

Sent ... on our knees

1. Intro & Context

- Jack pulls into the carpark to buy some bread and milk from the shops
- When he sees the carpark is full Jack prays to God
 - "God if you can just find me a carpark - I'll hand everything over - I'll stop relying on myself and put my trust in you"
- Low and behold ... a moment later, there right in front on him someone pulls out and a free park appears.
- Jack looks up and says
 - "Don't worry God, I found one"

- Share that because today we are talking about prayer
 - In particular, we're thinking about prayer in the context of mission

- This term in our sermon and GG series we're seeking to prepare our hearts and minds for our mission week towards the end of term
- We are a church that lives to be and make disciples ... that's our mission
- Over the next few weeks I want us to consider ...
 - What does it look like to be one who's sent by Jesus sends on this mission?
 - What is the modus operandi of a 'sent one'

- Tim shared with us last week that first and foremost, we are sent ... for God's glory
 - To proclaim and share the gospel so that people from all nations might praise and worship the one true God and glorify him

- This week ... as we continue to reflect on what it means to be a sent one ... we go and glorify God ... in prayer
 - That is, we are sent ... on our knees

- And the Bible gives a very clear reason for this
- In every person there is a spiritual battle taking place
- People don't come to faith in Jesus Christ unless there is prayer and God working in them to see the light and the truth of the gospel
- Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12
 - *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

- Life is war ... it is a spiritual battle ... and Christians are God's army ... God's people taking the message of salvation, grace and forgiveness to a world that is perishing while Satan the enemy tries to stop it
- And so as you and I go out with the gospel ... for God's glory ... we must always go on our knees in prayer
- This morning I want to help encourage and equip us in this aspect of being followers of Jesus for whom prayer is core to your being as a sent one
 - Priority of prayer
 - Principles of prayer
 - Privilege of prayer

PRAY

2. Priority of Prayer

- When it comes to mission, we see the priority that Jesus places on prayer in Matthew 9
 - *36-38* ³⁶ *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* ³⁷ *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.* ³⁸ *Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*
- Jesus sees the crowds are lost and without a shepherd
 - They need the good shepherd
 - For he has compassion on them
 - Compassion = means internal organs were moved > we would say 'he was gutted'
- He was deeply and inwardly moved by the plight of those without a shepherd
- Calls disciples
 - But before he sends them out on mission ... what does he call them to do?
 - Pray! Ask the Lord of the harvest to raise up more workers for the harvest
- Before they do anything ...
 - Before they develop their strategies
 - Before they do any training
 - Before organise their follow up programme
 - He calls on the disciples to pray for the mission of seeing people saved
- When Jesus calls them to pray ... he's not talking about some tokenistic, half-hearted prayer either

- The word Ask = beseech, plead, beg
 - Assumption is that the disciples will be moved with compassion Jesus has for the world and will not simply “ask” God to send more workers ... as one request among many ... but
 - they would PLEAD with God to do so
 - they would beseech God to send people out to seek and save the lost

- Why would Jesus do this?
- Because it reminds the disciples and it reminds you and I that the harvest is the Lord’s ... not mine ... not yours
 - It’s not our human skill / wisdom / knowledge / programmes / charisma / winsome words that will see people saved
 - People need to be born again
 - They need to have their eyes opened / ears unstopped / hearts impacted
 - And only God can do that
 - You and I cannot argue, coerce or reason someone into the KOH
 - The Spirit of God needs to do his work of illuminating the truth of the gospel for them

- **Illustration – Sam¹**
 - Reading Bible / DBM with a friend I cycle with
 - Chatting over the last few years about faith and religion
 - He had read lots on different religions
 - I said “Hey, I’m looking for someone to read the Bible with, I don’t know if you’d be interested?”
 - Praise God – said yes
 - Reading for 9 months > Mark / NT letters / some OT / now John
 - He understands it > likes it > knows that he needs to believe in Jesus
 - But at the moment ... he won’t

 - And this passage reminds me that it’s the Lord’s harvest ... not mine ... and I need to be patient and diligent
 - But above all I need to **pray** ... that God would do his work in Daniel
 - And if I’m honest ... I forget to do that

- John Dickson - The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission

¹ Name changed

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- *"Evangelism is grounded in prayer. I realise this is a mother's-milk statement, but sometimes I am in danger of treating prayer like it is mother's milk – something I have grown out of."*
 - So friends the most basic task when it comes to mission ... it's praying to the Lord of the harvest
 - And as you and I are sent out with the life-giving message of the gospel ... so that the nations might praise and worship God ... we must go on our knees in prayer
 - **Application**
 - Who prayed for you to be saved?
 - Who was calling out God for your salvation?
 - I know who was praying for me – it was my grandmother
 - Who are you praying for?
 - Who are you pleading for in prayer?
 - Who are you calling out to God for him to have mercy on them?
 - Are you fighting in prayer for your:
 - Sons and daughters – we need to be praying for our kids
 - Mums and dads – some of your mums and dads don't yet know Jesus and need your prayer
 - Brothers and sisters
 - Friends
 - Neighbours
 - This week in GG ... we going to encourage you write out some names of people in your life, your networks, circles of life ... and cry out to God in prayer for them
 - For God to have mercy on their soul
 - For God to soften their hearts for the gospel
 - For Him to open doors of opportunity for the gospel to be shared
 - Because when it comes to mission ... prayer is our number 1 priority

3. Principles of Prayer

- Assuming you're convinced of the priority of prayer ...
 - how should we pray?
 - what should we pray for?
- There are lots of passages we could go to that talk about prayer and lots things we could say about prayer ... but let me just give you a few principles from Colossians 4

