

Text: Ephesians 1:1-18, 15-17

Sunday 20th September 2020

Brightons Parish Church

Message

Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's Word.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be pure and pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

We're halfway through our series on prayer, responding to this call from the Lord to grow as a people of prayer, that His purpose for us – to 'invite, encourage and enable people to follow Jesus' – might be realised in our day and in our community. We've seen the importance and value of the Lord's Prayer, how it can shape us and help us know what to pray.

Then on Tuesday night of last week, I put into practice what I'd preached on, taking to the streets of Brightons and prayer walking, for about half an hour, as a means of praying for others. If you missed the live event, you can still watch the recording on our YouTube channel, and it might give you ideas, or a flavour, of what prayer walking can be like.

In that time of prayer, it was my privilege to pray for the wider community, but I also got to pray for our church family, for people who identify with Brightons, who say this is their spiritual home. This call from the Lord to pray, is also a call to pray for one another and that's the focus of our reflections this morning.

In the letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul mentions “Father” and “prayer” more times than in any of his other letters. It seems that having God as our Father, and belonging to His family, should result in prayer. Later in the letter, **Paul says:** ‘...be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.’ (Eph. 6:18)

Part of the reason why Paul will again and again weave together having God as our Father with prayer for the family of God is because of what Father God was doing through His Son Jesus. **Paul writes:** ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ.** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he

predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ...’ (Eph. 1:3-5)

Paul is saying that it is in the nature of God to draw people into relationship, into His family. Before the creation of the world, there was Father, Son and Holy Spirit **existing in perfect community and from the overflow of their love they sought to extend that community, to have a family, a people that were their own. And so, God made choices, God made a plan, God acted intentionally, with purpose, exerting His will so that one day you might have the invitation to come into the family of God.**

****Friends, in this passage,** in the Scriptures as a whole, the goodness of God is revealed, for we have a heavenly**

Father who seeks us and pursues us. He is not distant, He is not cold or austere, but rather He delights in you, He loves you so greatly that His Son died for you. I wonder, do you have this relationship with God? Have you responded to God's invitation?

If you have, you're now part of the family of God, bought at a price, dear and precious to the Father, and so, we should treat each other that way as well. Often, we can misunderstand church thinking it's just another club or a group to belong to. Because of that it's easy to take one another for granted, or just to be surface level in our care for each other. **But Paul models something** different: Paul earnestly gives himself away for the church - Paul gives his time, Paul serves, Paul encourages and underpinning it all Paul prays for the family of God.

So, here's the invitation for this week of prayer. Remember, I said each week we'd have something to pray or do. Well, this week I invite you to turn to Ephesians and use one of Paul's prayers. You can find them in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 15-17, and Ephesians chapter 3 verses 16-19.

Take one or both of these prayers and pray them for our congregation and for our organisations. Pray them for your Pastoral Grouping. Pray them for our Boys and Girls Brigades, as well as our Sunday School groups. Because we are family, we are part. of the family of God because of Jesus, because of the love of Father God, and so He calls us all to reflect His love to one another, by caring enough to pray. May it be so. Amen.

We close our time together with our final song...

HYMN *Hymn of the Saviour*