

**ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING**

**WORSHIP AND BAPTISM SERVICE**

**10.30 AM 9<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025**

**BRIDGET GURNEY LEADING AND SIMON BIRD PREACHING**

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).

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**THEME:** Prayers of Jesus 1 – at Jesus' baptism

**A CALL TO WORSHIP:** PSALM 34

I will bless the Lord at all times

**His praise shall continually be in my mouth**

My soul makes its boast in the Lord

**Let the humble hear and be glad**

O Magnify the Lord with me

**And let us extol his name together**

**HYMN MP 1040**

Come, now is the time to worship.

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are, to worship.

Come, just as you are, before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God.

One day every knee will bow.

Still the greatest treasure remains for those

Who gladly choose You now.

Brian Doerksen © 1998 Vineyard Songs

**PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name**

What a privilege to call your Father. This means that we are all brothers and sisters to each other. Thank you for giving us this wonderful family, for giving us each other. Your name is so precious. You are holy. There is no one like you. We praise and glorify your name.

**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

Father, your kingdom is here. May your kingdom grow and be with us. May we be instruments of yours, serving you the way you would want us to.

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

Father, you are the creator of this universe. We pray that you will provide for our every need – food, clothing and shelter. Sustain us and build us up each and every day.

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those that sin against us.**

Father, forgive us for our selfish desires, our greed and our pride. Teach us Lord, to forgive those who seek to hurt us. For Father, how can you forgive us, if we ourselves do not forgive others.

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

Father, guide us away from temptations which lead us into wrong doing. Keep us alert to what is around us, so that we do not sin.

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever.**

Father, you are the same as you were in the past, and will be the same in the future. May the power and the glory of your heavenly kingdom shine throughout our lives.

**Amen**

**FAMILY TIME:**

**BAPTISM:** Ali Romanzadeh and Foroozan Asghari.

*(There will be an offering taken during the following song, and after the song the children will leave us for their own groups)*

**SONG:**

Our God is so big,  
So strong, and so mighty—  
There's nothing our God cannot do.  
That's right!

(repeat)

The mountains are His;  
The valleys are His;  
The stars are His handiwork, too.

Our God is so big,  
So strong, and so mighty—  
There's nothing our God cannot do.  
That's right!

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**BIBLE READING 1:** Luke 3:2-3,15-18, 21-23a

**BIBLE READING 2:** Acts 19:1-7

**HYMN MP 545**

Open our eyes Lord,  
We want to see Jesus,  
To reach out and touch Him  
And say that we love Him.  
Open our ears, Lord,

And help us to listen.  
Open our eyes, Lord,  
We want to see Jesus.

ROBERT CULL © 1976 CCCM MUSIC/MARANATHA MUSIC.

## **SERMON: Prayers of Jesus 1 Luke 3:21-22**

I should not need to justify a sermon on prayer. We know it is key to the Christian life. But a call to prayer often makes us feel guilty, stressed and burdened. We know we should pray more, but, but... So let's take a deep breath. Let us hear what Jesus says:

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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 your souls.' (Matt 11:28-29). He knows how we feel. He will come alongside and help us.

We are starting a new series on prayer and we are going to look at the prayers Jesus prayed, and learn from him. We shall see how central prayer was for Jesus, and today, at his baptism, we see his first act of ministry was to pray. So, I want to encourage us today, to **let prayer be the first thing we do, not the last.**

This the time of Lent, leading up to Easter, and it is usual to choose a more devotional theme. Also, we remember one of Julia's parting words was to emphasise prayer. The Baptist Union have a week of prayer (23-30 March) on the theme, "Everyone, everywhere, having the opportunity to encounter the gospel." And of course in our world situation prayer is needed more than ever.

First, I want to dispel a few misconceptions that put us off praying. Prayer is not about right technique, for the 'spiritual ones,' or having to know the right words. I would rather not call it 'prayer.' That makes it sound like some special activity, and not part of normal life. Prayer is just conversation, communion and intimacy with God. We are all made in the image of God, so we all have the ability to communicate with God.

We are looking at the prayers of Jesus recorded in Luke's Gospel. Luke's Gospel has been called, 'The Gospel of Prayer.' (Geldenhuis) as it has prayer as one of his special emphases. Luke, as a doctor, noted details. He noted that Jesus taught the Lord's prayer after the disciples asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples,' (Lk 11:1). The disciples must have seen something special in the way Jesus prayed, so they asked this. I hope as we look at Jesus prayers, we will ask Jesus to teach us to pray afresh.

We start with Jesus' first recorded prayer, when he was baptised, right at the start of his ministry. We will focus on the words, "When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" (Luke 3:21-22). There is a sequence of events here, structured around the central words, 'As he was praying.'

**All the people were being baptised.** The Good News story opens with God's word coming to John the Baptist to prepare the way. John called the people to repentance, then baptised them. This was a sign God forgave their sins (3:2-3). He told the people to wait for one after him, who would bring salvation (6) and would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and fire (17).

**Jesus was baptised too.** We know that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and without sin. So why did he need to be baptised? Matthew's Gospel tells us that John said to Jesus, 'I need to be baptised by you.' But Jesus said, 'This is to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt 3:14-15). Jesus' ultimate ministry is to save, redeem and reconcile us to God by bearing our sin on the cross. We see the shadow of the cross falls even here at his baptism as Jesus' identifies with our sin, until his willing surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane – where he said, 'not my will, but yours be done,' (Luke 22:43).

