

Jesus' Life of Prayer - 7th November 2021

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[0 : 0 0] As with, I guess, everything in life, in particular how we consider and relate to God, we can do no better than to look at the life and person of Jesus.

So this is true from how we treat one another to the kind of priorities we have in life, right through to the way we're called to challenge injustice or champion the needs of the poor.

Jesus is our template, our example for how to do life God's way. And so tonight, I'd like us to spend some time thinking in particular on this topic of prayer about the ways in which Jesus himself prayed.

Because if Jesus is our model for life, then we do well to see what we might learn from his prayer life for our own. And the good news is that if we look through the accounts of Jesus' life, they're actually saturated in prayer right from the off.

If we start from the beginning and the way in which Mary, Jesus' mum, carried Jesus in her womb. She did so in a prayerful way.

[1 : 0 7] In fact, we're given a record of a song of praise she sang while carrying him. A prayerful song. My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. The one we know and call the Magnificat.

There's obviously a spirit of prayer, of song, which is seeping, if you like, into Jesus' life from the word go, from his mum in particular.

We know as well, though, for example, that as an adult, this singing gene was obviously strong in him. Jesus himself sang songs of praise, songs of prayer to God.

So, for example, at the end of the Last Supper, we're told this, that after Jesus and his disciples had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus, it seems, was in the habit of singing hymns, singing his prayers, just as his mum was, just as we as a church are.

Elsewhere, we see some of his postures as well. It's not just the words he's using, but the physical positions he takes when he prays. So, for example, when he's feeding the 5,000, we're told that taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks.

[2 : 2 3] He lifted his eyes, it seems. Following perhaps the example of the psalmist who says this, I lift my eyes to you, O God, enthroned in heaven.

Other times, we know that Jesus didn't lift his head, but prays low down, if you like. So, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read this, that going a little farther, Jesus fell with his face to the ground and prayed.

Although it seems Jesus' prayer posture was pretty varied on this night. That's from Matthew's Gospel. In Luke's Gospel, it describes him like this. Jesus knelt down and prayed, probably a combination of the lot, given the pressure he was under on that night.

On other occasions, though, Jesus commends the idea of standing while praying, saying, whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your sins.

I guess we could say that Jesus understands that the position we take in our prayers will depend perhaps on our mood, perhaps on the content of our prayers, the context of where we're at, and so on.

[3 : 37] So, sometimes kneeling feels right, sometimes falling face down, you know, prostrate may be the right position to take. Other times, heads up is better, maybe hands out, all that kind of stuff.

And I'm sure Jesus spent as much time praying while walking as much as anything. I wonder for you, what would you say is your sort of default physical position, your posture when you pray?

Are you sort of head down, are you hands out, are you standing, are you sitting, are you kneeling? And if we think about that, why might that be our default position that we choose to take? And how might our posture affect the way we pray?

Just turn to someone next to you and say, oh, you don't have to, but if you want to just share. So, actually, I tend to pray like this or I pray like that, and I wonder if I do it because of this reason, and then we'll just have a little bit of feedback.

So, just share with each other. So, what are we reckoning? What are we reckoning? Have you got a sort of go-to posture or position when you pray? What is it about that?

[4 : 42] Or are you completely different each time? Or is it context-based in terms of what you're praying or how you're praying? What have we said? Anyone want to share? Probably just traditionally, I've always closed my eyes and bowed my head.

But just chatting with Paul, maybe thoughts come into your mind that way. But maybe we should look up more to pray. I'm not sure. I'm just saying if you're praying in traffic, best to keep your eyes open.

It wasn't anything too amazing. It's just I find it useful if I have my hands open. It's like accepting a gift.

Like you would if somebody gave you something in prayer. You're sort of accepting and receiving. You're asking for something and then you're receiving it, aren't you? Obviously, in proper Anglican churches, you have kneelers.

Yes. Yeah. And that was the way I was brought up. And you obviously, we still do kneeling for communion here, which is interesting. And I would say that's a form of prayer.

[5 : 47] When I went to a Baptist church, I was busy looking for the kneelers and they didn't have them. And they certainly didn't kneel for communion, which is so it's interesting. So to get out of your system and realize you can pray anywhere in any position at any time.

