be words that come up on the screen for when we're singing together. There is an order of service, which Ive just found again, and we're going to share in communion together this morning, so it is a good welcome to each and every one of us as we come and hear what God has in store for us this morning, and we sing God's praises. So hear what Matthew has to say in chapter 11. Come to me all you who that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for you souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

So we come and we welcome God and his Holy Spirit into our presence as we share together in worship.so let's begin together by singing our first hymn, or song, **Take my life and let it be..**" Joy plays it for us on the piano.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Authors: Frances Ridley Havergal, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart CCLI SONG # 2873921 Public Domain. CCL No 5664

Paul continues in prayer.

"O God our Father, as we come into your presence this morning, in this place, we recognise that you have been with us throughout the night and in the preceding hours to coming together, and yet we welcome you especially, We come and we spend an hour or so together, focussing on your presence, on your word, and on your Holy Spirit. We ask that you will enable our hardened hearts to be softened by your word, that our wills will be engaged with your word, and so be directed in a better way. We pray for our fellow colleagues here, our friends and our neighbours, those who we share our life together with. May we encourage each other as we continue on our journey of faith. We thank you for each and every one, and we thank you for guidance in the past, and we pray for your continued direction and guidance for the future. And so we pray together that prayer which you used as an example and taught your disciples to pray:

Our Father.

who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen."

Paul reminds us that Last time he was stood leading the service, it was Pentecost, and he shared with us some thoughts as we came towards communion. He asked if anyone could remember those thoughts, and with some prompting, we were able to recall the "Look" comments he suggested we use to prepare ourselves for communion ; 'Looking back', towards what Christ has done for his people and for us personally on the cross, and what he has done for us day by day, so we look back and give thanks to God for his good gifts. Next came 'look in,' examine ourselves before taking the bread and wine, so we do not take it unworthily, knowing that none of us are perfect but we are responsible for our actions and say sorry for our actions. "Look up" - to acknowledge where our Lord and Saviour is, seated at the right hand of God the Father. "Look around" - we are here as God's family, we are chosen, and our custodians and responsible for the lives of our family. When Jesus said this is my body, for you - it was in the plural, not just you on your own, so let's remember today that God calls us to be his body. Finally we "look forward", to not only to what God is going to do in our lives and in the life of our church, but at what he is going to do in the coming days and years, in the times we do not know, but one day we will come to a point where Christ returns, to bring us all, and our world, to a point where we can all be redeemed. So let us look forward.

Paul prays:

"Father God, we thank you for those little indicators that we used a month ago, and we use today. We thank you for who you are. We thank you that we can have, at our disposal, your word, scripture, that enables us to look back and see the wonderful things that you have done, and your plan for us throughout the years to bring us to a point where we can remember and celebrate your death on a cross, in our place, and what that means, not only in our day to day lives but our future. Enable us Father God to not only know these things in our minds but know them in our hearts and in our lives we seek to follow you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

At this point Paul moved from the pulpit to the Communion Table.

As we come and share in the bread and wine, listen to these words from Scripture. Jesus said to them and says to us: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. So come, listen, I am standing at the door, knocking, if you hear my voice, open the door and I will come to you and eat with you and you will be with me.

So come to this table today, not because you must but because you may, not because you are strong but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come but because you need mercy and grace. Come because you love the Lord a little and long to love him more. Come because he loves you and gave himself for you. Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his body.

The apostle Paul, who was not at the upper room, for the last supper, tells us of the institution of that meal. He says: for I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night on which he was betrayed, took some bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, this is my body, for you, do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way he took the cup, after supper, saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We're going to receive the bread, as we receive it, please eat, and then afterwards we receive the cup, which we retain so that we may drink together as a sign of our unity.

Colin and Joy distribute firstly the bread, which we eat, and then the cup. Paul invites us, as we receive the cup to drink, saying

'Take this cup, in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.'
We drink together.

After the cups and plates have been collected, Joy returns to the piano

Paul continues in prayer: '

'Loving God we praise and thank you for your love shown in Jesus Christ. We thank you for his life and ministry, announcing good news of your kingdom and demonstrating its power. In lifting the downtrodden, healing the sick, loving the loveless, we thank you for his sacrificial death upon the cross for the redemption of the world, and for your raising him to life again as a foretaste of the glory we will

share. As we give you thanks for this bread and wine that we taken, symbols of our world, the sign of your transforming love, send out your Holy Spirit we pray that we may be renewed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, more and more as days go by, and formed into his body, the church. This we pray, through his name and for his sake. Amen.'

