

## **THE DRIVE METHODIST CHURCH, SEVENOAKS**

### **Order of Service, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

#### **Led by Michael Richardson**

Welcome and a welcome to those on Zoom. Today is also Christian Aid Sunday and since we cannot take an envelope collection, you are asked to send donations to John Archer – with a reference to Christian Aid. Dermot will take another Service soon, to celebrate the work that they do.

#### **Opening prayer. Call to Worship and a time of quietness.**

If you have never been to church on a Saturday morning, for Saturday Prayers and you decided to come and see what goes on, I wonder what you would expect.....? What you would experience is complete silence for a whole hour, except for some soft music and with an opportunity of speaking and praying with one of us on duty. You would be free to come and go as you please. On Zoom, we have experienced a slightly different format, with some of just half an hour spent in saying our prayers – prayers for you, for those who need our prayers, for each other. But, what's the point and what difference does it make and why do we do it?

We have been communicating with our Lord, the One in whom we have put our trust and the One who encouraged His disciples to pray. Our whole Christian life is surrounded by a statement of faith and therefore we believe that God is hearing our prayers and answering as he thinks is best for us – sometimes difficult to accept. This is a church 'powerhouse' because of the relevance and power of prayer.

If I asked you to name one or more books of the Bible that you would turn to for guidance or inspiration on the subject of Prayer, I wonder which book or books you would choose?

Today's Service takes the theme from 'Roots', the Preachers and Leaders of Worship publication issued bi-monthly; today's theme is 'the potential of prayer'. We start with a hymn based on Psalm 121. Meditate quietly on the words as we start worship together.

## **Hymn – StF 628 Faithful One.....**

Faithful One, so unchanging, ageless One, You're my rock of peace.  
Lord of all, I depend on You, I call out to You again and again.  
I call out to You again and again.  
You are my rock in times of trouble. You lift me up when I fall down.  
All through the storm Your love is the anchor, my hope is in You alone.

*Brian Doerksen (born 1965) © Mercy/Vineyard Publishing CCL 7093*

## **Prayers of Worship, Adoration and Praise.**

God of yesterday, tomorrow and today  
We are children of the world you love and care for.  
We praise you, heavenly Father, for calling us into a relationship with you.  
We praise you, Lord Jesus, for the power of your name and the protection of  
your prayers.  
We praise you, Holy Spirit, for your guidance and gifts that enable us to draw  
others to you.  
For you are faithful in times of uncertainty, strong when we are weak,  
And the breath of all our being, the energy of all our doing  
And the peace of all our resting. **Amen.**

## **Prayers of Confession**

As we bring our prayers of worship to you, we recognise that we fall short of  
the standards expected of us. Forgive us, Lord and in a moment of quietness we  
ask you to put right what is not right in our lives. Hear our prayers of confession  
and in forgiving us, make us better people to live lives that match up to our  
calling. **Amen**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

## **Hymn – From Methodist Central Hall, Westminster – StF 440**

Amazing Grace...

- 1     Amazing grace-how sweet the sound- that saved a wretch like me!  
      I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.
- 2     God's grace has taught my heart to fear, his grace my fears relieved;  
      how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
- 3     Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;  
      God's grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
- 4     The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;  
      he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
- 5     And, when this heart and flesh shall fail and mortal life shall cease,  
      I shall possess within the veil a life of joy and peace.
- 6     When we've been there ten thousand years bright shining as the sun,  
      we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

*John Newton (1725-1807) CCL 7093*

## **Reading from the Old Testament – Psalm 139 vv 1-14 & 23-24**

- 1 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.
- 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.
- 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

**12** even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

**13** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

**14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

**23** Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

**24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

## **Some thoughts from Frank Topping**

### **Reading from the New Testament St John 17 vs 6 – 25**

#### **Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

**6** "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

**7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

**8** For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

**9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

**10** All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

**11** I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

**12** While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

**13** "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

**14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

**15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

**16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

**17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

**18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

**19** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

## Jesus Prays for All Believers

**20** “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

**21** that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

**22** I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—

**23** I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**24** “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

**25** “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.

## **Hymn – StF 25** God is Here (vs 1,3 & 4)

1 God is here! As we his people meet to offer praise and prayer,  
May we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.  
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts  
Wait the coming of his Spirit iInto open minds and hearts.

3 Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold,  
Here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old,  
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore  
What it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

4 Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,  
Keep us faithful to the gospel, help us work your purpose out.  
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive:  
We, who cannot live without you, we adore you! we believe!

*Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000) © 1979 Stainer & Bell Ltd CCL7093*

## **Sermon – The potential of prayer.**

Let's start with the Psalms, which contain wonderful words, some of which are heart rending, challenging, calming, moving and so we could go on....

Psalm 121 – I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from  
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Many of the Psalms are headed with the words – “a Psalm of David” and he certainly needed to pray to his God on many different occasions. In the RSV this Psalm is headed “anonymous – some suggest Hezekiah”. Hezekiah, a king in the southern Kingdom of Judah, cleaned up the temple and “pleased God” – and yet he still needed his time of peace & quiet in the presence of his God. The Psalm has words of comfort and reassurance.

Preachers are sometimes guilty of trying to find words beginning with the same letter to emphasise the point they are trying to make. Using the letter “p” is sometimes referred to as “shelling “p”s! In considering the **potential** of prayer, we need to consider the purpose; the place of prayer; the peace of being in God's presence; the place of prayer – in OUR lives; the puzzle of not knowing whether our prayers have been heard; the practice of saying our prayers; the peace we get in being in God's presence and thus the **POTENTIAL** of prayer.