It's the relationship, isn't it? That's there. Right. I start the morning with prayer, particularly at the breakfast table, because I write my prayers out on the iPad.

I have a prayer list of mainly people I know and love. And then I'll pray any time, really, particularly when we see incidents on the news.

And sometimes I don't want to watch the news because it is so awful. But if I see it, then I have to pray for the people that you see. It's probably far too late because what you see isn't now.

It's probably a day or two ago. But I just find myself praying for these people. So that's my prayer line. There's a thought on that from C.S. Lewis.

[6 : 57] I might have mentioned this before, but he reckons if you pray after the event, not knowing how that event turns out, then God, who's outside of time, can sort of transport our prayers back to when...

Were you just saying that? Can sort of transport our prayers back in to make a difference somehow. It's sort of a mystery of prayer. But, yeah, don't worry about praying after the event because God can still use it, even if it's retrospectively.

So, yeah. Any other thoughts on posture and positions, Mark? Well, I've just said I was a bit old-fashioned, really, because until I came here, it was like hands together, eyes closed.

Always. Always. And then when I came here, I went out for prayer and Carol Winray, I think, undid my hands. That's it, really.

But I'm really old-fashioned, isn't I? Hands together. Oh, this is interesting. I know that's the way often we raced, yeah? Yeah. All right. Thanks for those.

[7 : 56] And hold that in mind because we'll sort of weave some other stuff through as we go. In terms of Jesus' prayer life, though, what else? Well, I think it's worth remembering that Jesus made a point of telling people when he'd been praying for them.

So to his disciples, we read this in Luke. He says, But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail. Now, why does Jesus say that he's prayed for someone? In this case, it's Peter, who he says it to at the Last Supper.

Well, I guess it's encouraging to think of anyone praying for us. But just imagine if it's Jesus himself. You know, how encouraging, how humbling must it have been to hear, on Peter's part in particular, how Jesus had been praying specifically for him out of the millions of people he could have been praying for.

At that moment, Peter was uppermost in Jesus' mind. And for us as well. You know, Jesus is interceding for us from his throne in heaven.

You know, we've all been the subject and are the subject, the focus of Jesus' prayers, which is pretty mind-blowing, really.

[9 : 07] I mean, yes, Peter, he goes on to deny Jesus three times, just an hour or two after the supper, it seems. But I guess Jesus' prayer was evidently effective, because Peter's faith didn't fail, ultimately.

It doesn't fail. It's just a few days later. It's Peter, one of the first, who rushes to the empty tomb before he encounters the risen Jesus. We know from elsewhere in the Bible that in the same way Jesus prayed for Peter, as I'm saying, he prays for us.

And the evidence for that is here. In Hebrews, it says, Therefore, Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede, to pray for them.

So, Jesus is therefore praying for you and I, asking his Spirit to help us. And I often think, you know, we often ask how we should pray, and maybe that's a question we'll weave through tonight.

But I wonder what it might mean for us to be willing to deep down accept the truth that Jesus is praying for us. How might that shape our perception and our relationship of Jesus?

[10 : 22] I wonder what difference that would make to our thoughts, our words, our actions, if we could realise how much Jesus is rooting for us. You know, if you've got something on your mind, and you know Jesus has already prayed for you to combat that, I suspect that would give us extra ability, if you like, to succeed in that.

What else? Well, the Gospels tell us that at times, when Mike was saying about praying at breakfast, Jesus was up at the crack of sparrows to pray sometimes. It says, Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.

But then equally, he's not just an early bird, no, he's a night owl as well. At the end of the day, he'd also find somewhere quiet to pray. We're told this, Jesus dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

That happens towards the end of the day. And that's where we see Jesus starting to pray in the day, but continuing that prayer all through the night.

Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. That's some stamina, I think, for his prayer life.

[11 : 39] Again, Mike was saying, you know, breakfast prayer for him works. For me, I'm not a morning person at all. You ask my kids, I ask Gemma. The idea of me getting up for an early quiet time is just pretty horrific, really.

I mean, God might get a kind of grunted good morning from me when I'm in the shower or whatever, but mornings and meditation for me, they don't mix very well. I've tried it, but I just can't focus.

It's just not the way I'm made. Instead, though, I'm much more inclined to pray if I'm out and about, during the day, walking, Tony was saying driving, or perhaps best of all, late in the evening, much more of a night owl.

