

ABBEY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

10.30 am 25th January 2026

Revd Zoltan Biro leading and *Jill Bird* preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



**Speaking with God:
Regular Prayer**

Call to Worship

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given you;
search, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened for you."

Lord, as we search now, let us find you.

As we knock, open the door to us.

Let us know you, that we may praise you;
and love you, that we may serve you.

Song

As the deer pants for the water,
So my soul longs after You.
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You.

Ref: You alone are my strength, my shield,
To You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You.

I want You more than gold or silver,
Only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye.
Ref.

You're my Friend and You are my brother,
Even though You are a King.
I love You more than any other,
So much more than anything.
Ref.

*Martin Nystorm © 1984 Universal Music, Capital CMG
Publishing*

Song

You were the Word at the beginning
One with God the Lord Most High
Your hidden glory in creation
Now revealed in You our Christ

What a beautiful name it is x2
The name of Jesus Christ my King
What a beautiful name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a beautiful name it is
The name of Jesus

You didn't want heaven without us
So Jesus, You brought heaven down
My sin was great, Your love was greater
What could separate us now

What a wonderful name it is x2
The name of Jesus Christ my King

What a wonderful name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a wonderful name it is
The name of Jesus

Death could not hold You
The veil tore before You
You silenced the boast, of sin and grave
The heavens are roaring the praise of Your glory

What a powerful name it is x2
The name of Jesus Christ my King
What a powerful name it is
Nothing can stand against
What a powerful name it is
The name of Jesus

Ben Fielding / Brooke Ligertwood © 2016, Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

Family Time

Song (The offering will be taken during the singing of this song)

Prayer is like a telephone for us to talk to Jesus
Prayer is like a telephone for us to talk to God
Prayer is like a telephone for us to talk to Jesus
Pick it up and use it every day
We can shout out loud
We can whisper softly
We can make no noise at all
But He'll always hear our call

Paul Crouch and David Mudie © 1991 Daybreak Music

Young people leave for their groups

Bible Readings: *Matthew 6:5-13; Philippians 4:6-7*

Song:

*Ref: Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul;
Worship His holy name.
Sing like never before, O my soul;
I'll worship Your holy name.*

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning,
It's time to sing Your song again.
Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me,

Let me be singing when the evening comes.

Ref:

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger.
Your name is great and Your heart is kind.
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing;
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

Ref:

And on that day, when my strength is failing,
The end draws near and my time has come;
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years, and then forevermore!

Ref:

Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin © 2011 Thankyou Music

Sermon: Jill Bird

So this word prayer – what does it immediately mean to you?? Tell your neighbour.
What have you prayed about this last week? Has God answered?

But what do you feel about prayer? Guilt -I don't do it enough. **Failure** – I've tried so often and can't keep it up. **God doesn't answer my prayers** – he can't love me. **Anger** – look at my life – why has God allowed all this to happen – I don't actually believe he hears me. Or what else???

Just maybe we need a rethink about what Jesus meant by prayer.

Why did the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray?? They were Jews, they had been brought up on prayer – set times in the day – many set prayers to recite – they of all people should have known how to pray! But they had seen something so different in Jesus – he went off alone to be with his Father, he didn't just pray with all the others in the synagogue. He went when he was exhausted after he had fed the 5000 and came back refreshed, strengthened and walked on water to meet his friends in the boat. He often went very early in the morning or even spent the whole night in prayer alone before a big decision when he chose the 12 special disciples. Then there was the wonderful experience for Peter, James and John, when Jesus said come with me as he went up the mountain to pray and they saw the transfiguration – Jesus in all his glory talking with his Father. They wanted to know what he did!!!

Learning to pray is a life time journey – we never arrive. The Pharisee in his pride said loudly look at me I'm so great at prayer – the humble man said quietly 'I come with so much still needing to change in me, teach me to pray'. Let's be the humble man today like the disciples and say LORD teach me to pray. I am going to just talk about personal prayer – our times alone with God. Simon next week will expand this to praying with others, as he includes the habit of fasting.

