

Prayer - What is it?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 October 2024

Preacher: Robin Silson

[0 : 00] But we're going to spend some time thinking about the prayer. It's kind of a four-part that we're starting. And this morning, what we're thinking about is the what's and the why's of prayer.

What is prayer? Why do we do it? And how is it possible? We're going to think about that together. I'm just going to pray for us as we start it.

Let me pray. Almighty God, we do thank you again for your word. We do thank you that we can speak to you, as we're going to be thinking about.

But we thank you as we think through this amazing thing that we get to speak to you. We thank you as we reflect on what you say about prayer. We pray that you'd warm our hearts. We pray that you'd teach us things about ourselves and about who you are.

In ways maybe that we'd never even considered. We pray that from it we would grow in what it means to have a relationship with a living God. But you've made it possible. So bless us and help us to fixate our attention on you.

[1 : 01] Help us to listen. Help us to reflect on things that we've maybe thought in the past and how that might change. So commit this time now. Into your hands we pray. In Jesus' name.

Amen. There is a game that everyone has played at some point. And this is the game. You'll know this. The game is this.

If you could invite three people to your house for dinner, dead or alive, who would you choose?

We've all played that game. You get the normal ones, don't you?

Same ones that crop up. Muhammad Ali. Maybe now we've got the Queen comes into it. Elvis.

John Lennon. Standard. At least somebody will say one of those.

I can guarantee. Now I don't know who you'd choose. But whoever it is, you choose in the main.

The reason that you choose somebody. In that hypothetical game.

[1 : 57] The reason you choose? You choose people that you admire. That you'd like to speak to. To ask questions to. Hear what they've got to say. Get their perspective on life.

And how they saw the world. They'd be interesting. They've done amazing things. Now we know that. Obviously. It's just a bit of fun. We know it's never going to happen. We know that.

Because either they're dead. Or even if they're not. It'd be impossible to get hold of them. If you wanted Lionel Messi. Or Michelle Obama. At your house for dinner.

Don't get me wrong. It's more possible than Elvis. But still massively unlikely. Isn't it? In real life. In real life. We know that normally.

If you want someone around your house for dinner. 99% of the time. You need to know them personally. You need to have some sort of relationship. At the very least.

[2 : 52] That is the only way. That you can have any sort of confidence. That they will listen to you. And respond. And say. Yeah. I'll come round on. I'll come round for a cuppa.

Or I'll come round for steak pie. This morning. As I've mentioned already. We're starting off a new four-parter. Thinking about prayer. And prayer.

In one sense. And I think most people would know this. If you asked normal Joe Bloggs on the street. What is prayer. They would say. It's somebody speaking to God.

Yet there is a lot more to it than that. Just like you need to know someone personally. Or have some kind of relationship. To have confidence that you can speak with them.

Either be in their company in person. Or on the phone. Or know how to get in touch with them. The same is true with living God. If you are to have any sort of confidence.

[3 : 49] That when you speak or pray. That he is listening to you. You need to know him. And have a relationship with him. The only way.

That any of us can be confident. That God listens to you. When you pray. Is if you are confident. That you can be in his company. Spiritually speaking. If you know that you know him. If you don't know that you know him. You can't be confident. Can you? That when you speak. He's listening. That's the first thing. That we're going to think about. Prayer. Means being confident. Knowing that you know. That you're in his company. The first question. That we have to think about then. Is that possible? Is it possible. To be confident. That you know. That you know. That you're in God's company. Let's think back to our. What I've just said a minute ago.

[4 : 47] About inviting someone famous. To your house. Round for dinner. I don't think anyone here. As far as I know. I don't think anyone here. Has a relationship. With King Charles. Tell me if I'm wrong. I certainly don't. I don't have his phone number. Or personal email. I do know where he lives. But me or you. We can't just rock up. Can we? And knock on the gates. And invite ourselves in. We could try. You could send an email.

Through the official channels. You could send a letter. You could rock up. And ask. Whoever. What are those hats called. That they wear. Are they called? Yeah.

You could. You could. You could. You could. You could. You could. Ruck up. And ask one of those fellas. Is it all right. If I come in. And have a cuppa. With King Charles. Speak with the army. At the gates. We could. We could try.

[5 : 42] Yet rightly. We should. We. None of us. Has any confidence. That he'll hear us. That he'll answer our emails. Or that we'll be loud in. Why is that? It's obvious.

We don't know him. Personally. We don't have a relationship. With him. So we know we can't be in. King Charles company. Yet. There is the tiniest.

Slim chance. That it could happen. Isn't there? For a PR stunt. He could turn up. The Queen did it. In 1999. She visited a council house.