Gemma, though, my wife, she's the complete opposite, and she'll usually be up at least sort of quarter of an hour, 20 minutes before everyone else, and she's got in the habit of listening to a daily podcast called Lectio 365 as a way of her starting her day with God on her own, half six-ish or so.

And the good news is, though, as we've seen, Jesus models praying at all times of day and night. So no one time is more right for us to pray than any other.

[12 : 53] But again, I wonder for you, we talked about postures. Is there a time within the day, within the night, that you find yourself more inclined to pray than others?

I know Gemma's mum, she often wakes up in the middle of the night, she says, and if she's awake, she asks God, why am I awake? Who should I be praying for at this point? And often someone will come to her mind.

So she's quite a night prayer. I wonder for you, is there a time that works best for you with your prayers? Is there a time that's more difficult? And how does that tie in, I suppose, with your own faith journey again?

Maybe just for a minute or two. Just share the timing of your prayer life. What works, what doesn't work, and why, what do you think might that be? All right.

How's your body clock and your prayer sink in? How's it work for you? Maybe just two or three. I want to share the timing of their prayers. What works? I'm a Gemma's mum.

[13 : 54] I wake up in the middle of the night and usually there's some people come to mind. And then very often I'll drop them a car the next day. Since lockdown, I always used to drive to work.

It's disgraceful, really, because I only live just over a mile away. But I started walking and I found that really helps because you watch the sunrise and you see the fields and actually it puts you in a much better frame of mind and it makes you more thankful.

I think that's better for your prayer life if you can say thank you to God for the things that are ahead of you and it helps you stay calm before you actually get there as well. So I think that's been really useful. I thank God at night.

I always say that I'll pray, lighten our darkness. Lord, we pray and in thy mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night. And then I thank him for the morning and then I pray willy-nilly through the day.

Chit-chat type of thing through the day. Dare I confess that my busy life and lots of things in my head to make sure that we don't forget to put some prayer time in.

[14 : 56] We've said in terms of habit forming to attach it to something that we know we're always going to do. So we always have our evening meal and then either before we've had it or after we'll have our prayer time then.

And it means we're both praying together but it doesn't sort of get squeezed out of the day because you've attached it to something you know you're going to do. Yeah, I was just kind of talking about I think I'm a night-time person and often I'll be up in the middle of the night and I'll be like, oh, no, I'm tired.

Why am I awake? And so that's always an interesting one. So I tend to write a journal. So whatever it is that's in my head will go into my journal and then the next day I'll have a look.

Tony, on the other hand, is a morning person. So he will do... Yeah, no, so he'll be up, crack of dawn, and I'm like, oh, don't wake me up. But having a busy life, it just...

Yeah, getting up in the morning... Oh, no, unless I've got to get to work but I'm not getting up at 6. No, I'm saying sorry, Lord, but grab hold of Tony while he's up.

[16 : 01] Yes, because of work I get up early and the first thing I do when I open my eyes is thank God for another day and my best time is in the morning because I find that if I pray in the morning, I'm praying for guidance, I'm praying for wisdom, I'm praying for protection and that sets me up for the rest of the day because I don't want to take the chance and leave it to the evening.

So we're praying in the morning. God has got me covered through the day. But for some reason, he prompts me to pray if I see the emergency services going by.

So if I see the fire engine or an ambulance, I normally tend to say a little prayer that if it's a fire engine, that people are safe, they're not hurt, or if it's an ambulance, that God will protect them and hopefully there's no loss of life or any fatalities.

So I tend to pray when I see that, really. Thank you. Yeah, our kids do that. They don't as much now, actually, but they're used to growing up when there was a sort of blue light of an ambulance.

They'd be... And the trouble is, it got quite competitive. Who could get in first kind of thing, which kind of ruins the moment a little bit. But yeah, I take your point, Tony. Yeah. I think it's helpful, again, to know the variety that there is even in this kind of size gathering between us.

[17 : 26] But I guess for the disciples, they'd have been, you know, a dozen blokes with Jesus. Each of them would have had different personality types and preferences and stuff. And it's interesting how Jesus might have adapted to their preferences as well as them adapting to his.

