

Abbey Baptist Church, Reading

Worship Service with Communion : 10:30 A.M. 6th April 2025

Lead by Jill Bird

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Prayer Series 5 Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane

Today is the last in our series on learning to pray as Jesus prayed. I wonder has it changed how you pray? With more persistence, with more faith, praying about different things and in different ways. I hope so!

We are looking at how Jesus prayed on the last night of his human life – the night before his death by crucifixion. He knew what was ahead and so what an important prayer.

So let's start with thanksgiving and worship – he faced the pain, the shame, the separation from his Father, to carry the weight of the sin, evil and suffering of the whole world for all time but also for each one of us. Not my will but yours be done said Jesus. We pause and remember the weight of what he did for us.

Because he went to the cross for us we have his glorious riches
CHRIST IN US THE HOPE OF GLORY BOTH NOW AND FOR EVERMORE

And so we come before you LORD JESUS with thanks and praise, offering you the worship of our hearts and lives. Open our eyes to see and know you here among us; open our ears to recognize your voice and deepen our love for you this morning Amen

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss –
The Father turns His face away,
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer;
But this I know with all my heart –
His wounds have paid my ransom.

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Come and see, come and see
Come and see the King of love
See the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer As he lifts the cruel cross
Lone and friendless now he climbs towards the hill
*We worship at your feet Where wrath and mercy meet
And a guilty world is washed By love's pure stream
For us he was made sin Oh, help me take it in
Deep wounds of love cry out 'Father, forgive'
I worship, I worship The Lamb who was slain.*
Come and weep, come and mourn
For your sin that pierced him there
So much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail
All our pride, all our greed All our fallenness and shame
And the Lord has laid the punishment on him
Man of heaven, born to earth
To restore us to your heaven
Here we bow in awe beneath Your searching eyes
From your tears comes our joy From your death our life shall spring
By your resurrection power we shall rise

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So LORD JESUS as we remember and respond to your sacrifice once again, thank you
that there is full forgiveness for all our selfishness and sin. We come and ask that you
wash us clean and give us a new start this morning full of your love and grace. In
Jesus name we pray AMEN

The Lord's Prayer: *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,

**as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever and ever. Amen.**

FAMILY TIME

The offering will be taken during the following song, and then the children will leave for their own groups.

God you're so good, God you're so good, God you're so good, you're so good to me

You died for me, you died for me, you died me, you're so good to me

You hear my prayer, you hear my prayer, you hear my prayer, you're so good to me

You rose again, you rose again, you rose again, you're so good to me

I love you so, I love you so, I love you so, you're so good to me

First Bible Reading: Matthew 4. 1-11

SERMON: Gethsemane

So it's still two weeks until Easter, but here we are in the drama of Jesus' last night on earth as a man. This must be the greatest week in history. We will celebrate Palm Sunday next week – the day Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem. Then Monday he cleared out the money lenders and thieves from the temple and then Tuesday and Wednesday he taught publicly in the temple and also privately to his close disciples. This is the evening of Thursday, the day of the Passover feast and he had celebrated with his disciples, washed their feet and instructed them on the new celebration we now call Communion. He had warned them time and time again he was going to die. He had set his face to Jerusalem and was determined to finish what his life was all about. He knew Judas would betray him. He knew the disciples would all run away. He knew Peter would deny he even knew him. But still he kept going.

So what happened next – let's hear it from the bible.

They went to a place called Gethsemane. On reaching the place Jesus said to his disciples, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation. Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch with me" Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, my Father," he said, "if it is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed ' If it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time saying the same thing. An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him and being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground

Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Get up and pray, so you will not fall into temptation. They did not know what to say to him. Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

This place of prayer Gethsemane – he often went there. Also known as the Mount of Olives. Gethsemane means an olive press – the place where the olives were pressed to squeeze out their oil.

What significance; have you known places or times when circumstances feel they have squeezed out the beautiful oil of the Spirit in you?

So what can we learn from this most intimate encounter with Jesus in prayer?

1. Prayer is hard work

Why was this so? Jesus was overwhelmed, distressed, even to the point of death. His sweat came out like great drops of blood. What was the battle? He realised he had to keep going. His first cry was ‘Abba my Daddy can’t you take this away – isn’t there another way? Can you hear him?’

Then he came back twice more and the prayer changed to ‘If you can’t take it away, may your will be done’ And it is recorded an angel came and strengthened him.

He is overwhelmed, not so much by what he had to go through physically in enduring crucifixion – many others had done that, before. But in carrying the dreadful weight of the sinfulness of mankind, bearing it before the holiness and righteousness of his Father. He was enduring the wrath of God against all evil and would feel that dreadful forsakenness of separation on the cross. This no other man has ever endured in his death and he did it for us all.

Jesus pressed in until he felt a place of victory from surrender. He was able to see again beyond the cross.

Hebrews 12.2 says ‘For the joy set before him, he endured the cross and despised its shame.’

What are you pressing into God for in prayer? Your marriage, your home office acceptance, your child, your business? Don’t give up. Do it as Jesus did.