In Castlemilk. In Glasgow. You can look it up. See it. There's pictures of her. Having a cuppa. In someone's front room. But I've never heard of it since. You can look it up.

There is the slimmest chance. But rightly. We shouldn't expect it. What I'm actually presenting here. Might sound a little bit trivial.

[6 : 36] As I've spoken about it. But what I'm actually suggesting to you. Is not actually good news. Because what it means is. If you don't have.

If you don't know that you know. That you have a relationship with God. If you don't know you know him. You can have no confidence. That he'll answer your prayers. If you speak to him.

There's the slimmest chance. That just sort of throwing it out there. He might hear you. But you can't have confidence. Because it's not possible.

For you to be in his company. 99% of the time. You see. A holy God. A holy God. One who's set apart. Who's different from everything else.

A holy God. And any person. Who has ever committed. Any type of sin. Which is all of us. Cannot have a relationship.

[7 : 32] We see that don't we. We look back. This goes back. All the way to the beginning of the Bible. Goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. After they've sinned. There's some verses coming on the screen.

Let me look. Let's look at them. Together. Verse 22. And the Lord God said. The man has now become like one of us. Knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand.

And take also from the tree of life. And eat and live forever. So. Verse 23. The Lord God banished him. From the garden of Eden. To work the ground for which he'd been taken. After.

Verse 24. We see the same thing. After he drove the man out. He placed on the east side of the garden. A cherubim and a flashing sword. Forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Verse 23. We see they were banished. Verse 24. They were driven out. And not allowed back in. They were kicked out of God's company. Out of his presence.

[8 : 29] They didn't have a relationship. As they did before. With him. And it's been that way ever since. We've all messed up. We've all messed up. There isn't a single person in the garden.

Who hasn't messed up. And we can't have confidence. Of knowing God. Or speaking to him. We can't have that confidence. Because God is holy.

And we are not. The question. Is then this. Isn't it? If that is the bad news. Is how can a sinful. Messed up people.

Have any confidence. In speaking to him. How is that then possible? Because. If you. If. As you and I know. People are praying. How can we enter into God's company.

With confidence. That he will not only. Listen to us. But. We won't be. Extinguished. Because he's holy. And we're not. That is the. Now this is the bad news. This is the bad news.

[9 : 27] But I. Have good news. For us. Because it is possible. To approach God. It is. Possible. To have confidence. And know. That he will. Listen.

To you. That's the first point. Second. Is confidence. In prayer. Needs. A mediator. Confidence in prayer. Needs.

A mediator. Another way to explain. A mediator. Is a middleman. There are lots of examples. Of middlemen. In life. An estate agent. Is a middleman. Isn't he? He mediates the sale. Of a property. Between a buyer. And a seller. He's the middleman. He has to know. The buyer. And the seller. If two people. Have a really bad falling out.

But want to sort it. Sometimes they might need. Someone who is friends. With both. And then. They come in between. And they mediate. To help the two people.

[10 : 21] Who've fallen out. Sort out their differences. A mediator. A middleman. A middleman. To be confident. To be confident. That God.

Hears. What you have to say. We need. A middleman. We need. A mediator. Someone who can. Represent. Both sides. Can represent. God to man.

And man. To God. Who mediates. Both sides. In other words. We need. A middleman. Who is both. Fully God. And fully. Man. And we must have. A relationship.

With whoever. That man. Might. Be. This. Is what you receive. In the good news. The offer. Of the gospel. Look with me.

On the verses. On the screen. It comes. With what we read. Earlier. From 1 Timothy. From the second chapter. From verse 1. I urge then. And here we have it. About prayer. I urge then. First of all.

[11 : 15] That petitions. Prayers. Intercession. And thanksgiving. Be made for all people. We then get the list. Of people that we should pray for. For kings. All those in authority. We did that this morning.

That we may live peaceful and quiet lives. This is good. And pleases God our saviour. Paul urges Timothy. To pray for all kinds of prayers. To be thankful.

To pray for people. To pray for those in authority. And he says in verse 3. It's good. And it pleases God to do that. But then. Here it comes. Verse 5. Why it's possible to pray.

For there is one God. And one mediator. Between God and mankind. The man. Christ Jesus. Who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

We have a middle man. Jesus Christ. Who makes it possible that we can approach God. And speak with him. And how is that possible? Verse 6. Because he gave himself as a ransom for all people.

[12 : 18] The issue. That every person has their sinful condition. The thing that every single person on the planet has done. Has messed up. That issue that stops people from being able to enter into God's presence.

From being in his company. The very thing that stops us. Jesus takes away. He pays for it with his life. So that when God sees us. When we come into his company.

His presence. We get to speak with him. We get to speak with him. You think of. A holy person. And sinful humanity. Is like trying to mix fire and water. Whichever is bigger wins out. Doesn't it? If you have a forest fire.