Paul returns to the pulpit, and Jean leads our Prayers of Intercession.

"Heavenly Father we thank you for all you do for us and for helping us through the week with all its ups and downs, and thank you that we are able to meet together as a family to worship you and give you our praise.

We thank you that you sent your son to live among us and that He died on the cross to take away our sin and we are sorry for the sins we have committed in the last week. We all start each day with every intention to try and live a Christ like life but I'm fairly certain that a lot of us fall at the first hurdle, but Lord we also know that you will still love us even when we fail you and knowing you love us makes us want to keep trying our best for you. We are so limited when we try to do things on our own but know that when we rely on your strength all things are possible.

We thank you Lord for the beauty of your world. Watching the seasons change, seeing how the trees shed their leaves and then the re growth as the weather gets warmer and the new life starts to emerge. The colourful flowers and the insects even those that aren't too welcome, they are all your creation and we are blessed to witness it.

There are many conflicts around the world Lord. Please be with the people of these countries, let them feel your love and help take away their despair at the loss of their family, friends, homes and communities. In the case of the Ukraine it seems to be an unprovoked attack and the people are watching their country being decimated for no apparent reason. We thank you for all the aid agencies and workers who give of their time tirelessly to facilitate the movement of people. Please Lord soften the heart of the Russian leader and give him a conscience so this destruction can stop.

Please be with the leaders of our country. Help them to carry out their jobs with honesty and integrity and to serve the people that elected them and not to be self serving.

Father we bring the town of Blackburn to you, with our diverse population, different nationalities and religions. Help us to all live side by side in tolerance and respect for each other and guide the leaders of our town to deal with our different communities with fairness and equity.

Lord we bring our church family to you. Please be with those members who need extra help at this time you know their problems more than we do let them feel your presence and your love and we thank you for those members who have felt that healing power. Heavenly father please guide our deacons and Alec our Pastor as they work hard on our behalf on the various areas within the church that need attention.

Lord as a church family we seek your guidance as we make a decision re the future of the leadership of the church. It is inevitable as in any family, that there will be differences of opinions, whatever the reasons. Please help us to respect each other's opinions and that despite differences we still love each other. Let us be a united church family Lord so we can show our neighbours' that we are a community that love you Lord and that anyone who comes to our church will be welcome when they come to seek you. Be with us Lord as we try to discern your mind at the meeting after this service and give guidance and wisdom to the deacon who will lead the meeting.

Heavenly Father you have promised that when 2 or 3 are gathered together you will be present and when we meet and pray together that You will hear us. We thank you for the privilege of being able to talk to you at any time and we know we ask so much of you but we do so secure in the knowledge that with You all things are possible.

Through Jesus Christ out Lord

Amen “

Paul invites us to stand and sing our next hymn, The King of love my shepherd is, which Joy once again plays for us on the piano.

The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid, and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still, thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight; thy unction, grace bestoweth:
and O what transport of delight from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house for ever.

Author: Henry Williams Baker CCLI SONG # 1442453 Melody - St. Columba (ancient Irish melody) Public Domain, CCL No 5664

Paul shared this message:

Today is the third in our series on prayer.

1. Three weeks ago Alec led our thoughts as we considered how Nehemiah responded in prayer and action when he heard about the decrepit state of Jerusalem. And how God answered those prayers in a remarkable way.

2. Last week Tim shared King David's very public prayer towards the end of his life, about the preparation of building a temple for God.

Both of these accounts were hugely significant in the life of God's people, both laid down significant legacies in establishing places where people could be drawn to an encounter with God. A thin place, a holy space. A place where all may come and see great works but more importantly come to meet and know our Great God.

When we look at scriptures like these we can be greatly encouraged by how God responds to prayer.

However when something seems so improbable for us, when there seems no chance of succeeding with something, we can easily be persuaded - 'You haven't got a prayer'. It's like being told 'it's never going to happen' - 'you haven't got a prayer'.

Just like the boy or girl who has done no work all term who 'hasn't got a prayer' of passing their exams with an 'A'.

Or may be a junior tennis player who has never played professionally 'hasn't got a prayer' of winning Wimbledon this year.

That little idiom is a reality for some people, because sadly they 'haven't got a prayer,' because they don't pray.

Tim quoted Billy Graham last week. On an another occasion when Billy Graham was asked he said the three most important things in having a successful evangelistic campaign were - Prayer, Prayer and Prayer.

