

Prayer - An Astonishing Privilege

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Date: 06 July 2025

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[0 : 00] And I always really enjoy the opportunity to come up to Calanish. It's great to see you and great to have the opportunity to worship together. We're coming in the name of our risen Saviour and we rejoice in the hope of the Gospel that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's great to be with you. Just a couple of things I want to mention. One is that I'm going to be going away next week on Saturday.

So I'll be away at camp for a week and then I'll have a couple of weeks of holiday. I'll only be away for a few days of the holiday and then I'll be back. I think I'll leave Boyan in charge. So if anything goes wrong you can phone him.

If anybody needs any help or anything during that time, please do just contact the elders in the first instance and they can get in touch with me. And I will be contactable even though I'll be away and we'll be getting insurance to provide any support that's needed.

So I'm here to the end of the week but away Saturday at camp, at Rent Free Girls Camp. So please do pray for that and for all the other camps as well. Also just to give a wee update regarding the vacancy and being with you is a good opportunity just to share a wee bit regarding that.

[1 : 14] So the Vacancy Committee met last month and as I hope many of you know we had a really helpful discussion. Coming out of that meeting there were four names that the Vacancy Committee were very keen to hear again.

That was David McLeod in North Harris, Mark McLeod in South Harris, Malcolm McLeod, Sed Bascoebel and Alex Stewart in Maryborough. So I've been speaking to them all and both David McLeod and Mark McLeod have said that while they're very willing to come back and preach again to the vacancy, at the moment neither of them feel a sense of being called away from where they currently are.

And so they wouldn't really be coming. If they do come to preach again later in the year it would more just be to help with supply rather than anything more than that in terms of how they're feeling at the moment.

And both Alex Stewart and Malcolm McLeod said how much they enjoyed being with us and they were both willing to come back and preach again. So their parents are going to come to preach in September.

And in August Malcolm is also going to come to a prayer meeting to share about his work with Sedfast Global. So that's something he's often done in Carloway to come and give an update about the support he gives to the persecuted church.

[2 : 28] That's happening in August. And then here comes the preacher at the end of September. Alec is pencilled in for the beginning of September. So it would be great to have the opportunity to hear them both again.

One other thing just to be aware of I suppose is that, many of you will know this, that Alec Stewart has also been asked to preach again in Shabbos and preached again there last week.

So we're kind of slightly awaiting to hear what Shabbos may or may not do. I don't really know if I should ask you to pray that they don't like him.

I shouldn't say that. But you know what I mean. More than anything we just want the Lord to make his path clear. And you know, more than anything we would love to see any of the vacancies in the congregation, the island filled.

And if Shabbos was filled then that would be great. And that does go to Shabbos. It won't be the first time that Westside has spoiled Carloway's day. But that's another matter.

[3 : 34] More than anything we want to lay before the Lord. And we're thankful that we have these potential dates in the diary for September. And so for the summer there won't really be any further developments in turn until we do hear them preach.

The main thing to do is just to keep praying for them. Praying for the congregation, praying for the vacancy and for all the other vacancies as well. And as we've said from day one, we actually want all the doors to close apart from one.

And we just want one door to open and for that to be the door that the Lord wants open in terms of filling this vacancy. So we pray that he would be our guide and help. And just to reiterate again that the vacancy committee process and me as internet moderator, nothing is secret.

Nothing is secret. So if any of you have any questions, if any of you want more information about anything, just ask. And we're more than happy to share about that. Okay, that's all the notices and updates that I wanted to give.

The most important thing is that we're here to worship God together. And we're coming in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of God the Holy Spirit. And we're going to sing to the praise of God in Psalm 98.

[4 : 43] And we're going to sing from the beginning. Psalm 98. Oh, sing a new song to the Lord for wonders he hath done. His right hand and his holy arm, his victory, have won.

And we're going to sing. First four stanzas, start to verse four. Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise. Lift up your voice aloud to him. Sing praises and rejoice.

And as we sing these words, we are adding our voices to the voices of millions of people all across the world today who are lifting up the name of Jesus. And it's such a blessing to be part of that.

So Psalm 98, let's sing together. Oh, sing a new song to the Lord. Oh, sing a new song to the Lord.

The Lord God is salvation.

[6 : 04] His salvation hath caused it to be known. His justice in the even sight he openly hath shown.

A mind full of his grace and truth to Israel's house hath been.

And the salvation of our God all ends of the earth have seen.

Let all the earth unto the Lord send forth a joyful noise.

Lift up your voice aloud to him. Sing praises and rejoice.

[7 : 34] Let's pray together. Dear God, our Father in heaven, we are so thankful that we can come to you this evening.

And that we can worship you and praise you. And enjoy being in your presence again as a new week begins. We thank you that that week begins in the hope of the resurrection.

That on the first day of the week Jesus rose from the dead. And ever since then your church has met on the first day of the week. To rejoice in that resurrection. To be reminded of the hope that we can have through our Lord Jesus.