And yet what's clear, I think, is that the disciples themselves were so impressed by Jesus' prayer life that they wanted to know how they might be able to pray in the same way that he managed.

So we read, for example, in Luke's Gospel, one day, Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray.

And so Jesus' prayer life seemingly inspired those who witnessed it to want that same kind of relationship, that same kind of interaction with God for themselves.

And so in this instance, Jesus goes on to teach his disciples what's known as the Lord's Prayer. And if you were here in church this morning, we played a clip of the Lord's Prayer which was used focusing on COP26 and the climate crisis, kind of contemporary twist, if you like, on the Lord's Prayer, the words that Jesus taught some 2,000 years ago.

[18 : 39] So I'm going to play that again because some of you weren't here, but I think it's a nice way to think about how the Lord's Prayer might be one in which we can adapt to the circumstances that are particularly on our mind at the moment.

So just a three or four minute video of a global focus, if you like, on the Lord's Prayer. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Creator God, who made all things, we acknowledge as your handiwork, we stand alongside all which you have created. Trees, rivers, mountains and valleys, soaring birds and scuttling creatures, creatures, all are held within your care.

May we grow in our love and appreciation for your creation and may our awe and wonder draw us closer to you, the God of all things.

Your kingdom come. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. For you so loved the world, the cosmos, the entirety of creation, of which we humans are just one part.

[20 : 04] May we learn again how to care for this planet. As we pause and consider the climate emergency, we remember that we're praying to the Lord of all the earth.

Give us today our daily bread. Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for your earth. We become a new creation of the kingdom. Sharing your provision and goodness with all our neighbors.

Founded on the covenant of your love. Lord God, you made the world and declared it was very good. As temperatures rise, storms rage, forests burn, and islands sink, it is the people who have done the least to cause the climate crisis, who are suffering the most.

We're waiting in Galo, we're waiting in Candogeon, and my own methiante with ready and I bore daim on risk. We stand together in sorrow. We ask for forgiveness for you are the God of all, who restores all relationships when we repent.

Forgive us for decades of an action and for not living in accordance with your will. As we forgive those who sin against us. I urge them, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority.

[21 : 26] World leaders gathered at COP26 carry a huge burden of responsibility over this world that you love so much. We hold them in our prayers. May they have humble and wise hearts.

We pray for anointed diplomacy, boldness, and conviction to show your love to those who have least. We pray for unity among the nations and for compelling voices and leaders to rise up so that miraculous action will begin.

We pray for unity and our hearts and our hearts and our hearts and our hearts and our hearts will be made for unity and our hearts and our hearts and our hearts will be made for unity but deliver us from evil.

May we remember that we are a global community. Our actions and choices affect one another. Help us resist the temptation to make choices for our convenience and to consider how those choices affect our neighbors across the world.

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. Help us respond with the radical love of Jesus.

[22 : 40] A love that disrupts the status quo and sacrifices itself to bring restoration. This is our responsibility. This is our worship.

Lord, renew us in a steadfast spirit and cleanse our hearts. Renew our minds and transform our lives. Renew our world.

Car c'est à toi qu'appartienne le règne, la puissance et la gloire. Now and forever. Amen. Amen. I like that video.

It's quite moving sometimes to hear people praying in their own native language. You realise that, you know, afresh that the global nature of our faith. But it's also a demonstration, perhaps, of the way in which the disciples asking Jesus to teach them how to pray is still bearing new fruit in new ways to this day.

But there's one little bit that I just want to come back to. If you notice from what Luke tells us here, when disciples do ask Jesus to teach them, there's something else which is interesting when it says, one day, Jesus was praying in a certain place.

[24 : 03] Now, where is this certain place, perhaps? We're seeing as this episode on the Lord's Prayer comes just after Jesus has met with Mary and Martha in Bethany.

It's possible, it's probable, perhaps, that it was the nearby Mount of Olives, a place we know Jesus liked to go and pray. But I guess this raises for us the idea that if it's true for Jesus, it may all be true for us, that certain places, certain locations, may well be particularly fruitful for our faith and our prayer life.

And if we think about it with Jesus, there are a number of different locations or landscapes where Jesus' prayer life seemed to be inspired by his surroundings.

If we think about the Mount of Olives where that probably was and we've seen him go up a mountainside in other verses we've looked at, high places, it's an obvious place perhaps to start thinking about the locations of Jesus' prayers.

