

Thursday 14th May 2020:

Day of Prayer for the Overcoming of Covid 19

Often it is hard to know how to pray. In times like these we have so many different emotions and reactions to what is going on around us. I think the call to a day dedicated to prayer for the overcoming of Covid 19 is a reminder that we can bring all that we are feeling, all our reactions, honestly and openly to God.

Our guide in prayer is Jesus. Jesus trusted the power of God's love so fully that he was willing to lay down his life for it and in that trust he was willing to bring his honest feelings to God – he praised God, he brought God his tears for his city Jerusalem, his own anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed for his friends and for those who were crucifying him. From that deep trust, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it he “offered up prayers and supplications”, and gave us an example to follow. We pray because Jesus prayed.

As those who are now members of his body, the church, on earth we pray in union with him, in the power of the Spirit he sends to guide us. As we pray we become open to the Spirit at work in us and in the world. As we pray we are drawn closer together by the same Spirit and into deeper solidarity with those for whom we pray. As we pray, we may also be shown how we can contribute to the answering of our prayer. As we pray, however unsure we feel, we are drawn into the trust of Jesus in the love of the Father for all that God has created.

Jesus frequently drew on the Psalms for his prayer, dating back to early day in Hebrew worship they would have been his prayer book, and the psalms express a whole range of emotions and reactions to the joys and sorrows of life: lament and crying out to God for relief, anger and questioning of God, calm and peace in God's presence, memories of God's faithfulness and trust in God for the future and everything in between. I can't help thinking that they are God's reminder to us that nothing is off limits in prayer.

If Jesus is our guide in prayer, it makes sense to begin with the prayer he gave us. I invite you to use it at midday if you can and I

hope the following reflection may help you dwell in the familiar words a little while – weaving into the familiar words the particular desires, fears, concerns, and hopes we have for this time.

Our Father.....

All our prayer is in union with Jesus, sharing in his relationship with the Father. May we come just as we are, with honesty about all that we feel.

All our prayer is in union with our brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps all creation. May we have a sense of that unity as we pray.

Who art in heaven.....

Our God is the Creator of all, and beyond all that we can imagine; not just a super-powerful part of our world we have to appeal to, but the source and sustenance of all life.

As we pray may we open ourselves to life-giving love beyond all imagining.

Hallowed be your name.....

God is holy – may we bring ourselves in worship to recognise that we are in God’s holy presence

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.....

Jesus’ miracles are the signs of the Kingdom, the signs of what is God’s will for creation. How many of those are miracles of health and healing – of body, mind and spirit?

We can bring our prayers of desire for the transformation of our world to God, all the mixture of feelings about what we see around us and what we hope for in this part of the prayer.

You may want to pause with this for some time and talk to God as you have been talking to friends about this time.

Give us this day our daily bread.....

This is a prayer of dependence on God, of acceptance of "one day at a time", a time for recognising what our true and basic needs are and asking God for them. Many of us have perhaps found that these days have helped us discover what our basic needs are. Can we hand them over for God to supply, in trust today?

We may want to include in our prayer here prayers for the basic needs of those around us and across the world to be supplied.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.....

This may be a time to bring our sorrow and lament – the moment in the prayer when we bring all that we can see opposes God's will both in our behaviour, in that of those around us and in the bigger systems of which we are part. Can we hold all that is in anguish, our own anguish and the pain of our world, out to God to be healed, reconciled, made whole?

Lead us not into temptation.....

Remember Jesus in the wilderness – temptation was the alluring false promise of things that were not from God, things not supporting God's life in him.

It's a prayer for us and our world to seek what brings true life in its fullness for everyone, to seek the common good, and not be lead awry by false values.

Deliver us from evil.....

Jesus gives us simple words to pray to the Father for deliverance from all that is evil – words we can use now to pray for the deliverance of our world from Covid 19.

May the words we usually use to end the prayer with help lead us towards a place of trust and worship

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

Forever and ever, Amen.