And to be fed and nourished by you as you bless us and build us up as your people. And as we come to worship you again this evening. We just thank you so much for all that you have.

For all that you've done for us. For your amazing love and mercy and grace. We are so conscious, Father, that we are not worthy of even the least of your blessings.

[8 : 35] We do not deserve the mercy and love that you've shown to us. And there are so many ways in which we have let you down in our lives.

And we come confessing that before you. We come confessing that with regret and with frustration and with sorrow in our hearts. But we also come so, so thankful for the gospel.

So thankful that Jesus came and died and rose again. And that his great message of forgiveness has been proclaimed to all the nations. And that for all who come to Jesus, their sins are washed away.

That as far as east is from the west, so far in your love, you've removed our transgressions from us. And we just thank you for that hope of the gospel. That healing and renewal and joy and peace that we can have.

And we pray that for all of us here, we would just be seeing and understanding these things anew tonight. And so whether that's for the very first time or whether we have known and understood the gospel for many, many years, we pray that the wonder of your grace, that the magnitude of your love, that the majesty of your glory, and that the greatness of your tender mercy would just be seen more clearly and understood more deeply by all of us.

[9 : 57] We pray, Father, that you would build us up in our faith. And we pray that your spirit would shape every single part of our lives. And we confess that sometimes we can live out our lives in a way where maybe there's times that we are devoted to you and focused on you and eager to serve you.

And then there's other times when we want to actually follow after sin and we want to disobey you. And sometimes we live our lives with different compartments. And we don't want to live like that anymore.

And instead, we want our lives to be lived in a way that are wholly shaped by the gospel. That from the most private thoughts in our hearts to the most public actions that we undertake and everything in between, may it all be shaped by the gospel.

We want to live our lives, Father, in obedience to you. We want to live our lives knowing you and loving you and serving you. We want to live our lives where we are more and more like Jesus, where we are salt and light and where others can look at us and see that there is something so amazing in our lives because of you and because of everything that you've done for us.

And we pray that that's how we would live this week of our lives and every week of our lives. And so as we gather here this evening, we thank you for the new song that you've given to us. And we thank you that as we lift up our voices in song to you, we thank you that your people all across the world are doing the same.

[11 : 24] We thank you that there is a wave of praise going all across the nations today as your church meets and as Jesus is worshipped and glorified. And we thank you that we're part of that.

And we pray that as we all come here this evening, we will be renewed and encouraged and built up and refreshed. There is so much in our lives that wears us down and that leaves us weary and leaves us struggling.

And we pray, Father, that as we come to you, that in your mercy and in your love, you pour out your goodness and you fill our hearts with joy and thanksgiving, that we would see more of your glory, your holiness, your wisdom, your truth, your love, your grace, your justice, your mercy.

All that you are, we want to know more of you. And we want to be closer to you. And we want to live out our lives to your glory. So please bless us in our time together this evening. And bless us as we go into a new week together.

And may your name be honoured and glorified in everything. We ask it through your Son, our Saviour Jesus. Amen. We're going to sing again in Psalm 42.

[12 : 31] Psalm 42.

There's a description of tears and of feeling of like the way you are today is not the way you once were. The way you are just now is not the way you wish you were.

And that's so often our experience as we go through life. Very often we feel that we're a long way from what we want to be. We feel empty. We feel thirsty. And these words speak so powerfully of that.

And they culminate at the end of verse 5, speaking of God being our help and of our need to trust in him. And of course all that language of thirst and everything is pointing us towards Jesus, the one who comes as the living waters, the one who quenches the thirst of all who come to him.

So as we sing these words, we can think both of our thirst and struggles as we go through life, but also of the fullness of Jesus' provision as he quenches our thirst and you.

[14 : 01] So Psalm 42, 1 to 5, to God's praise. I give the heart for water brooks, in thirst of plant and prey, So pass my longing soul for God, That come to thee I may.

My soul for God, the living God, To thirst when shall I bear, Unto thy countenance approach, And in God's sight appear, My tears have longed to me within me, Both in the night and day, While long to me continually, Where is thy God?

My soul is purified in me, When this I think upon, Because that with the multitude I here to for what hath gone.

With them into God's house they went with voice of joy and praise.

Yea, with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days.

[16 : 47] O why art thou cast down my soul? Why aid me so dismay?

Cross God for I shall praise him yet. His countenance is my name.

We're going to read two short passages from the Gospel of Luke this evening. We're actually going to be focusing on Psalm 130 in our sermon. But I want to read two passages from Luke.

First of all from Luke 11 verses 1 to 13. Luke chapter 11 verses 1 to 13.

And then we'll read verses 1 to 8 of Luke 18. And it came to pass that as Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

[18 : 08] And he said unto them, When you pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And he does not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves. For a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.

And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me and dead. I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

[19 : 21] If a son shall ask bread of any of you, that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? And then just turning over a couple of pages to Luke 18, we'll read verses 1 to 8.

Luke 18, verses 1 to 8. And Jesus spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man.

