

All Saints Bible Study – October 24, 2008

We considered **prayer** this week. We looked back at the times Luke mentions Jesus praying, often just before high points in the narrative or after times of particular ministry e.g. at Jesus' **baptism**, Luke 3:21-22; before **choosing the 12** Luke 6:12; before **Peter's confession** Luke 9:18; before the **transfiguration** Luke 9:28

We read **Luke 11:1-13**

We considered **Luke 11:11-13** and thought about things we had given our children, perhaps not exactly the thing they had asked for. Where Matthew mentions the father giving 'good things' Luke mentions the Holy Spirit and we remarked that it is not the things given that matter, but the context of love in which they are given or withheld.

We considered **Luke 11:5-10** in parallel with some Old Testament texts, in particular:

- I Chronicles 28:9 And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind ... If you seek him, he will be found by you
- Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.
- Jeremiah 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD

God longs for us to engage in relationship with him.

We considered the prayer Jesus gave his disciples to use **Luke 11:2-4**, both a simple prayer to memorise and a pattern for prayer. We remarked that the Jews would be used to the discipline of daily prayer, part of that prayer being 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength'. But for Luke's audience the concept may be novel.

We considered some thoughts on prayer from **Stephen Cottrell**, Bishop of Reading's book '**Praying Through Life**':

- Calling God 'Father' defines the essential child-likeness of all Christian faith. Jesus proclaims that the greatest in the kingdom of God will have to be like little children. It is good for the child to be in the presence of its parent.
- When we pray we discover the truth about ourselves: we are children of God. He is the source of life and the joys we find in every human endeavour flow from his creating heart. Because prayer is about relationship it is about letting go and allowing someone else to be at the centre of your life. The human spirit will recoil from this kind of loving. We like to be at the centre of ourselves. Prayer is relationship with God – it is the relationship we are made for. I am a Christian not because I know a lot of things about God but because I know God. In Jesus we can know God with the same intimacy that a child knows a father.
- This relationship, which God has initiated through his love, is something we enter freely. God will never force his way into our lives – he wants only the free response of our love.

Mk 14:36 - Abba, **Luke 1:38** - Let it be to me as you have said.

- The Lord's Prayer is **3 praises** followed by **3 petitions**

- 3 praises: What the Lord's prayer desires is that God's name be honoured by all who bear it; that his rule may prevail; that his loving purpose take effect. We make his name holy in our lives; we commit ourselves to the establishment of his kingdom; we submit to his will.
- 3 requests: We are instructed to ask for the provision of material need; for forgiveness for ourselves and a forgiving heart towards others; to be spared from trials beyond our strength - see where this comes – after Jesus has started talking about his death to disciples
- Corporate aspect: prayer is relationship with others. This is a prayer of mutual generosity.
- Intercession is not about persuading God to do something that is opposed to his will, but standing in God's presence on behalf of another person and seeking God's will for that person's life. There is a challenge in the Christian life to love the things that God has given us. Intercession is not a technique for changing God's mind, but it is a releasing of power as we place ourselves in a relationship of co-operation with God. There is no real distinction then between prayer and action. Prayer leads to action because we cannot with integrity pray for something which we are not also prepared to do something about. Prayer takes us into dangerous places. It commits us to act. When we ask, we are asking that God's will be done in our lives. When we search, we are searching out God's way of love and justice.