

# Sunday 6th July 2025 - Living Prayer: More Than Words

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Date: 06 July 2025

Preacher: Dave Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. We're carrying on with our series on prayer. And this morning we're looking at prayer being more than just words.

! I don't know how often you come to pray and feel that words are never quite enough. There are some beautifully written prayers, so well written, they're like poetry really. And the Bible contains many written prayers. But equally, the Bible shows us that prayers are also more than words.

And when we look at the life of Jesus, he doesn't just go around saying prayers. His love and grace are practical, bringing healing of body, mind and spirit.

And if you think about it, the very act of communion is prayer using bread and wine. Prayer in the Western church has, over the centuries, taken on certain ways of doing things, which we tend to value above all else.

[ 1 : 18 ] We see monks and nuns as being devoted to prayer. Prayer. They withdraw from society and somehow we see them as almost professional prayers who come across as holy.

They've somehow got it right. They are seen as experts in the task of praying. And therefore, we tend to see ourselves as amateurs who simply don't know how to pray.

And we haven't got the right words or indeed the time. Best leave it to the professionals like monks and nuns and vicars and spiritual leaders.

Because after all, you need to have the right words. Getting up and doing something is one of the most beautiful and practical aspects of prayer.

Words are important, but often when we do something, a physical action, prayer takes on a whole new dimension.

[ 2 : 26 ] We're used to seeing candles lit as prayers in some churches. And the candle continues to burn once the words have stopped.

The prayer carries on, so to speak. It was so good to hear a little bit from Hazel a moment ago. And a few months ago, we were asked to provide a number of items for Hazel to take to Kenya.

And they are little practical prayers sent with hope and love. And now, we have beautiful things from Kenya.

It's all right, isn't it? Okay. These friends from Kenya are making clothes and crafts to empower themselves to be self-sufficient.

They would always prefer to work and earn a living rather than be funded. And when we buy their work for a proper amount, it brings them freedom.

[ 3 : 34 ] It encourages and inspires them. It's an answer to prayer. They are all prayers of one form or another.

Prayers of love, joy, and hope for a better world. Prayers we can understand. Prayers that are uncomplicated.

Prayers that are tangible. And that we can identify with. Prayers beyond words. Often, we can be so focused on saying prayers with lots of fine words and all we want is a quick answer.

This kind of thinking has led to our own prayers being essentially functional. Something you do to get the desired effect. I pray to get an answer.

It's very appealing because it puts ourselves, us, in charge and at the very centre of prayer. As soon as we do this, we make prayers a way to get what we want.

[ 4 : 45 ] Our thinking becomes, how can I get God to do what I want God to do? And we end up getting in a terrible mess, trying to manipulate God.

This all ends up being completely delusional, making us believe we're on God's side. If only people believed what we believe and prayed the way we do.

It's so easy, unfortunately, to slip in this way of thinking. And we do hear this far too often. It's so ingrained to the way that we've been taught to pray.

And we only see prayer from our own point of view. Jesus is constantly on the move, busy with people, understanding their situation, rubbing shoulders, responding to their needs.

At times, Jesus does indeed withdraw to a quiet place for time alone with his father. To refocus, to be refreshed and renewed.

[ 5 : 54 ] But then it's very much back to it, busy rubbing shoulders with people and understanding their needs. So this morning, I'm going to ask you to take part in two practical things, which I hope will take us all out of our comfort zones and help us to understand that our prayers can take many different forms and are not just words.

Throughout history, people have been on the move. God's people were wandering in the Sinai Desert for 40 years after escaping slavery in Egypt.

And Jesus himself was a refugee, as these verses from Matthew show us. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. Get up, he said.

Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet. Out of Egypt, I called my son. So today, let us remember those who've had to flee all they know.

[ 7 : 25 ] I would like you to imagine what it would be like if your home wasn't a safe place at all. Just imagine if you had no choice but to leave your home and find somewhere else to stay.

How would you manage? How would you cope? Around the world, about 120 million people have been forced to leave their homes.

To leave everything they have known. Sometimes it's because there are men fighting nearby. And sometimes it's because they can't grow food because climate change has made the land too dry.

About 70 million people have had to leave home and find somewhere else to live in their own country. And more than 40 million more have had to leave their country and look for another country to take them in.

And we're now going to do something you probably will not like. But we're going to pray for those displaced people. Not just in our words, but in one huge action as a group.

[ 8 : 37 ] I'm going to ask you to pick up everything you've brought with you. Your bag, your coat, your stone. And to move. Yes, to move.

There's no need to move far. Perhaps just two or three rows is enough. But you must move. Please move. Move. It feels uncomfortable, doesn't it?

Take your bags, your stones. Please stay with those you came with. Take care of the children. Help those who can't move easily.

But move somewhere else with your whole group. You have to move.

You don't have to move far, but you have to move from the place where you are. It's time to find somewhere new to settle. We are doing this because we want to feel what it's like to be forced to move from the place where you were so settled.

[ 9 : 57 ] Being forced to move can be chaotic. If you have children and there are people with you with limited mobility, it's certainly not convenient. And for some of you, this move will make you angry.