And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while. But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith, And shall not God avenge his only light, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

[20 : 43] I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth. Amen, and may the Lord add his blessing to these readings of his word.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Again, let's pray. Father, we thank you so much that we can come to you in prayer, and we thank you that as we come to you in prayer, we come to you, the one who knows us, and you know our deepest needs.

And sometimes, Father, we can struggle to express ourselves clearly, and sometimes we struggle for words. And yet, before we even speak, you know our deepest needs, and you meet with us with care, and with love, and with beautiful compassion.

And we pray that for all of us here, that we would know and understand that more, and especially for any here today who are struggling. And we pray that for any here this evening who have, just in the midst of difficult days, those who might feel unwell, or who feel burdened, who feel worn out, those who might be doubting, those who maybe feel that they've slipped back in their faith, those who are seeking you, or maybe those who feel that maybe they're never going to find you.

Whatever our circumstances, we know that you know, and we pray that you would speak to each one of us, and help us, and be with us. And for the wider congregation, and for the wider community, we just pray, Father, that you would guard us, and bless us, and help us.

[22 : 17] We pray for all in need in the community, those unwell, those who grieve, those who are going through difficult times. We ask that you would guard, and protect them. And we pray too, Father, that your blessing will be upon these coming weeks of holidays, both as people go away, and as people are home.

We pray that these times would be just a time of refreshment, and of blessing for all. And we pray that in the midst of it all, that the bonds of family, and friendship, and love would grow deeper.

And we pray, Father, that you would just be at work in this community. We want so much to see more people come to faith, and we want to see your spirit working in people's hearts.

We feel so helpless, and we are so aware, Father, that without you we can do nothing. But we know that you have promised to pour out your spirit.

You've promised to empower your church. You've promised to bring in all of those who are your own. And we pray, Father, that we would just see that harvest coming.

[23 : 21] We pray that you would be drawing people to faith. And there are many people in this community who have heard the gospel for many, many years. And we know that there have been so many seeds sown in their hearts.

We pray that these seeds would bear fruit. We pray that whatever hurdles people might see in their lives, whatever it is that might be pulling them away from you, or stopping them from coming to you, please take these hurdles away, and please just draw people by your irresistible grace, and may they be captivated by just the wonder of your love and of your goodness.

Please open people's eyes, and we just pray that we would see people, young and old, men and women, boys and girls, coming to know you, and just to experience the amazing transforming power of the gospel.

We pray, Father, that you would be building up your church here. We pray that more would be coming in, that more would be growing in faith, so that the witness for Jesus increases in this community, and so that there is a church here to proclaim the gospel to the next generation, to the generations that are still to be born.

And we pray, Father, that you would just be doing a wonderful, powerful work here in the community. And we pray too, Father, for the congregation at a time of vacancy. We just pray for your guidance, for your direction.

[24 : 36] And our great desire, our one desire for the vacancy, Father, is that you would send the man of your choosing to shepherd this congregation. And we pray that you would just give clear, clear guidance to both that man and to the congregation, and that you would be leading us and guiding us.

Help us to be patient, but also help us to be expectant. Help us to accept when some doors close, and help us to keep on praying about doors that may open.

And we pray, Father, that you would just be guiding and directing us. We pray that there would be clear unity and togetherness in the congregation. And we pray that the new ministry to come would be one of just great joy and excitement, and one where together the congregation is able to take forward the work of the gospel, and to be a beautiful witness to the community all around us here.

And when we pray for our congregation here, we pray for all the other vacant congregations on the island. We pray for Shabbos. We pray for Barvis. We pray for Stornaway. We pray for Grava.

And we pray too for South Uist and Birbecula. And we thank you that it looks very, very likely that Shalas McGillivray will be able to take a part-time ministry there. We pray that all that would go well, and we thank you for that wonderful encouragement.

[25 : 57] And for other vacant congregations across the church, we pray for them. We pray that you bless the work of the gospel all across our nation. And please, Father, please keep doing what you have been doing for generations.

Please draw people to faith in Jesus, and raise up those who are going to proclaim the good news of Jesus, and who are going to follow you, and who are going to serve you. And please use us in every way that you can to help continue to take forward that work of the gospel.

And now, Father, let's return to your word. We pray that you'd be preparing our hearts, that you would deepen us in our love for you, and draw us closer to you, and help us as we seek to follow you this week, and for the rest of our lives.

Bless us and be with us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's sing again, this time in Psalm 37. Psalm 37, and we're going to sing verses 3 to 7.

And these verses just contain some wonderful instructions for us. Set thou thy trust upon the Lord, it says in verse 3. Delight thyself in God, verse 4.

[27 : 09] Thy way to God commit, verse 5. And rest in the Lord, and wait for him, as it says in verse 7. And these are all just wonderful things for us to do as we go into a new week together.

So Psalm 37, from verse 3 to verse 7. Set thou thy trust upon the Lord, and be thou doing good. Set thou thy trust upon the Lord, and be thou doing good.

