

'PRAYER IN LUKE'S GOSPEL' – HOMILY - 16 OCTOBER 2016

Over the next two weekends, Luke's Gospel looks at some aspects of prayer.

The reading from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy, Chapter 3:16, tells us today that,

"All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright". (New JB version)

So then, as we ponder Luke's Gospel, how will our understanding of prayer change and guide us?

(The written homily today is much longer than the homily I give at Mass this weekend, and adds a review of some of the lessons from the previous 17 chapters that we heard this year.)

For many chapters before today's passage, Luke has been teaching us about prayer.

Apart from the many healing accounts, other examples are:

In the [Infancy Narrative](#) of [Chapters 1 and 2](#), we hear the four prayers of Mary, of Zechariah, of the Angels, and of Simeon.

In [Chapter 3](#), we hear that Jesus continues to pray after being baptised.

In [Chapter 4](#), how do we face temptations in life?

We pray over the wilderness temptations that Jesus faced and overcame.

Do we drift through life?

Or do we have a mission as we ponder Jesus revealing his mission to the people at Nazara?

In [Chapter 5](#), do we take our opportunities to trust God and put out our nets into deep water?

In [Chapter 6](#), Jesus spends the whole night in prayer before choosing the Apostles.

In [Chapter 7](#), Jesus faced criticism and spiteful comments.

Do we pray about such things when we experience them?

Through our prayer in what ways do we become more loving, like the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus?

In [Chapter 8](#), we hear of some of the companions of Jesus, such as Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Susanna.

This can inspire us to bring our companions to God in prayer and to thank God for them.

We bring the storm in our lives before God and pray for God to calm it.

In [Chapter 9](#), Jesus spends time in prayer before his teaching moment with the disciples.

Jesus brings the outline of his passion leading to the cross.

What is the cross we bear and how do we pray about it?

In our lives, carrying the cross and praying about it.

Later in the chapter Jesus is transfigured in prayer while on the mountain.

Once more we are called to be humble and welcoming as Jesus places a little child before the adults.

Later again James and John display an angry attitude to the Samaritans.

We place the storm of our anger before God in prayer.

In [Chapter 10](#), we see that Jesus thanks the Father. We see how blessed we are.

We see the need to be active and compassionate and inclusive in the [Parable of the Good Samaritan](#).

Yet needing also time to sit at the feet of Jesus in prayerful attention, in the meeting with Mary and Martha.

In [Chapter 11](#), Jesus teaches people how to pray. Then he invites us to ask, to knock and to search.

Jesus says,

“More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it”.

In [Chapter 12](#), we are promised that, as we face trials for our faith, the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say.

Jesus asks where our treasure is.

What does our prayer tell us about our treasure?

Jesus points to God’s care of the birds and flowers as he implores us not to be dominated by our anxieties.

In praying and living our faith Jesus says,

“to set your hearts on his kingdom, and these other things will be given you as well. There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.”

In [Chapter 13](#), we hear of the [Parable of the Mustard Seed](#), and ponder how we pray to grow in faith.

In [Chapter 14](#), we are reminded that we must be humble.

We hear about planning and commitment.

To be salt.

In [Chapter 15](#), we ponder the [Mercy Parables](#) -

Of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father and two sons and servants.

In [Chapter 16](#), we can’t serve both God and wealth. Our prayer should not be to idolise wealth.

The [Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus](#) challenges the way we live and pray.

In [Chapter 17](#), only one of ten healed returns to give thanks.

How often do we return to give thanks to God through prayer?

We pray that our service be humble.

We ponder in prayer what Jesus means when he says,

“the kingdom of God is among you”,

All the points above are only some examples.

The 17 previous chapters have many other teachings, healings and encounters.

This week’s parable of Jesus in [Chapter 18](#) covers the [NEED](#) to [PERSEVERE](#) in [PRAYER](#).

The parable is about an unjust, unrighteous judge who is only interested in himself.

He is not a role model.

He does not respect God and does not respect others.

The other character in the story is a widow seeking justice.

She is persistent, and perseveres in asking for justice for herself.

She just keeps coming.

The English translation can raise some interesting questions.

The [New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#) says,

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.”

The [New Jerusalem Bible \(New JB\)](#) version translated the Greek word [‘pantote’](#) (Gk. [πάντοτε](#)) as ‘continually’.

Is there a difference for you between praying [ALWAYS](#) and praying [CONTINUALLY](#)?

The NRSV version translates the response of the unjust, selfish judge in verse 5,

“yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming”.

The New JB translation says,

“I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face”.

The Greek word *‘hypopiazerein’* is also a boxing term for giving a black eye. Whether the unjust judge gives in because of his concern of being worn out or the threat of receiving a black eye, he gives in.

How does the unjust judge and the widow compare to God and ourselves?

God is not like the unrighteous and unjust judge.

God is loving and hears our prayers.

The widow perseveres.

We too must persevere.

But prayer is more than just claiming our rights.

Jesus finishes the story with a question about faith.

As Jesus listens to our prayer, does he find faith within us?

Verse 8,

“And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth”.

This passage next week will lead to the parable of the [Pharisee and the Tax Collector](#), where Jesus will challenge us about what type of faith we have, what type of prayer?

Spiritual writers speak about the change.

The [TRANSFORMATION IN US](#) when we persevere in prayer.

St John of the Cross speaks of *‘a purification’* in us as we open to God’s love.

St Teresa of Avila speaks of *‘seven mansions’*.

Other parts of Luke’s Gospel and its companion volume “Acts of the Apostles” describe this journey as we see the disciples change.

Their perseverance in prayer leads them to become witnesses of God’s love and Good News.

And we ask ourselves,

‘How have we changed through our prayer to God?’

As we pray to God who is love,

‘How have we become more loving, more sensitive to the needs of others?’

Is our prayer still about us?

Or is it about God and ourselves and others?

Next week Jesus shows us, in the [Pharisee and Tax Collector parable](#), the difference

Between praying as an egotist

And praying as a humble person.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – ‘Prayer in Luke’s Gospel’ – 16 October 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/101616.cfm>]

[St. John of the Cross – ‘Dark Night of the Soul’](#)

[St. Teresa of Avila – ‘The Interior Castle’](#)