Why do we have to do this? I like sitting here. We're comfortable with those around us. Moving forces us to see things differently.

Forces us to view things from another perspective. Across the world, people are forced to move many times.

They didn't choose to move. They were forced to move. Some families have had to move many, many times. Being forced to move leaves you longing for home and safety.

We're going to pray. Loving God, we pray for all those people in the world who are forced to move from their homes. Hear us for the displaced people of Gaza.

[ 11 : 05 ] Hear us for the displaced people of South Sudan. Hear us for the displaced people of Afghanistan. Hear us for the displaced people of Ukraine.

Hear us for the displaced people of Syria. Hear us for those here in the UK ejected from their homes or fleeing violence in their homes.

Hear us, we pray. Hear us. Amen. Amen. Can we say together these words from Psalm 137? By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept when remembered Zion. There on the poplars, we hung our harps.

And there our captors asked us for songs. Our tormentors demanded songs of joy. They said, sing us one of the songs of Zion.

[12:10] How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? And the second thing.

You've collected a stone today. A stone is a simple way of saying a prayer. Nothing complicated. Nothing fancy.

A simple prayer. We read in Genesis the story of Jacob. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, surely the Lord is in this place.

And I was not aware of it. He was afraid and said, how awesome is this place? This is none other than the house of God.

This is the gate of heaven. And early the next morning, Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

[13:12] And he called the place Bethel. In Luke chapter 19, we read, some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, teacher, rebuke your disciples.

I tell you, Jesus replied, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. And the miracle is that the stones already do cry out in praise to God.

Please hold on to your stone. What does this stone represent to you if it's a prayer?

Is it a prayer for yourself? Something you find difficult? Or something you struggle with?

Is this stone a prayer for someone else? Is this stone a prayer of thanks? Or just simply a stone that represents holding on?

[14:31] Prayer is not simply about words. It's also about touch or sound or something visual.

Prayer involves all our senses.

It's not otherworldly. Hold on to your stone and listen to this prayer. It's one of my favourite things, collecting stones at the seaside.

Some rough and jagged chips from an old block. Others, smooth as silk and delectable to the touch. I like to gather them, fill my pockets. Not sure why.

Though I love to keep a special stone for someone special. Can they really cry out to you, these stones, each in their own way? I know they sing your praise.

I've heard them many times when the waves wash over them, making them shuffle and tumble and chime gleefully. What is that if it isn't praise? I'm also pretty sure that they pray for us when we hold them in our palms when not sure what to say.

[15:41] Maybe it's their ancient wisdom. Millions of years witnessing dinosaurs, ice ages and kingdoms come and go. I just know that feeling a single stone, the only one in the world like it, in the palm of my hand makes me feel that I too am held.

So to finish, we're going to have a little time of silence as we hold our stones and pray. And then we'll listen to some music.

Music is another form of prayer, isn't it? Which is not just words. And when we come to the clip, you'll see it's interpreted by sign language.

Which is a visual form of words. And when the music plays, please feel free to come and lay your stone here on the altar.

If you wish. Or if you prefer, just hold on to your stone. And place it there once the service has finished. Or if you prefer, take it home and keep it somewhere special.

[16:58] But know this. Know this. That God hears your prayer. Let's just be quiet for a moment.

Yes. Yes.

Yes. So if you wish, come and place your stone on the altar. Or as I say, hold on to it and put it there at the end.

Or if you wish, please take it home. Thank you.

Cause your care on his shoulders.

[18:22] Oh, cause your care on his love. Yes.

On his shoulders Oh, curse your care On his love When I'm lonely, console me, ignite my flame In these broken days, fix my ways with your grace When I'm searching, when I'm hiding But my hiding

place, I'll trust in your ways

Cause you'll get On his shoulders Cause you'll get On his love The storms might come, but he'll never leave Take his word, he'll forever be Source of strength when we're running out of energy Place your cares on these shoulders, the remedy He'll give you strength that is needed for every task I know he's on our side and that's everything In the past, they just led us even through the dark And anything we need, we can ask Cause I know Cause I know Cause I know You're with me You're near me You're for me You're for me I know You're listening And listening And leading And loving And loving And loving And loving

And free me, and carry me I know that you're with me, you're near me, and you're for me And my weakness, my trust, you're in this darkest and this hard And I'm lonely, come and soul me, and I'm searching, and I'm burning Oh, I know that you're with me, you're near me, and you're for me Oh, yeah So I'll cross my cash I will cross my cash On your shoulders On your shoulders I'll cross my cash I'll give you everything I can On your side Because you can't believe Because you love me I will cross my cash On his shoulders On his shoulders

When I'm with you, I'm strong So I give it all to you On his shoulders On his shoulders On your shoulders Cause my hand is on his shoulder I know he's on his side and that's everything Cause my hand is on his shoulder So I give it all, I give it all to you I give it all, I give it all to you I'll cast my hand on his shoulder I'll cast my hand on his shoulder

[ 22 : 46 ] I'll cast my hand on his shoulder I'll give you my words, Lord, your heart Prayer is much more than words And all the people said, Amen