And a teaspoon of water. It's the water that will evaporate. Yet if you have a chip pan fire. And a reservoir. The chip pan will be put out.

[13 : 24] Whichever is bigger. Will be put out. Jesus. The living God is called a consuming fire. And we come like a teaspoon of water. But you see.

When we come. When we come. With the mediator. The middle man. You see. Jesus Christ. He is. The consuming fire. But he also made himself man.

So he's like the teaspoon of water. At the same time. And he doesn't evaporate. And he doesn't burn it up. So we come. It isn't like mixing fire and water.

Anymore. Followers of Jesus are made holy. Like God. And can talk to him with complete and full confidence. That every prayer is heard. Through him.

Through Jesus. We have access to the power of the Holy Spirit. There was a time wasn't there.

When Kate Middleton was a nobody. Nobody knew who she was.

[14:22] I didn't know who she was. For Kate Middleton at the time. Quite a while back now. To speak with King Charles. Once upon a time. Was as hard as it is for us today.

But it changed when she met his son. Who she would eventually marry. She now has full access to the king.

Comes through her marriage. To his son. She might even have him on speed dial. I don't know.

Because she has a relationship.

With King Charles' son. It is possible for us. Because of Jesus' death. For us to have a relationship.

With his son. The son of God. Faith in Jesus. Gives you full access. To the throne of God. You can approach with confidence.

[15:20] And it's even better. Than having him on speed dial. You can approach with confidence. Because you come through the son. The son always had full access.

To speak to his father. The living God. You come in his name. Because you come in his name. The living God has to listen to you. He never doesn't speak to his son.

So if you come in the name of Jesus. He has to speak. He has to listen to you. If he was not to listen to you. He would go against his own character. Because he's always listened. To his son Jesus.

That's how much confidence you come. When you speak to him in prayer. He's always listening. If you don't have a relationship. What I said is you have no confidence.

If you have a relationship. You have every confidence. That every word is heard. So if you thought about prayer. Being what it means. It means to be in God's company.

[16:15] Thought about we need a mediator. Jesus Christ. Finally we'll think about. What it means in terms of. The relationship that we have. Jesus is the middle man.

That's what makes. The relationship with God possible. His death on the cross. There is one aspect. That we haven't thought through. We've talked a lot about. Being in God's company. What does that mean? Here's something else.

It's about where. Kind of where we can pray. In the times of the Old Testament. People went to the temple to pray. They had to move towards. Where God was.

They had to go to the temple. There's a special place. Where his presence was. And people weren't allowed. As a reflection of the fact. That they couldn't enter. That presence spiritually. They weren't allowed. To enter his presence.

In the temple. Only somebody special. Could go there. Christians don't have to think like that anymore. Because God is not resident. In a particular building. It's not.

[17:12] We meet in this. Community centre. Don't we? It's not like this building. Is now where God lives. Or it's not like in a church. That God doesn't live. In a particular building.

If you have a church. Where the. When I was growing up. The top. The top of the church. Was like a place. That you weren't allowed to go. Because it was seen as like.

This area is a bit holier. That's. That's. That's nonsense. You get to go. You can go anywhere you want. In that building. And God is as much at the front. As he is at the back.

Because God doesn't live. In a building. When someone begins following Jesus. God makes his home. In the people. They receive his spirit.

He makes his home. In them. Just look with me. These verses on the screen. I'm going to go through it slowly. Because some of this stuff. Gets a little bit technical. But when the set time.

[18:06] Had fully come. God sent his son. Born of a woman. Born under the law. That's God sending. That's God sending Jesus. Fully God. And fully man. To be our middle man. Verse 5.

To redeem us. To pay for our sins. We've said that. And here comes the crucial verses. That we might. Receive adoption. To sonship.

Because you're his sons. God sent the spirit of his son. Into our hearts. He sent his Holy Spirit. To live. In our hearts. To make his home with us. And then it is the spirit.

In us. Who calls out. Abba Father. It's the spirit of Jesus. Living in us. That moves our hearts. To call out to God. To speak to God. Abba. Abba. It just is another word.

For father. In Aramaic. You're saying father. Father. Calling out on God. As your father. Verse 7. So you are no longer a slave. But God's child.

[19:00] And since you are his child. God has also made you an heir. Which means. We receive everything. Given to the son. One of those blessings. Is being able to speak with God.

With complete confidence. As a son. We belong to a new family. Who God delights in. Which means. Doesn't it? Which means. When you pray. When a Christian prays.

It's not like. You're twisting. God's arm. Behind his back. The more you do it. Like he. Like he listens to us. Out of a sense of obligation. I better listen to him again. It's not like that.