2. Prayer helps us withstand temptation

Twice Jesus talked about temptation with his disciples. Pray that you won’t fall into temptation. Get up and pray that you won’t fall into temptation.

What was this temptation about? I think for Jesus it was to choose an easier way. He didn’t have to go to the cross. He had free choice and it was in obedience and steadfastness that he went.

Hebrews 5.8 During the days of Jesus life here on earth, he offered up prayers with loud cries and tears, to the one who could save him from death. He was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, Jesus learned obedience by what he suffered.

Let’s think of the other time when Jesus was tempted – our first reading. Were Jesus’s temptations during the 40 days in the wilderness easy? He had to then choose not to take the easy way – doing miracles for his own comfort, saying yes to satan’s lies for an easy way. And now the greatest temptation of all – to run away from the cross.

So does Jesus understand our temptations for an easy way?

Hebrews 2.18 Because Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted

1 Corinthians 10 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

What temptation can you fall into? **Fear** like all the disciples who ran away. **Anger** like Peter who chopped off the servant’s ear. **Unbelief** like Thomas who lost his trust and faith. **Despair** like the two men on the road to Emmaus. They had not found victory in prayer.

Fix your eyes on Jesus the author and completer of our faith **Hebrews 12.1**

3. What does it mean to watch and pray?

How sad for Jesus. Three times he asked his friends to watch and pray with him and three times they went to sleep. Did they feel great regret later that they failed their best friend?

The other time he taught them to watch and pray, was when he was telling them about his coming back to earth. We are to watch and pray particularly then – the foolish virgins whose lamps ran out of oil had not been ready to watch and pray!

So what does it mean to watch – to be alert like a guard at night. When are we watching? It’s a special time to be in God’s presence seeing the events around us with his eyes, his viewpoint.

Asking him how to pray, when to be still, when to be active. To have one ear and eye in heaven and one on earth. It's there that we find strength to resist temptation, it's there that we get fresh outpouring of God's love, peace and joy to endure hard times. Are we learning to watch and pray?

So we have looked at this last great prayer of Jesus. What have we learnt?.

We need to learn to persist and press through, however hard the circumstances

We need to learn to overcome temptation, particularly not to give up and choose easy ways

We need to learn to watch and pray with Jesus.

Which is God speaking to you about? Let's choose this last one, that as God's beloved Abbey church we can grow in the challenge of watching and praying together, as we move forward.

Stay with me, remain here with me

Watch and pray Watch and pray Taize community

SONG:

You Chose The Cross With Every Breath;

The Perfect Life, The Perfect Death. You Chose The Cross.

A Crown Of Thorns You Wore For Us,

And Crowned Us With Eternal Life; You Chose The Cross.

And Though Your Soul Was Overwhelmed With Pain,

Obedient To Death, You Overcame.

I'm Lost In Wonder, I'm Lost In Love, I'm Lost In Praise Forevermore.

Because Of Jesus' Unfailing Love, I Am Forgiven, I Am Restored.

You Loosed The Cords Of Sinfulness,

And Broke The Chains Of My Disgrace; You Chose The Cross.

Up From The Grave Victorious,

You Rose Again So Glorious; You Chose The Cross.

The Sorrow That Surrounded You Was Mine.

Yet, "Not My Will, But Yours Be Done," You Cried.

Martin Lazell Thankyou music 2002

We are coming together to share a special time of fellowship with Jesus and with each other . Jesus on the night before he died shared a meal with his friends. His death and resurrection was to deliver us for all time from sin, failure, regret and the fear of death. Because of what Jesus did for us, we can each one have free access forever to the very presence of God and know we belong to his family and to each other. His new commandment was to love each other as he loved us as he died on the cross.

We come to remember, we come to celebrate, we come to proclaim what Jesus has done for us, as we share this special time together.

He first shared with them the bread. He had taught them that he was the very bread of life. 'I am the living bread' he said, 'If anyone eats of this bread he will never die, but live for ever. This bread is my flesh that I will give for the life of the world.' So as we eat this bread – a symbol of Jesus' broken body, we receive afresh the life giving presence of Jesus to fill us with his love and his strength.

Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you , do this in remembrance of me.' Let's share the bread together

He then shared the cup of wine. Jesus opened the way into God's presence through his death . His blood represents the ultimate sacrifice of his life on our behalf. He carried our sins for us on the cross, that we might go free of punishment. We rejoice in that forgiveness and cleansing from all sin as we repent and confess our sinfulness – both personal and corporate - as a body of God's people here at Abbey church.

Let us take the cup together – Jesus said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.' Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the power of the Lord's death until he comes back.

Time of prayer

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

THE BLESSING:

Lord we won't give up. Your promise is that you are able to keep us from falling and to present us before your glorious presence without fault and with great joy. To the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and for evermore 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.

This week's notices

Church lunch together on Easter Sunday April 20th

April 8th 8pm zoom prayer meeting Meeting ID 862 1518 8882 Passcode Abbey

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215188882?pwd=6ywOduiS4wePr1NaNRPKaXvuCPau98.1>