Some people have a simple and profound faith who no matter what the situation or the company they keep they just pray about everything all the time. I had a friend at college who was like that...

I heard about a Christian lady like that who lives next door to an atheist, she prayed aloud about everything throughout the day and when the windows were open in the summertime the neighbour could often hear her praying throughout the day, he would often think to himself that lady is just nuts, there is no God so praying doesn't really work or matter.

One day she was in desperate need of some groceries, her funds were low, so as always she prayed aloud saying 'you know my need Lord - I trust you are going to provide'. On hearing her the neighbour thought to himself 'ah ha' I'll sort her out.....so he bought the groceries, put them on the door step, knocked on the door and hid.

Seeing the groceries she came out praising the Lord, to which the neighbour said, you silly woman, God didn't buy you these groceries, I did, to which she was even more excited as she skipped down the street praising the Lord even more to everyone she met. When this atheist man caught up with her, he said didn't you hear straight? Yes she said - I knew the Lord would provide, I just didn't know he would get the devil to pay for them!

So would you like to turn with me to 1 Samuel 12: 19 - 25, (which Barbara reads)

The people all said to Samuel, 'Pray to the Lord your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.'

‘Do not be afraid,’ Samuel replied. ‘You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish.’

I would like to give you 4 facts about prayer from this passage, to guide us to see how much we need these words

1. Prayer is needful, prayer is needful

You will notice in v19 all the people of Israel said to Samuel ‘Pray’
Now Samuel was known as a man of prayer, ever since he was a little and he was dropped off at the tabernacle, - it’s recorded in chapter 3 of this book, he prays ‘ speak Lord your servant hears’.

Centuries later the prophet Jeremiah recorded that Samuel was known to God as a great prayer warrior of God,
God says in Jeremiah chapter 15 even if Moses and Samuel stood before me my mind would not turn towards the people.
And so it is that God picks out two examples of great men of prayer - Moses & Samuel

In Psalm 99 Samuel is counted among those who constantly call upon God’s name.

We know this about Samuel because he demonstrates his relationship with God in the verses preceding our reading today (v16-19a) read.

Here’s the setting - Samuel is giving a speech at the coronation of Israel’s first king, which was King who? King Saul. Samuel is not happy because the people of Israel had asked for a king that they may be like all the other nations. They were, in effect, rejecting Gods theocracy, to fit in with everyone else who had kings. Samuel had previously warned them of the consequences and then here demonstrated Gods displeasure to the people (by cooperating with Samuel and sending thunder and rain)

Realising they are in trouble the people plead for Samuel to pray for them. This is often how we are - wanting things our way and then when we get into trouble only then turning to prayer.

Most people pray as a last resort.

When you make prayer your first response it will never have to be your last resort.

Now some people will say that God rules the universe, God can do whatever he wants to do, so what difference will our prayers make if God is sovereign and can do whatever he wants to do?

why pray?

In his sovereignty God has voluntarily linked himself to human co-operation.

In his sovereignty God has voluntarily linked himself to human co-operation.

That is God is bound to the prayers of his children in order to merge his work with our prayers.

Often he will do that, even though he can do whatever he wants regardless at any time. There are many scriptures that tell us about that co-operation - in Revelation 5 - Jesus took the scroll to read out/carry out what has been prepared from the very beginning, he is brought the golden bowls filled with the prayer of all the saint's, here is the Lamb doing what he always said he would do but with the prayers of the saints. 2nd Ezekiel 6 - where God is declaring what he will do, but then he says 'I am ready to hear Israel's prayers for these blessings and I am ready to grant them their requests'. God is waiting and ready to hear us.

Augustine put it this way -"without God we cannot but without us God will not". James put it like this "you have not because you ask not"

So prayer is needful.

2. Intercession is powerful (v19)

Notice verse 19 says they did not come to Samuel and say pray, but 'pray for your servants'. pray for us that we may not die.

In Colossians 4 12 Paul wrote about his friend Epaphras always struggling on your behalf in his prayers. (Labouring fervently on your behalf) and although intercessory prayer can be hard it is always helpful. Because as James wrote ' the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man - what? - avails much, in other words it works!

There is also a role of an intercessor spoken about in the OT as someone who stands in the gap. It comes from Ezekiel 22 where God said 'I sought for a man who would make a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of this land that I should not destroy it. God said, I really want to do something, I don't want to destroy these people. I'm just looking for someone who will be an intercessor who will stand before me in prayer on behalf of these people, somebody who forms a link between God and people in order that God can work.