The former Bishop of Oxford, John Pritchard has written some very helpful books on the subject of prayer – none more so than “How to pray”. I acknowledge that some of my thoughts have come from his book. Let's take a look at another Psalm, Psalm 139. Whilst Psalm 121 puts us into a relaxed frame of mind, contrast that with number 139; ‘You have searched me and you know me.....’. A God that knows our ‘highs and lows’ – our ‘failures and our successes’; a God who is with us whatever the circumstances.

So how do we pray? How do we make the first move? When? What for? Paul describes the young church at Berea by saying that ‘they studied the scriptures DAILY...’ - and how hard is that for some people and yet we really do need to be in contact with God every day if our Christian life is to grow and be sustained; I would suggest that that is the purpose of saying our prayers. At a Crusader Camp in 1947 I heard a well-known evangelist Montague Goodman, challenge me by explaining Revelation 3 verse 20 – ‘behold I stand and the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me.’ I took that step of faith – I prayed in faith - to ask Jesus into my life, but I still need to communicate on a regular basis in the certain knowledge that God heard my prayer all those years ago. At that early

stage in my Christian journey it was made clear that I needed to promise to have a time of quiet, a time set aside every day to be ‘with God’. I have failed often, but still all those years later, I need to have that time set aside to be ‘in His presence’. Each of us has a different way – and time of the day - of having a time of quiet – a ‘quiet time’ when you can read a short passage of Scripture and be quiet in God’s ‘presence’; a time for ‘re-charging’ our batteries; that is your choice. In the quietness we can experience the presence of God; a time when we can ‘feel’ what God is saying to us; enjoy the peace of God’s presence. Each of us has - I am sure - experienced a period in our lives when we have felt as if we were ‘on our own’ – or ‘in the wilderness’. We cry to God – but does he hear? Is He ‘there’? Michel Quoist has written a short ‘poem’ entitled ‘the telephone’ which reminds us that prayer is ‘two way’ – we speak – often! – but we do need to listen, to hear what God is saying to us. But then we ask – “why hasn’t He answered my prayer?” – and that – in my opinion – is the most difficult thing to understand – to accept – to realise that God knows what is best for us and He knows the future and will answer our prayers as He knows what is best for us; that is a real test of our Christian faith.

In the New Testament we read many times how Jesus needed to ‘go into a quiet place’ – to be alone, to be with His Father; even He needed that time of refreshment – of ‘battery re-charging’ – so how much more do we? In our New Testament reading – we read John’s recording of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples – the need for them to understand that He would soon be leaving them; a time for them to realise that they would be ‘in the world’ – on their own. His prayer was that God ‘would protect them from the evil one...’.

We must take comfort that we are His disciples, still needing that protection, ‘sent into the world’ in the certain knowledge that He is there to guide us, lead us and hear us, when we cry to Him. The potential of prayer is huge – but it is down to each one of us to harness its power, to pray for others, for ourselves, to pray for forgiveness and to trust that God hears our prayers and knows what is best for us.

Psalm 121 – I lift my eyes to the distant hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. May you experience His presence when you pray to Him. **Amen.**

## Hymn – from MCH – StF 548 Blessed Assurance.....

- 1 Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine: O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation purchase of God; Born of his Spirit, washed in his  
blood:  
*This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*
- 2 Perfect submission, perfect delight, Visions of rapture burst on my sight;  
Angels descending bring from above Echoes of mercy, whispers of love:  
*This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*
- 3 Perfect submission, all is at rest - I in my Saviour am happy and blest -  
Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with his goodness, lost in his  
love.  
*This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Saviour, all the day long.*

*Frances Jane van Alstyne (1820-1915) CCL 7093*

## Prayers of Intercession

Today is Christian Aid Sunday and we remember the work being done by that organisation.

A prayer sent from the daughter of our former Minister when we lived in Mumbai – Job 12 v 10 ‘In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.’

Gracious Heavenly Father, we come before you with thankful hearts.

Lord, you alone can sustain us and give us the strength for the paths on which you lead us.

Lord, as so many suffer and fight the long hard battle against the global pandemic, may we hold our faith that You alone are in control of the situation.

Lord protect us in mind, heart and spirit. Keep us courageous and assured of your deliverance. In your hands is the life of all mankind. Let Your guidance be with Government and Local Authorities as they continue to roll out plans for the welfare and safety of your people. Be with those in the ‘care’ sector, the medical and nursing profession, Care Home workers and the many people on whom we depend to carry on in these unusual circumstances. Lord you are our Saviour; you alone can protect us. Hear our cry and answer our prayers. In Jesus’ name we pray. **Amen**

We pray for members of our congregation who need our prayers; those unable to get out and about; those unwell and frail; in a moment of silence we bring them to you by name..... We pray for our Minister Dermot and his wife and the other Ministers and Lay Workers in our Circuit and lastly we pray for ourselves, that we may be faithful to your calling, consistent in the lives we live and always faithful to You, our Lord and Saviour. We pray in your dear name. **Amen.**

**Hymn StF 459** – Captain of Israel’s host

- 1 Captain of Israel's host, and guide of all who seek the land above,  
Beneath thy shadow we abide, the cloud of thy protecting love;  
Our strength, thy grace; our rule, thy word; our end, the glory of the Lord.
  
- 2 By thine unerring Spirit led, we shall not in the desert stray;  
We shall not full direction need, nor miss our providential way;  
As far from danger as from fear, while love, almighty love, is near.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

Jude verse 24 – To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His 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**

**Benediction**

We say together..... 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.**