**As he was praying.** Jesus has made himself ready for his mission by entering into the sin of the world. This is the moment the other Gospel writers describe him as coming out of the waters (Matt 3:16). What is the first thing he does? He is praying. I want us to hold on to this moment. To pause. Jesus has made himself ready, now he waits. This is the Son of God, and he needs to pray, and it is the first things he does. How much more do we need to do that?

We do not know what he was praying. He was entering into communion with God and, in the light of what follows, I guess he was seeking God for all he needed for his ministry. As he encourages us to do, was he asking his Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit? (Luke 11:13).

We move on to see how God answered Jesus' prayer. These following are signs and confirmations especially to confirm that Jesus was the Son of God; but we can have an expectation for God to answer our prayers, in some way, along these lines.

**Heaven was opened.** This was an awesome moment for Jesus and the disciples who saw it. I sense it says to us that our prayers reach, touch and even open heaven to us (see Heb 6:5, Rev 5:8). He wants us to cry out to him 'Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' (Matt 6:10).

Now here is a huge motivation to pray. We need to remind ourselves that prayer is not just listening, and contemplation; but God wants us to ask, even cry out (Luke 11:9). Why? He wants to develop his children's faith. As one writer put it, 'God has voluntarily made Himself dependent on our prayers.' (Hallesby). Our prayers change things. He has chosen to share with us the work of bringing in his Kingdom. He is training us to have faith and be overcomers.

**The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.** Jesus limited himself to human form and, even though he was without sin, he depended on the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out his ministry, and here he received the assurance of this power and presence. For us, Jesus is the model of a Spirit filled life. As we are empowered by the Spirit, together we continue his mission in the world.

As mentioned before, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, but in Jesus we see a sequence in him that we see in Acts is repeated in his followers: repentance, faith, being baptised and receiving the Holy Spirit.

**A voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'** The final answer to Jesus' prayer was assurance of who his is – the Son of God. For us, this is one thing the Holy Spirit will do for us: he will tell us we too are his beloved children (Rom 8:16). Now there is a lesson for us here. The answer to Jesus' prayer - an open heaven, the Holy Spirit and assurance of who he was - was at the start of his ministry, before he had done anything. We can think we need to do the right things to receive answers to prayer; or we need to earn our relationship with God. Jesus here and in his ongoing prayer life showed his ministry started

with a place of acceptance and identity, it was sustained in prayer and from that he did his work and achieved things for God. We sometimes try to gain out acceptance and significance through achievement.

So may we return to the moment, 'as Jesus was praying.' If you face a crisis or need this week, will you stop, be there in the present moment and wait to see how God answers? **let prayer be the first thing we do, not the last.**

**HYMN BP&W 603/MP746:**

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?  
Jesus only is 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.

JOSEPH SCRIVENS (1819-86)

**SONG BP&W 600/MP908**

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer,  
when I call, answer me.  
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer,  
come and listen to me.

PSALM 130 © 1982 ATELIERS ET PRESSE DE TAIZÉ

**INTERCESSION: –**

Father, we bring this world of ours which you have created. There is so much beauty around if we would only look. But there is so much ugliness around because of wars, greed, and natural disasters. For three years there has been conflict between Russia

and Ukraine, and unrest and tension in many other countries. There has been greed from leaders wanting more power than others. There have been floods and droughts, avalanches and crashes. Father, we bring them all to you. We pray that your will be done in all the situations we have named.

**SONG** O Lord, hear my prayer.....

We pray for the British Isles where we live. We bring our Government to you. They have a difficult job to please everybody, and to do the best for the country. We pray for those who know you in Parliament, that they will be a strong witness to all around them. We ask that we, as residents, will seek to protect and care for the land, and to respect other people's opinions.

**SONG** O Lord, hear my prayer.....

Father, we bring to you our town of Reading. For our council, and all who work for them. Like the Government they have a difficult job. For those who work in the Police Force and Ambulance Service, that they will be kept safe. For all who work within the NHS, striving to keep us healthy. For the bus and taxi drivers, that they will drive safely and considerately.

**SONG** O Lord, hear my prayer.....

Lastly Lord, we bring ourselves, especially those who are in need of your help and comfort. We bring you Gwen and the family, David and Myra. Comfort them in the loss of Peter. We thank you for Peter, and the many memories we have of him. May Gwen, David and Myra remember the good times. May the memories of the last few months of Peter's illness fade away. Grant that they will be comforted by the thought that Peter is now resting with you. For others in our Church family whose health is giving some concern, give them strength to cope with discomfort and pain. Lord, hear our prayers, for we pray in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

**Hymn BPW593/MP201:**

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and ever more,  
Feed me now and ever more.

Open Thou the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through:  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield,

Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee, I will ever give to Thee.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS (1717-91).

**THE BLESSING:**

May the Father ever hear our prayers. May he keep us covered with his love, both now and ever more. **Amen.**

**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.**

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**Church Information:**

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March – Church Meeting and Fair Trade stall**

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March – Zoom Prayer Meeting 8pm**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> – Renew 10.30      Bible Study 12.15      iCaf 2.00**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> – Toddlers 10.30      Bible Study 10.30**

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> – Ping Pong 5.00      Iranians Meal and Bible Study 7.00**

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