And so thou in heaven shall dwell, and heavenly have filled.

Divine God, thyself in God he'll give, thine heart's desire to thee.

Thy way to God commit in trust, it bring to pass shall he.

[28 : 27] And like unto the light he shall thy righteousness display.

And he thy judgment shall bring forth, like noontide of the day.

May sin the Lord, and patiently, which for him do not fret, for him who cross spring in his way, success in sin the gate.

Amen. Well, I'd like us to turn together to Psalm 130.

And we're going to look together at this psalm, although we will be referring back to the parables that we read in Luke 11. But Psalm 130 we'll turn to. It's a very short psalm, so I'll just read the whole of it as we begin.

[29 : 57] Psalm 130. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord.

My soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

I want to use this psalm and the parables that we read in Luke as an opportunity for us to think about prayer. Prayer is such an important part of the Christian life, and in many ways prayer is something that, it's one of the one things that we have to do if we are going to be followers of Jesus.

[31 : 12] Prayer is how we start our journey as Christians when we ask the Lord to forgive us, to come into our lives, to save us.

And prayer is so important as we continue on in every step that we take in our lives as Christians. So prayer is massively important. Prayer is a beautiful and extraordinary privilege, because in it we get to speak to God Almighty.

And I think that it's wise and important for us to stop, to recognise just what an extraordinary privilege that is.

We are, I think everybody here, will have been encouraged to pray since you were tiny. Certainly most of us will have been. It's something that we've maybe been familiar with all our lives, and yet maybe because of that there's a risk that we can just sometimes forget just what an astonishing thing it is that as you sit here just now, as you put your head in a pillow tonight when you go to bed, as you get up tomorrow morning, and whatever you end up doing in the week ahead, you can talk to God.

And he's listening. And so prayer is massively important. Prayer is a huge privilege. And in so many ways, prayer is one of the astonishing privileges of the Christian life.

[32 : 54] And yet, I would love to ask you all, when I say that word, prayer, what is your instinctive feeling?

What do you feel inside when I talk about, when I mention the topic of prayer? Do you feel instantly thinking, yes, prayer is amazing, prayer is such a privilege, prayer is astonishing, prayer is beautiful, prayer is wonderful?

Maybe you think that, and if you do, that's amazing, if you think that. I think it's more likely that you are the same as me. That when you hear the word prayer, you feel like a failure.

And you feel guilty. And you feel like your prayer life is a long, long way from what it should be.

And I think it's important to say that for every Christian, either sometimes, or maybe all the time, prayer feels hard.

[34 : 07] And so, prayer is incredibly important. Every Christian, and every church, needs to pray. But the truth is, every Christian struggles to pray.

There are times when we find it very, very difficult. And when something is difficult, what do we feel like doing?

We feel like giving up. And, there's probably two types of people in this room tonight.

there's probably those who find prayer hard, and you feel like giving up. You just feel like you're, you're making up, that you're just failing at it, that you're messing up, and you feel like giving up.

That's one group of people. The other group of people have already given up. And maybe, maybe it's been a long, long time since you prayed.

[35 : 14] And, and, if that's true, if that's true, I hope that what we're going to say tonight is going to be a, a big help to you.

And, so, whether that's true in terms of feeling like giving up, or whether it's true in a sense that you maybe, actually have given up, and haven't prayed for a long time. What we're going to look at tonight, I hope, is going to help us.

And, the thing that we're going to focus on, in particular, is, is a word, that is very important, in relation to prayer. And it's the word, persistence. And, and that's a crucial word, in relation to prayer.

And, because, if everything I've said is true, if prayer is something that makes us feel guilty, if prayer is something that we struggle with, and if something, and if prayer is something that's hard, then, in the face of the temptation to give up, what do we need to do?

We need to persist. We need to be persistent, in prayer. It's a really important word, in relation, to prayer. And, Psalm 130, I think, has a lot to teach us, as we seek, to persist, in prayer.

[36 : 32] And, we're going to look at this topic, with two headings. We're going to, first of all, we're going to say, pray with, persistence. And then, we're going to say, pray, because, of persistence.

Pray with, persistence. Pray, because, of persistence. And, everything we see, I hope, will come, out of this, beautiful psalm, that's open before us.

So, Psalm 130, is, is a very raw, and, honest, cry, to God, from somebody, who feels like, they're in the depths.

And so, someone's struggling, someone's weak, and they feel like, they're just, just, they're just, drowning. And, they desperately need God, to help them.

And, alongside that, alongside that, honest, raw, cry for help, you also have some, beautiful, statements, of, of the sure, and certain promises, that come from God.

[37 : 34] And so, you've got, you've got a beautiful combination, Psalm 130. You've got the very depths, of a human experience, that we all, encounter from time to time.

And at the same time, you've got the majestic heights, of the gospel's promises, all together, in just eight, little verses. And so, although the Psalm's very short, there's a lot of rich, and wonderful teaching, for us, in it.

I want us, first of all, to focus, on three phrases, that, we, which we see in the Psalm, and that are all connected, to, the first person, pronoun, the word I, in other words.