And you probably know, as well as me, there's a long history of mountaintop experiences being a way for people to connect with God from Moses on Mount Sinai to Elijah on Mount Carmel.

[25 : 16] Jesus follows in this tradition but he adds his own twist to it perhaps by using mountains as a means to convey his own teaching, his own revelation as well.

So yes, the views from on high are always pretty spectacular unless the fog's coming but there's a way in which Jesus opens the eyes of those he's teaching on a mountainside not just for the view around him but to see him as he truly is.

So there are times for example where we see Jesus leading some of his disciples up a mountain possibly Mount Hermon which is the highest mountain in Israel where they see him transfigured before their eyes glowing, if you like, in his true glory.

and in terms of mountaintop experiences we're told it's Moses and Elijah again, two mountain meditators I suppose who appear with him and there's something in that it seems.

Elsewhere in Matthew's gospel we see Jesus famously teaching his sermon on the mount it's probably a hillside more like but it's somewhere where obviously there's a view that's where the physical location seems to be reflecting something of the broadness of the sermon that Jesus is delivering.

[26 : 29] Again in Matthew Jesus is said to have fed the 5,000 we're told on a mountainside indicating that people's views were enlarged in more ways than one with this miracle.

And then at the end of Matthew you might recall this one we see that the disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go for what's known as the Great Commission this releasing of his followers to go and make disciples of all nations.

Now why might mountains be significant places of prayerful encounter? I guess the walk up a mountain is preparation in itself a bit like Keith was saying that sort of pilgrimage to work almost sense of journeying with a purpose you know an intention to hear from God whilst the view itself as we're saying might give a sense of God's grandness and our smallness if you like at the same time maybe there's a humility and a reverence which comes from being on a mountain which helps us become more aware of God's voice speaking to us.

I won't ask us to share on this bit now we look at some other places as well but I wonder for us which high places if you like which places give us a renewed perspective in life you know do we find that there's places which help us to know God's presence in new ways depending on the elevation if you like as to where we are.

So mountains it seems were a key place for Jesus. What else was significant? Well it seems that water was something which mattered to Jesus most notably the Sea of Galilee this amazing freshwater lake in Israel a place where Jesus spent a lot of time and even made his home on its shore in the village of Capernaum so he taught from boats floating on the lake he walked on this water in the Sea of Galilee he calmed its storms helped his friends to miraculously land catches your fish and so on in all watery ways in which Jesus prayer life on this water bore fruit in people's lives and most significantly perhaps it was the water of the Jordan River this river which flows in and out of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus was himself baptised an act in which he identifies with us but also the fresh start that he enables us to make with God so if mountains are significant perhaps for the vista we get the sense of God's presence in that grand scale why might water be spiritually significant

[29 : 04] I guess there are numerous qualities which inform our prayer life being beside quiet waters the psalmist tells us restores or calms our soul get the ebb and flow of tides that reminds us of the inbuilt rhythms of creation get the cleansing properties of water help us to repent and be refreshed by God you get the thirst quenching nature of water which enables us to perhaps consider God's life-giving spirit there's a well in the Bible where Jesus meets with a woman that water cooler kind of place of meeting where lives are shared and God can move among us and so on and so on water all sorts of encounters and prayerful times that Jesus has and again what about you if Jesus seems to think that water is so significant for his ministry I wonder for us just being alongside water in form or shape the way we encounter

God we're so blessed having chased water just on our doorstep for me that's a great place to walk around it's just the right length you know four or five miles hour and a bit I can do that and that seems to be the length of time I need but the water helps me to engage with God as well I don't know about for you maybe you've got a water feature or a pond or whatever it is you have that you like to go to hold those thoughts though because there's another place of prayerful encounter for Jesus which was the desert the wilderness area where his own self-awareness came to the fore most famously the 40 days in the wilderness time of trial for him and it's significant that the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness happened just before he started his public ministry so the desert was a time of self-discovery self-understanding if you like also discerning God's guidance I guess for us too though we may not literally find ourselves in the wilderness or the desert there's not much of that around here but there will have been times when we've been in places of isolation or sparseness which call us maybe to self-reflection fresh chance to work out what our faith with God is all about