He hangs off. Every word. With. The same attention. That. The. The father. Listens to Jesus. The same attention.

He gives you. The same attention. That he gives. To Jesus Christ. When he speaks to him. The same attention. We speak to the. Holy. And living God. As father.

[19:55] Now people have. Different titles. And names. Given to them. The different roles. They have in life. I haven't told. Gareth. That I'm going to use him. As an example. But.

I'm going to know. Gareth. At work. To those. He doesn't know. Maybe. In different departments. Maybe. He's known as. Mr. Morrison. Gareth. But to those.

He works. He works. Maybe. Closely with. Or in his team. Maybe his friends. His family. Is known as. Gareth. There may be. Another layer of closeness.

Still might be there. Those who. Know him. Have got a special nickname. For him. That nobody. Else knows. But there are. Only two people. In the world. Who get to call him.

Daddy. Just two. And it doesn't matter. What Gareth is doing. If he hears. Either of those. Two children. Shout. Daddy. He'll turn to the direction.

[20:50] Of their voice. If there is a problem. He'll leave. Whatever he's doing. Whoever he's talking to. And he will go to them. The living God.

Has the same relationship. With all who come to him. In the name of Jesus. When you speak with God. As your father. He's hanging off.

Your every word. And he will turn. And come. And come. To you. With whatever's going on. If you ask for bread. He won't give you a stone. If you ask for fish. He won't give you a snake.

He's your father. He's your dad. In heaven. And he gives you gifts. He does bless you. Let's come in for landing then.

He's thought about what prayer is. Speaking with God. We thought it needs. To speak to him. And know that he's listening. We need to be confident. That we're speaking to him.

[21:51] And we can't come into him. With confidence. Unless we know that we know him. The reason we know that we know him. Is if we have a middle man. Jesus Christ. Who's taken away our sins. So that we come to him.

As he makes us holy. He makes us. Like fire. Like peace. When that happens. The spirit of Jesus. The spirit of adoption.

Comes to make his home in us. So that we speak. To the living God. As children. As father. This way of living. Is not exclusive. To just some people. Did you see what it said.

In our reading from earlier. This is good. And pleases God our saviour. Who wants all people. To be saved. And to come to a knowledge. Of the truth. All people.

He wants all people. This is available. To every person. This relationship. This living relationship. With a God. Who created you. Is available.

[22:47] It's what's on offer. That everyone can have this too. To have all your mess. Taken away in your life. To be forgiven. By God. To have all your sins. Cast to the bottom of the sea.

To be made like God. To be confident. That you can speak to him. Have a relationship with him. And receive everything. Given to Jesus. For yourself. As a truthful. It's on offer to everyone.

Prayer means a relationship with God. It means being able to come into his company. And speak with him. And know he hears every word. At the beginning. We spoke about that game.

Didn't we? Three people to invite. The truth of the gospel. This is the truth of the gospel. The truth of the gospel. The truth of the gospel. Is that the one who made you. Your creator. That you can speak with today.

Because you're sincere. Because you have a mediator. Jesus Christ. Didn't even know. And you have a God. As your father. He wants you. He wants you to come. Let me pray.

[23 : 51] Almighty God. Lord. It's amazing to think that. This is the. The blessing. The good news. Of the gospel. For each of us. Lord.

I pray. And I give thanks. That. Each of us now. In our hearts. We can speak to you. As our father. That as we pray now. You're hanging off every word. For each of us. Lord.

I thank you. That it's made possible. That you know. The mess. That we've done. In our lives. You know. There's so many things. That we regret. And that you've taken it all away. You've made us holy. Like yourself. So that we can come into your company.

In your presence. We thank you. That's possible. It's possible. Because you made it possible.

You're the one. Who called us by name. You worked in our hearts. By your spirit.

You made a whole million. We pray. This is so good. And I just thank you. That this is not. I thank you. I thank you. That it is. It's not exclusive. But it's on offer.

[24 : 43] To every person. That you want all people. To be saved. And to come. To acknowledge the truth. And so. I pray. That increasingly. That relationship. That more and more people. Would turn to you.

Today. Lord. I pray that. What is on offer. Would be understood. And Lord. I pray for us. Who.

Where we've known you. I pray that we've grown. What that means for us.

That we didn't. We don't treat it. As something that. To be. As something trite. Or insignificant. Or forget. How amazing it is. And so. I give you thanks.

And I pray that you bless. And I pray the knowledge of this. Will sustain. And keep us going. In the weeks. And the months. That lie ahead. Each and every day. That being able to come to you. As Father. Through the. In the spirit. Through the name of Jesus.

Would give us every confidence. As we speak. We ask for this. In Jesus name. Amen.