So, if you look at verse one, you'll see, he says, I cried, unto thee. And, if you look, at verse five, it says, I wait.

And then, if you look at the end, of the verse five, it says, I hope. I cried, I wait, I hope. All of these, are the language, of persistence.

[38 : 46] So, in verses one to two, out of the depths, I cried to thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice, let thine eyes be attentive, let thine ears be attentive, to the voice, of my supplication.

The Psalmist, cries out to God, and he cries out, from the depths. So, this is not, a prayer, for when things, are going well. It's the prayer, in the midst of struggle, and fear.

It's a prayer, from when things, are going badly. And, all the language, of verse one and two, combines, to make this, urgent appeal, for God, to hear his voice.

The Psalmist, is trying, Lord, hear me, help me. In other words, this is not, a kind of, token gesture prayer. This is not just, you know, the same routine, of prayer, that you might say, every day, as you go through the motions.

It's not like that at all. The Psalmist is, urgently, crying out to God, out of a sense of desperation. And then, you go on, in verse five, you've got the language of waiting.

[39 : 45] I wait for the Lord. In verse five, verse six, it's the same. My soul, waiteth for the Lord, more than they, that watch for the morning. I say, more than they, that watch for the morning. And, that's a great reminder, that in prayer, answers, don't come instantly.

And, this Psalm, is speaking about, a season, where, where he's crying out to God, and he's waiting. The answers, are not coming straight away. He cries to God, he waits.

He looks for an answer. And, in it all, despite his struggles, he is, he's, persevering, because he knows, that ultimately, only God, can help him.

He waits. And then, you have the language of hope. I hope, in his word, as it says, in verse five. And, that truth, of what God, has communicated, in his word, that is where the psalmist, is placing his hope.

Now, hope is a word, that's maybe easy, to misunderstand, when we come to it in the Bible. Because, we can often use the word, hope, in terms of something, that we, we hope, might happen.

[41 : 05] And, so, I always use, spit bottle stations, when I'm here. Please forgive me. But, Carla, we are playing tomorrow night. We hope they're going to win. They might not. They will.

But, we hope they will. Maybe some of you, are going to go on holiday, and you hope, to see this person, or do that, it's, it's, it's a might, hopefully. When we see the word, hope in scripture, it's important not to think of it, in that maybe, maybe not, kind of sense.

Because, because, in the Bible, hope is much more concrete. It's much more, in that sense of, expectation, that what God, has said is coming, will indeed, come.

And you see that pattern, in this psalm. The psalmist, reinforces the fact, that with God, there is forgiveness. There is mercy. There is redemption.

And on the basis, of all these hopes, he is setting his hope, on the Lord. And as verse 7 says, he calls Israel, to hope in the Lord, as well.

[42 : 09] So the psalmist is saying, I cry, I wait, I hope. All of these, require persistence. A cry to God, from the depths of fear, and despair, is going to be, a persistent cry.

Waiting for God, when the answer doesn't come, straight away, needs to be, a persistent waiting. And hoping, for the promise, of God's word, to become a reality, has to be, a persistent, hoping.

And it's all teaching us, to pray, with persistence. And that's reinforced, so powerfully, by the two parables, that we read, from Luke's gospel.

And Luke, in fact, makes that explicitly clear, because he said, at the start of chapter 18, it says, at the start of chapter 18, he told them this parable, to the effect, that they ought always, to pray, and not lose heart.

Now, the two parables, that we read, are actually very, very fascinating, because, in each of them, it's really interesting, because the person, portraying God, in these parables, is actually not very nice.

[43 : 12] And that's a lesson, in terms of reading parables, when you read a parable, it's important, not to look, look too much, into the details, rather to think more, in terms of the, the main point, because, you know, in the parable, you've got the friend, who comes to, his friend's house, and, you know, the picture basically, is he's knocking on the door, saying, oh please, can you give me some bread?

And the friend is like, oh, what are you doing here? And later, you've got the judge, and, you know, this widow is hounding me, and I don't fear God, and I'm not really interested, in people, but she's just harassing me.

And, and actually, the, the, the friend who's being disturbed, and the judge, who's not particularly kind, they're actually being used, in the parable, as an image of God, not to say that God is unkind, or, or unjust, but it's what we would call, uh, an, a, a, a, or, a, argument, which is basically a, how much more, argument.

So, it's basically, Jesus is saying, look, if the, slightly worn out friend, and if the unfair judge, will actually answer, the requests, of those who come to him, how much more, will a good God, provide for those, who are in need?

So, the judge and the friend, are deliberately bad examples, of people, who are actually willing to help, and that's not teaching us, that God's impatient, or bad tempered, it's teaching us, that, that if these bad examples, will help, how much more, will God the Father, who's good, and wise, and kind, how much more, will he help?

[44 : 46] And the key point, is that's telling us, to be persistent, in prayer. In fact, it's reminding us, that God, expects us, to be persistent, in prayer.