I guess in many ways lockdown has been that kind of desert place perhaps for us an enforced time of reappraisal might not like the desert times might not like that enforced nature of things but just as we're told Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness after his baptism so too perhaps I wonder if we do well to see desert-like times as opportunities to learn rather than burdens to endure again I wonder for you there have been desert times of late where you've known that your faith has been stretched or even fed but then fourthly Jesus also spends time prayerful time in gardens we know Jesus liked to pray in the garden of Gethsemane at a place he chose to pray on the night before he died now Gethsemane means olive press so maybe the presence of olive trees around him gave him encouragement reassurance if you like to know that even though he was being pressed on all sides on that night the pressing would produce this most precious of oil olive oil this anointing oil with which he would soon be able to go and endorse and unleash a movement because of his willingness to go through that pressing with God gardens I guess give us an awareness of creation the places of growth of seasons new life being born from death of plants being tended and cared for in order to reach their potential wonder for you in what ways might gardens be a place that brings you a sense of renewal where the seasons turn but you get new life coming out of decay and death so we've seen mountains we've seen water we've seen the wilderness we've seen gardens all informing

Jesus prayer life and so the last little bit of thinking about stuff for ourselves what about you any of these four resonate with you have you got other locations that seem to be particularly helpful for your prayer life last little chance have a chat with those around you and then we'll share a bit of feedback from that if we can it was when Keith was talking about walking in the countryside and whatever it took me right back to when I was a young lad growing up on the farm so cows is where it's at so I'd be told to go and get the cows up for milking and that bit avoid trekking over the fields so I'd go absolutely furious with life and everything all the way there but then miraculously on the way back it was all prayer and thank you God for this that and the other so I just wonder really when we go to some of these places yeah perhaps even in the garden if you'll get wound up about things and what have you and then somehow something God intervenes and it becomes a blessed place if I can put it that way

I don't stay out all night or anything like that but the night sky for me and the stars all my days I just I you know I've got animals so you do nip in and out when it's dark and I can't never just ignore it and walk back inside I find myself just out in the garden just at night time just oh God I just think there's billions of them you know what I mean and that just kind of just takes my breath away just to know that even though all that bigness that there's little me here and God can just hear me when I ask him something and he also says that he bends down he bends down to listen to us and I think that just gets me and I think he's there like a father just like saying talk to me but then when you get up in the morning and even though the sun's come out and it's a bright you can still see the moon sometimes and I'm just thinking you know he just never changes it just for me yeah it is amazing just really takes me to how big our God is but yeah he can every single one of us he has our voice that just that just amazes me

[35 : 54] I also find if I'm walking through a wooded area or like a mini forest that's a good time for me to pray and meditate but looking at these pictures I think what makes the surrounding area so in tune with God is that there's a peaceful calm around that area because there's not a lot of people there's not a lot of traffic there's not a lot of noise so there's a sense of quiet and stillness and peace even when you're high on the mountains or sometimes when you're by the water or even like you say in the desert there's not a lot of human interaction so to speak so you tend to find that it's just you and God in that place alone and you're relying on him you've got no distractions so you're more in tune you've got there that makes sense which is interesting because one last little thought a lot of these are out in nature rural kind of ideas but one last little thought for we have a final song there's there's one more tantalizing glimpse I think of how Jesus prayer life works from a passage we found in Luke's gospel where it's just as Jesus approaches Jerusalem on Palm Sunday having ridden on a donkey we're told this that as Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city he wept over it and said if you even you had only known on this day what what would bring you peace but now it is hidden from your eyes days will come upon you when your enemies will hem you in on every side they will dash you to the ground you and the children within your walls they will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of

God's coming to you now so it's a sort of prophecy if you like Jesus gives of the destruction of Jerusalem which would happen what some 30 40 years after that but I think the fact that we get that record of Jesus weeping over the city it's a it's an indication and an insight into Jesus compassion for people compassion which is prompted actually not by nature but by the urban ness the city in front of him as I say he prophesies as to what will happen as Jerusalem gets smashed ultimately by the Romans and he weeps because of this but it seems he weeps because he knows for these people that a different way of life was possible if only they'd have accepted it and I wonder if this this verse from Luke about Jesus weeping and prophetically praying if you like over the city it's an appeal to the need for us in in our towns and more built up settings to be open to God's prompting to pray for the people we meet as well as just encountering God in that one-on-one way that we might do more often in nature you know pray for their needs their hopes their flaws yes we have these nature encounters with God which are great but city life or town life suburban life you know community life wherever we are it seems it's equally if not more important than any other environment for the way it shapes our prayers because that's where we spend the majority of our time and I say that because if we if we think about the book of