Prayer is needful, intercession is powerful

3. Obedience is essential (v20-22)

Samuel said to the people, do not be afraid: you have done this evil yet do not turn aside from following the Lord but serve the lord with all your heart and do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver for they are empty, for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great names sake, because it has please the Lord to make you a people for himself.

What Samuel is telling this crowd (and us)is that God is not going to forsake you, now you just make sure you don't forsake God any longer. Samuel says Don't expect me to pray for you while you live anyway you want. Prayer is not a 999 call, you still need to trust and walk with the Lord, its much like the song (when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way, while we do his good will, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey.....)

There is a great principle here - never use someone else's prayers as a crutch for your disobedience. We all need to be obedient to Gods word.

4. Prayerlessness is sinful. (V23 & 24)

Why does he say this is sin? Prayerlessness. Why does he say it is against the Lord?

It's a sin against the lord because prayerlessness insults the Lord. Not praying insults God Why is that? Well he is the creator of everything, yet he invites you into his presence.

He say come talk with me, come involve me in your life and i will work with you. Jeremiah 33:2&3

Call to me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and hidden things. That's an invitation from God.

We may give the most common answer about why we neglect prayer- well I just don't have time for prayer with others and I struggle on my own. It's hard to make the time to pray.

Ok let me ask you, what you do have time for, may be golf or gardening, may be Netflix Box sets or baking or shopping, do you have time for swatting up and practicing that musical instrument so that you can become proficient with it?

Let me ask you:

The average person lives for? 77yrs = 28,000 days or 670,000 hrs or 40 million minutes.

The average person spends 24mins a day getting dressed (some more!) = 13hrs month or 7 days a year.

The average person spends 40mins a day on the phone (some more!) = 20hrs a month, 10 days a year.

The average person spends 1hr a day in the bathroom = 30hrs a month, = 15days a year.

The average person spends 3hrs a day watching television = 90hrs month = 45 days a year

Look at this, the average Christian spends less than 10mins a day in prayer. = 6hrs month = 3 days a year.

According to Barner Christian research group the average Christian only prays an average of 1minute a day.

Prayerlessness insults God.

There is a second reason he calls it a sin. Prayerlessness impoverishes us, by not praying I lose out on an opportunity to partner God on a work he wants to do. Jesus said ask and you will? (receive), seek and you will ? (find), knock and the door ? (shall be opened unto you). That's what Jesus told us to do! So doesn't it make sense that if you never ask, you will? (never receive).

So prayerlessness- insults God, it impoverishes us and

So finally prayerlessness injures others (read v 23, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you)

What do you mean it robs or injures others? It robs people of the blessing God wants to give them.

Some may say we want to see action from Christians, practical help for those in need, rather than hearing about praying for others. But what we should realise is Prayer is Action, it's the first Action we should take because through it we are engaging God in the process. You can always do more than pray after you have prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.

A Christian Chaplin to the government once said 'O Lord forgive us for thinking prayer is a waste of time, and help us to see without prayer our work is a waste of time.

If there is a God and if that God invites us to come into his presence to talk and fellowship with him, and promises to involve himself in our daily activity and promises to act on our behalf; and if he has made that way possible by sending his son to bleed and die on a cross so that we could have fellowship with him, and pray to him that he would act, then what are we thinking **Not** doing that? What on earth could we be possibly be thinking not doing that?

Could that be the reason we lack real power?

Our God the creator and sustainer of all things has real power to do anything. If we lack anything (and most of us lack a lot) may I suggest it could be we just need a permanent connection to the real power source. Without that connection 'we don't have a prayer'.

Lets pray: Lord God our Father, there is not one of us here today who would not be ashamed of our prayerlessness if it were made known, and we are ashamed to you to say that we're your followers and we look to your word for truth and yet we live our live-in the way that we do. we ask that through these words here that we have read this morning in scripture, we would realise what a privilege it is to be able to come to you in prayer, to be able to talk with you each day along the way, and at times with our fellow christians, friends and colleagues. O Lord God our Father, bring us to our senses, so that we may love you more nearly, more dearly as we seek to follow you, and may it be seen in our actions, that first action that's required, go prayer with you. Amen.

Paul invites us to stand for our final Offertory hymn, What a friend we have in Jesus.

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge— take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Author: Charles Crozat Converse, Joseph Medlicott Scriven CCLI SONG # 27714J Public domain, CCL No 5664

Paul leads us in a final prayer of thanksgiving, and shares the notices for the week, before we all join together saying the Grace.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