And that's, such an important thing, to think about, because, I think if we're all honest, being persistent, and persevering, in prayer, can be very difficult.

Often, we lose heart, and as we said at the start, often, we feel like giving up, and maybe, maybe some of you here today, and you have, either given up, or come very close, to giving up.

Maybe you've been praying, for something, for a long, long time. Maybe you've been praying, for somebody you know, and love, to come to faith. Maybe, you've been praying, yourself, to come to faith, to have assurance, from the Lord.

Maybe you've been praying, for help, in overcoming a sin, that you're struggling with, again, and again, and again. Maybe you're praying, for somebody who's unwell. Maybe you're praying, with your own health. Maybe you're praying, for guidance, about a big decision, that you have to make.

[45 : 56] And, there are many things, that many people, have prayed for, for a long, long time. And sometimes, it feels like, nothing's happening.

Sometimes, it feels that, God's not answering. And that can be so hard, and so discouraging. And so, maybe, you know, if things are going well, it feels easy to pray.

But if things are going badly, it's way harder. And our motivation, evaporates. The thing I want to notice here, for our own prayer lives, that Psalm 130, teaches us, so beautifully, is that, persistence in prayer, can be encouraged, and motivated, by both the highs, and the lows, of spiritual experience.

In other words, persistence in prayer, can be, can be helped, whether things are going well, or whether things are going badly. Because this Psalm, is a mix, of both. It's a mix, of the highs and lows, of spiritual experience.

And that's the case, for us, so often, our experience, is a mixture, of highs, and lows. Sometimes we feel confident, we feel, like we're close to the Lord, we feel like we're understanding things, it's as though the Lord, is right with us, and the wind is in our sails, other times, we're full of doubt, and we're thinking, it's gone even there, am I really a Christian?

[47 : 26] Does prayer even work? Sometimes, we can feel very patient, and we think, yes, I'm going to keep on playing, and I know, that this might take a long time, to be answered, but I'm going to keep going, I feel motivated, and I know, that I have to be patient.

Sometimes we feel the opposite, and we're like, Lord, why are you not answering this prayer? And we feel so frustrated. Sometimes we feel like, we can understand, what's going on, so, you know, we think, well, okay, I can see things are fitting together, in my life.

This happened, it wasn't expected, but, then that happened, and then I realized, that's what, that's what, was meant to be, and it all kind of lines up, and you see the pieces of the jigsaw, fitting together.

Other times, life feels like, someone's picked up the jigsaw box, and just shaking it, and throwing it out, and nothing makes sense, and everything seems, uncertain.

The life of discipleship, as you follow Jesus, will bring all of these, maybe this week, will bring all of these, in your experience, confidence, or doubts, patience, impatience, knowledge, uncertainty, all of them, can fuel, persistence, in prayer.

[48 : 38] And I want you to remember that. So when you feel confident, when you feel like, things are going well, use that energy, and that confidence, to knock on the door of heaven, confident, in all that he can do.

Or when you're full of doubt, just remember that, on our own, we can do nothing. And instead, we've got to just lay everything, before the Lord, in prayer.

When you feel patient, keep faithfully praying, keep patiently waiting. If you feel impatient, then run even faster, to the Lord, and plead with him, to answer.

When you feel like, you understand, things, and things are fitting together, well, well, in those moments, we know, that we need to keep praying. When we feel uncertain, in those moments, well, we pray, why?

Because we know that, there's nothing else, that we can do. We don't know, what else we can do. In other words, in all our experiences, whether things are going, really well, or whether things are going, really badly, what does God want you to do?

- [49 : 46] He wants you to pray to him. To talk to him. And to lay it all out, before him. So, if you're a Christian, or if you become a Christian, you must never forget, that when things are going well, that's when we run to Jesus, and we thank him, and we praise him, and we rejoice, in the experience, of his goodness, that he's brought in our lives.

When things are going well, we run to Jesus. But you've also got to remember, that when things are going wrong, when you have stuffed up badly, when you feel low, and flat, when you are doubting, and when you're really not sure, what you are, or where you should go, what do you do?

You run to Jesus. Run to Jesus, when things are going well, run to Jesus, when things are going, really badly. And, in him, you find the comfort, and the help, and the shelter, and the protection, that you need.

And, it's all a great reminder, that the danger, to our prayer lives, and to the life, of discipleship, the danger, is not actually, when things are going well, or when things are going badly.

The real danger, is when we're just not that bothered. That's, that's when we're in danger.

- [51 : 26] And, that's brought out, very powerfully, in the parables. In Luke 11, and in Luke 18, there's a word, that comes up again, and again, it's the word, trouble, or troubled.

It's like, oh, my friend is troubling me. This widow, is troubling me. And, and, it's a beautiful word, because, it's showing, that the widow, and the friend, they were troubled, by their situation, and that led them, to go and trouble, the judge, and the friend, who had bread.