For me my prayer time with God is about learning to be in his presence and enjoying it! When we become Christians we are invited into a deep, loving eternal relationship like we have never known before. Some of this will be repeat from what Zoltan encouraged us to do with reading the bible as the two go together as we seek God daily.

So what does Jesus say to do as we learn this kind of praying ?

Let's look back to our bible reading – 'When you pray -----'

1.Go into your room alone. I need a 'space' that becomes a holy place where I meet with God. Over the years I can remember my holy places – usually one particular chair in our living room. When our kids were small they knew if mum was sitting there she was not to be disturbed. Right now I sit looking out over East Reading and often have the delight of a beautiful sunrise as Jesus rises in my Spirit for the new day.

2. The habit needs to be regular – we eat our food, we clean our teeth, we go to sleep all very regularly to keep us physically healthy. How much more do we need to be spiritually healthy by developing the daily habit of time alone with God. Jesus wanted to be with his Father and receive again his love ‘ This is my dearly beloved son’; to talk over the day with him – I only do what I see my Father doing.’ Do you remember the 4 weeks of Advent – hope, peace, joy and love. I think Jesus needed his soul filled up again with these so that his cup could overflow. In his earthly life he was as human as us – we are talking about encounter and being filled again with all God has for us to be an overflowing person into our world.

Does this sound a long way from your experience?? How can you start?

Choose a time – when are you at your best? Morning, evening, lunch - a time when you can be alone? Don’t be hard on yourself – even the disciples slept when they should have prayed. Don’t start too long as you may get discouraged and then you can extend as you begin to really enjoy these times with God. For me reading the bible, worship and prayer are all part of the same experience – I move back and forwards and in and out of all three in my time with God.

3. What do I do? Let’s look at Jesus’s prayer. How does it start? **Our Father** – extend it by saying out loud if you can. You really are my Father – a good, good Father – you love me so much and I am so special to you – you know all about me and still love me. I often imagine my heavenly Father sitting with me in the room and asking him what he would say to me – start with **nearness**.

Then move to God’s **greatness**. We have this phrase that I am sure most of us don’t know what it means!

Hallowed be your name – to honour, worship, set apart as completely holy and beyond our understanding. Imagine being taken up into heaven and getting a glimpse of God’s greatness, power, eternal nature. Ephesians says ‘we are seated with him in heavenly places.’ Psalms are so helpful here One thing I ask of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Psalm 27, or often I will have a worship song come into my head and I will turn it up on my phone and have a sing.

Your kingdom come – your will be done on earth as in heaven. I often wonder on the order! This sounds like big prayers, and I don’t feel ready for that yet. It is definitely the opposite of Lord please do **my will** on earth. More later in our series.

Give us today our daily bread – but actually right now I am not in Sudan [and perhaps I should just say a prayer for the folk there] but actually I have plenty of food already in the house for today . What is my real need for today?? More love, more patience ? Jesus says ‘**I am the bread of life**’ – I can feed you spiritually with all that you need for a life that is full and fruitful. So is this the time to bring your day before the LORD – I am sure this is what Jesus did – ask for help, direction, strength, love – whatever you need – bring your cups to be filled up.

Don’t forget to

bring the day back to God in the evening with thanksgiving for his help!

4. But you say I get so many **distracting thoughts coming into my head** – I can’t concentrate!

- If it is **something that needs doing** later in the day have a note book by your side and write it down and maybe say a quick prayer to God over that activity and then leave it there knowing you won’t forget
- But so often it is **troubling emotions** – fear about something you have to do, Anger at a person who hurt you yesterday and you keep going over what they said or guilt and regret over something you did badly. We are tempted to try and bury these thoughts in frustration as they stop our concentration, but I would say they are probably the most important things that God would have you chat over with him and ask for his healing and help. Be real. Tell God you are fed up with your job, angry with the Home Office, fed up with yourself – you can shout at God

5. So what other advice did Jesus give about prayer? **Think hard about forgiveness**. Such a strong word we had from Jesus in our reading – if we don’t forgive neither will our Father forgive us. Does that sound serious . Sounds like separation and distance from our Father . The one thing we are trying to change. Who are you still angry with? Who do you need to say sorry to?? It’s hard but do some business with God

regularly to keep a clean page. Ask for help if this is not working – the bible talks about a root of bitterness that can take hold in our lives through years of anger and unforgiveness.