Revelation the writer John he has a vision for the future this fully realized kingdom of God of a new city a new Jerusalem a holy city where people live with one another but also we're told with God pictures of an eternal city as the place where God is with us and I wonder if that kind of idea in Revelation where obviously things start in the garden in Genesis but they end up in a city in Revelation if that might inform and shape our prayer life as whilst mountains and water and desert and gardens all have their qualities seems it's city life it's people if you like not places which matter most to God and this picture of a city is of a place in which we live side by side in Revelation in a close-knit community sharing life with one another but with God in our midst if as Jesus demonstrates our prayer life is shaped and informed by our surroundings I wonder if perhaps this week and beyond if most of all our prayer life might be shaped not simply by the nature around us which is important but the lives the needs the joys the hopes of those we live alongside so yes we pray when we're prompted by the stars that's brilliant but I wonder if we walk past people in the street we're prompted by them as well so I guess my prayer in all this really is that as we journey into this coming week and beyond that wherever we are whenever we are however we're got an opportunity to pray we might do so knowing that we're called by

God to be part of this shared life with those around us we're not in isolation we're called to serve and be served called to bless and be blessed we're called to love and be loved and so my hope is that our prayer lives might be shaped by all around us yes but perhaps most of all shaped by those we live alongside as we lift their needs and our needs to God now time being what it is ironically we're not going to have much time to pray tonight and that's okay because it's really the idea being that this would be a way it gets thinking and take it into the week ahead what I want us to do though if we can if we can listen to a hymn it's the hymn what a friend we have in Jesus which is all about prayer as this plays perhaps you might just want to use these next three or four minutes for our own thoughts our own prayers with God in this place and ask him to root whatever it is that we've maybe has resonated with us tonight that will stand us in good stead in our prayer lives and our walk with God tonight tomorrow and in the days ahead so we'll sit and listen to this track you can sing along should you wish but uh let's use this as our own final time of prayer what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins what a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer everything to God in prayer oh what peace we often forfeit oh what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer oh what we do not carry everything to God in prayer have we trials and temptations is there trouble anywhere we should never be discouraged take it to the Lord in prayer can we find a friend so faithful who will be have we trials and temptations have we trials and temptations is there trouble is there trouble anywhere we should never be discouraged take it to the Lord in prayer can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrow share have we trials and temptations is there trouble anywhere we should never be have we trials and temptations is there trouble anywhere we should never be discouraged take it to the Lord in prayer can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrow share have we script for but we have verberental there trouble anywhere we should never midst

Thank you.

[44 : 58] Are we weak and heavy laid out, burdened with a load of care? Wrecious Savior still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise forsaking? Take it to the Lord in prayer. In His arms He will enforce you, and His love will shield you there.

Oh, what peace we often fulfill. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not care. Everything took on in prayer. And don't forget to leave it there.

Oh, what needless pain we bear.

We pray that we can take into the week to come. Whatever surroundings we are, that God would teach us how to engage with Him, prompted by what we're surrounded by, who we're surrounded by.

[46 : 49] So, say a final prayer for us, and then we'll go on our way. But Lord, would you help us to reflect that humility of the disciples and teach us how to pray?

Might be we've been relating to you for a long time. Might be we're fairly new in the faith. Each of us have new things to learn from you, and will do for eternity.

So, I pray for us, Lord, that you would teach us to pray this week, perhaps in fresh ways. That you'd open our eyes to our surroundings.

That the timing of where you prompt us, and how you prompt us to pray, might just alert us afresh to your Spirit with us. Inspire us, we pray, through Jesus and the model He gives us of this comprehensive way of praying.

And may you enrich our prayer life, that we might fall evermore in love with you, we ask. Amen. Amen.

[47 : 59] And the Lord does provide, because West Ham have beaten Liverpool 3-2 as well. So, there we go. Alright. God bless.