And, all of this, is helping us to see, that, that, that, this whole issue, of persistence, in prayer, is exposing, our heart's motivation. Because, persistence, in prayer, doesn't actually come, from being all super holy, or knowledgeable, or impressive.

It actually comes, from being troubled. troubled. And, that's why the question, we have to ask, is not, you know, are you sorted, or, are you full of knowledge?

The question, we have to ask ourselves, is, are we troubled? Are we troubled, by, by, the fact, that there's people, around us, who don't know Jesus?

- [52 : 44] Are we troubled, by, the fact, that we, we desperately, need to see more people, come, to hear the gospel, and come to faith? Are we troubled, by the fact, that, that there, there needs to be, a gospel witness, in this community, for the next, 20, 40, 60, 100 years?

Are we troubled, by that? And, are we troubled, enough, to trouble God, in our prayers? And, that's a really, important question, for us to think about.

And, we should use, all that, troubledness, to fuel, our prayers. So, your, your, your prayers aren't, fueled by your impressiveness, and, your prayers are fueled, your prayers are fueled, by your troubledness, by the fact, that you care, about your children, and your grandchildren, and your neighbours, and your community.

That troubledness, fuels our prayers, as we bring it all, before the Lord. That's, what the psalmist did. He was in trouble.

He was in the depths. He was in a low moment. And, all of that, fueled, his prayers. In other words, it's reminding us, that when it comes to prayer, don't, ever, give up.

- [54 : 03] Don't, ever, give up. So, if you're a believer, keep praying. Keep praying. Keep praying, that you would grow in your faith.

Keep praying, for your family. Keep praying, for your colleagues, for your friends. Keep praying, for the work of the church, locally, and nationally.

Keep praying, for missionaries, that you know about. Keep praying, that the gospel, will shape, every single part, of your life. Keep praying, that you would be able, to be a witness for Jesus, in everything that you do, this week.

Keep praying, that you would know, more and more, of God's love, in your heart, and that his love, would shape, everything that you are, and everything, that you do. When things go well, keep praying. When things go badly, keep praying.

Keep on praying. So if you're a believer, keep praying. If you're not a believer, well first and foremost, start praying. And if you, if you have not prayed, for years, if you've not, prayed, for years, then, then I want that season, to end tonight.

[55 : 07] and I want tonight, to be the night, when you say, Lord, help me to pray. Lord, help me to pray.

And bring me back, close to you. So start praying, or restart praying, and keep praying, and don't give up, and remember, Jesus has promised, it shall come to pass, that everyone, who calls, on the name of the Lord, shall be, saved.

Keep praying. He is waiting. He's listening. Just go for it. Pray, with persistence. And, I'm realizing, that's five to seven, and I'm coming, to my second point.

But, my children have this joke, that, I always announce, two points, or three points, and they're like, oh, we've got two points, we're going to look at these two points. And they said, Dad, the truth is, you're going to spend, 90% of your sermon, on point number one, and then squeeze point two, into the last two minutes.

Which, we're about to do again tonight. So, forgive me for that. I want us just to think, a little bit, about praying, because, of persistence. And, to see that, we're going to pick out, another couple of things, from Psalm, 130.

[56 : 35] So, we're not just praying, with persistence, we're praying, because, of persistence. And, let me highlight three phrases. Back in Psalm, 130, the first one, is in verse four.

It says, there's forgiveness, with you, all the phrases, are connected, by the word, with. There's forgiveness, with you. Verse eight, with the Lord, there's mercy.

Oh, sorry, verse seven, that is. And then, end of verse seven, with him, is plenteous, redemption. Forgiveness, mercy, redemption.

all of that, all of that, is also, the language, of persistence. But, this time, it's not talking about, our persistence.

It's talking about, God's persistence. And so, when we say, pray because of persistence, I'm not talking about, our persistence.

[57 : 37] persistence. The reason that we can pray, is not because, we are persistent. It's because, God, is so, utterly, and magnificently, persistent.

And the words, that we've highlighted, in this psalm, capture this, so beautifully. Forgiveness, is all, about, persistence. Look at verse, three.

If the Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? So, the Lord, can mark our iniquities, and he can hold them, against us, and they give him, every reason, he needs, to give up on us.

But, God, chooses a different path. He chooses, the path, of persistence. And, that means, forgiveness.

And, the whole reason, God, offers us, forgiveness, is because, he wants to solve, the problem of sin. He wants to restore, our relationship with him. He wants, to give you, a way back.

[58 : 42] He wants to pull you, out of the depths. Our sin is a, massive problem. And, the simplest solution, is for God, to just walk away, and abandon us. But, he doesn't do that.

And, the reason he doesn't, is because, his commitment to you, is so, persistent. That's why, he forgives you. And, he forgives you, for everything.

Merchie, the word, Merchie, in verse 7, is also about persistence. Now, that word, is a beautiful word. It's a Hebrew word, hezed. And, it's actually a very hard word, to translate, because, it actually conveys more, than what one English word, can express.

So, Merchie is part of what it conveys. It also conveys loyalty. It conveys the idea, of commitment. It conveys the idea, of love, that will never give up.