6. Then the advice **to be mindful of the evil one and ask for help and protection** – another area worth a whole sermon! But put up your battle shields and be aware of his lies in your ears.

Before you finish go over your time with God – a notebook to write down anything specific is a good idea. What has he said to you? What bible verse was especially your verse for the day? What have you specifically asked God for? Believe he has heard – he’s a good Father and knows what’s best.

Martin Luther King Jr the famous American civil rights leader, shortly before he was assassinated, in a famous speech said ‘ I have been on the mountain top with God – I have seen the promised land’ Moses went up a mountain with God and saw the promised land, Peter, James and John went up the mountain with Jesus and saw his glory. What about us at Abbey? We too can be ‘seated with him in heavenly places’ and talk with God on the mountain top – that is prayer.

At the end of Jesus’ teaching on how to pray, we return to worship – what a good place to end our time with God. For yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever AMEN

Song

Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
to rid my soul of one dark blot,
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Charlotte Elliott (1789 – 1871) © Public domain

Prayers of Intercession:

Dear loving Father,

We thank You for bringing us together today in Abbey Baptist Church to worship You. We are grateful for the freedom to gather in Your presence and for Your constant grace and love.

Father, we remember that many around the world cannot worship freely. We lift before You our broken world, especially those suffering because of war. We pray for the people of **Gaza**—may they never be forgotten. Be their shelter, their comfort, and their hope.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the people of **Ukraine**. As the war continues, many live with grief, loss, and exhaustion. Father, bring an end to the violence. Restore peace, heal the wounded, and rebuild what has been destroyed.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the people of **Iran**, who long for a life free from fear and injustice. Lord, have mercy. Hear their cries and let righteousness and compassion prevail.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Father, we lift to You **Hongkongers** living in the United Kingdom. Help us to build a secure home here, and guide the U.K. government to act with fairness and integrity, honouring its commitments.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for **the sick and the weak** among us. Today we especially pray for **Gwen** our sister on her birthday. Thank You for her faithful service and leadership. Please ease her pain and surround her with Your peace and love.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we commit to You the missions we support—**ReInspired, CCA, CIRDIC, The Mustard Tree, the Bowers Family, Ray Lam** and his family serving at **Crossroads** in Hong Kong. Bless and sustain them in their work.
Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Dear Lord, thank You for guiding and protecting us each day. You are our Light, our Way, and our Life. We trust all these prayers to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Song:

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art.
Thou my best thought by day and by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father, I thy dear child;
Thou in me dwelling, with thee reconciled.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight.
Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tow'r;
Raise thou me Heav'nward,
O Pow'r of my pow'r.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always.
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'ns
Sun!

Heart of my heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Dallan Forgaill, 8th century (Translated Mary Byrne and Eleanor Hull) © Public domain

Prayer of Commitment

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit
you have made us one with your saints
in heaven and on earth:

**Help us to see your presence
burning in the hearts of others;
grant that we may be united
in a fellowship of love and prayer;**

Give us the courage to pick up our cross
and respond to the needs of the world,
give us the stamina to follow you,
to be your hands and heart in the world;

Enable us to witness to your grace and mercy.

We pray all this through the love your son, Jesus Christ. 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 afternoon at 4.00 p.m. **Prayer for Christian Unity Service**
St. Luke's Church. Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LH.

Events next week:

Wednesday 28 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing	Thursday 29 th	10.30 Bible Study
	12.15	Bible Study		10.30 Toddlers
	2.00	iCaf 4	Friday 30 th	5.00 Table Tennis Club

Sunday 1st Feb

10.30

Worship with Communion

Practising restraints:

Fasting

(Isaiah 58: 3-10; Matthew 6:16-18)