And so, sometimes it's translated, steadfast love. Sometimes it's translated, loving kindness. It's a love, that runs to the core, of your heart, but which motivates, outward action.

[59 : 45] And, it's the love, that lies at the heart, of all of God's, covenant promises, towards his people. And, the key point is this, it's a love, that never gives up. In other words, it's a love, that is eternally, persistent.

And, that's the level, that God's love, operates at. It's not a changeable love. It's not a love, that requires you, to maintain, a decent standard. It's not a love, that lasts for as long, as you are lovable.

It's a love, that is relentlessly, persistent. It's a steadfast love, an unshakable love, an undiminishable love.

And then we have, redemption. And that's all about, persistence too. Redemption speaks, of buying back, what belongs to you. It's marketplace language, it's the language, of ransom.

In other words, it's the language, of cost. And that's how, God's persistence, shows itself. He will not give up, he will carry the cost, he will pay the price, because he is not, giving up on you.

[60 : 54] And of course, all of this, all of this, is pointing us, towards Jesus. We can have forgiveness, because of everything, that he has done for us, on the cross. And in doing so, we see the magnitude, of God's mercy, and steadfast love, towards you, because that's how far, God will go, all the way to the cross.

And in paying that price, he takes all our sin, upon ourselves, so that he can redeem you, and bring us, out of slavery, to sin, out of the depths, and back into his family.

And it's all because, when it comes to your salvation, when it comes to you, being safe forever, God is relentlessly, and unstoppably, persistent.

If persistence, means never giving up, then the cross, is the greatest example, of persistence, that you will ever see. And Jesus, went there, for you.

He did it all, for you. And this is reminding us, that the gospel, might motivate, our persistence, but the gospel, never relies, on our persistence.

[62 : 07] Never. The gospel, never relies, on my persistence, or on your persistence. It relies forever, on God's, magnificent, unrelenting, persistence.

And, and that, and that, is what makes the gospel, so utterly amazing. Because, you know, when I talk about, persistence in prayer, you know, I could, I could stand here, and say, you know what, you have to make sure, you're persistent enough, so that God might hear you, and that you might be saved, but actually, that's not the truth.

We're persistent in prayer, not in order to be good enough, for him, but actually, we're persistent in prayer, because, before we were ever persistent, he was persistent, with us.

And, we need to marvel, at the, beauty, and wonder, of God's persistence, towards us. And, that's what will motivate, our persistence, as we follow him, this week.

If you're a Christian, or if you become one, then you receive the benefits, of all, of God's persistence. So, God the Father, has adopted you, as his child forever, forever, you're his.

[63 : 27] That's persistence. The Holy Spirit, has come to dwell, in your heart. He's never leaving you. That's persistence. The Holy Spirit, is sanctifying you, transforming you, every day, to make you more, and more like Jesus.

That's persistence. Jesus, is preparing a place, for you in heaven. That's persistence. God is holding you, and he's never letting you go. That, is persistence.

And, he is the one, who does it all, and he never, ever, gives up. And, if you, are not yet a Christian, or if you're not sure, where you stand, why do you think, God has you here?

tonight. It's because, of his persistence. He's persistently, seeking you.

Persistently calling you. Persistently waiting for you. And he's not giving up.

[64 : 43] And so, for all of us, he's the one, that we turn to. And he's the one, that we rest in forever.

And so, please, with God's help, may we all be persistent, in prayer. But, more than anything, I want you to pray, I want you to pray, to pray with persistence.

I want you to pray, because, of his persistence. His unrelenting, persistence, to make you his. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the amazing gift of prayer.

We pray that we would, we would be and remain persistent in prayer, day by day, looking to you, leaning on you, calling on you. But we thank you even more, for your persistence with us.

[65 : 55] For your persistence, that sent your son to the cross. And that poured out your spirit, to change our lives, and the lives of so many others. And we thank you for your forgiveness, for your steadfast love, for your redemption, for your unrelenting persistence.

And as we come here tonight, we leave the past in the past, just as you have done. And we pray that each one of us, would turn to you, follow you, look to you and lean on you, tonight, and forever.

Amen. We're going to close with this psalm, that we've been looking at together. Psalm 130, which just captures so beautifully, both the depths of our struggles, but the magnitude of God's grace.

Lord, from the depths to thee, I cry, to my voice, Lord, do thou hear, and to my supplications voice, give an attentive ear. Psalm 130, to God's grace. For from the depths, to thee I cry, my voice, my support, to the love, and to my supplications voice, Lord, do you?

Unto my supplication's voice give an attentive ear.

[67 : 32] Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shes mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgiveness is that fear thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait. My hope is in His word.

More than the last for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord.

I sin more than there that to watch, the morning light to see.

Let Israel hope in the Lord, for within mercies be, and plenteous redemption is ever found with Him.

[69 : 27] And from all His iniquities He Israel shall redeem.

Amen. As you go into a new week together, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen. Yes, Thank you.