- Here the Apostle Paul is encouraging the Colossians about mission
 - v5-6 ...
 - Wise in way you act towards outsiders
 - Make most of every opportunity
 - Conversations be full of grace
 - Having an answer for those who ask you about your faith
- But like Jesus ... before he talks about any of that ... in v2-4 ... he says pray!
 - Before you talk to others about God
 - You need to talk to God about others

Devoted

- Verse 2 – *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*
 - Paul says devote yourselves to prayer
 - Not 24/7 ... but lives that are characterized by prayer
 - Where you are praying
 - consistently / regularly / steadfastly
 - Praying with determination, resolve & earnestness
 - Being diligent, disciplined, and purposeful
 - It means ... persevere, keep at it, and don't give up
 - The early church was devoted to prayer² ... because they knew they were in a spiritual battle for the lost
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- **Illustration – Revivals**
 - Tim Keller writes that the great periods of Christian awakening that took place in the USA 18th and England 19th and Wales in the early 20th century were all preceded by great movements of people praying for revival
 - When Billy Graham crusades came to Australia 1959, 1969, 1979
 - BG insisted that would not come unless the local church committed to praying 2 years in advance for the crusade
 - In 1959 - estimated 40,000 people were praying for that BG crusade
 - MCG – 143,000 at final meeting
 - SCG – 150,000 people
 - Conservative estimates were that over 140,000 people became Christians during that crusade
 - And it began with sustained, devoted prayer

- **Illustration – Liana**

² Acts 2:42

- M&D became Christians in 40's
- Brothers became Christian soon after – 19, 21
- Liana thought she was already a Christian ... but as she began to see the changes in her family's life and priorities, it quickly became apparent her lifestyle and priorities were very different and she realised she wasn't a Christian
- The family was intensely praying for her, asking other friends and Christians to pray for her to come to the Lord
- God in his mercy saved Liana ... and her to repentance and faith
- Within 2 years she went to Bible college to do a diploma of Bible and Missions
- Within first few weeks meets this guy at the photocopier, they get chatting, share names ... "Oh you're Liana Williamson! I went on beach mission with your mum and dad and I've been praying for you for the last two years."

- Devote yourself to prayer
 - Persevere ... never give up

Watchful

- Paul also says to be watchful
- When this word watchful is used in the NT it most often is to do with waiting or watching or staying awake for the return of Jesus³
- So, when we pray we're to pray with an expectation and readiness for Jesus return

- Jesus picks up this idea in the Lord's Prayer when he teaches his disciples to pray
 - *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ **your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***
- Jesus expects his disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come ...
- That is
 - God's reign and rule to be established on earth as it is heaven
 - That the kingdom and the righteous rule of God will come in the lives of men and women
 - That they will become Christians and enter into his kingdom and eternal life

- **Application**
- Friends, when you pray ... what are you praying for?

³ Note also the eschatological understanding of v5 and use of word in the gospels [Matt 24:42f; 25:13; 26:38, 40f; Mark 13:34f, 37; 14:34, 37f; Luke 12:37]

- Are you praying for
 - Little for Johnnys cold
 - Work is really busy
 - Get this assignment done
 - Safe travels

- Praying for all those things are good things to pray for
 - Jesus says in the Lord's Prayer ... ask for your daily bread
 - It's good and right to ask for the things you need
- But if that's ALL your praying for
- If those things are the only things that fill your prayers ... friends you need to lift your eyes heavenward ... and pray
 - That God's name be hallowed and his kingdom come
 - For God's glory
 - People's salvation
 - Work of the Holy Spirit
- Keep our eyes fixed on things above, not just things below
- In your prayers be watchful and mindful of the return and rule of Jesus and that his kingdom will come ... in your home, school, university, work-place, street, suburb, social group

Proclaimers

- Third principal is to pray for those who proclaim the gospel
 - v3-4 *And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.*
⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
- Paul says as I go and do the work of evangelism and mission, pray God would open doors so I can tell people about Jesus

- Pray for those who proclaim the gospel - preachers, teachers, ministry leaders, missionaries
 - Pray for God to open doors of opportunity for
 - the Taylors in Tanzania
 - the Charles in Chile
 - the Pearsons in Arnhem Land
 - John at GRC
 - And that they would proclaim the gospel clearly

- Pray God open doors for our

- Scripture teachers (Bec, John, Samanthi, Liana, Linda, myself, Lynne & Mike) as they go into our schools and teach about Jesus
- MM team ... as they connect with young families each Monday morning
- Youth leaders as they teach and evangelise youth on Friday night
- When we do mission week ... as we run the coffee cart and go door knocking ... pray for open doors for the gospel to be shared and God to be glorified
- **Illustration – SRE**
- We do scripture here at PSPS on Wednesday afternoons
 - Normally I pray for SRE on Wed mornings ... but this week I also prayed as I was walking into school
 - “Lord please open up doors for the gospel today in scripture”
 - “Please help me to teach well and for your Spirit to be at work in the hearts and minds of the students”
- First class – Year 5
 - Start the lesson looking at Gen 1 and humanity being the high point of God’s creation
 - Show them Gen 1:26 "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,
 - Why do you think it says Us and Our
 - Hands up > God had a wife! Angels!
 - No > F, S & HS
 - Hands > Who made God? God there from the beginning
 - More hands > “Not fair ... God gets to live forever, but we don’t”
 - Ahhh – thank you Lord
 - “Yes Sean⁴ we do ... that’s the good news of Christianity ... that Jesus died for you rose again to pay for your sin and when you believe / trust in him you too can have eternal life”
 - “You CAN live forever ... you just need to put your trust in Jesus”
- God answered that prayer ... and it was one of the best scripture lessons I’ve had in a long time
- Pray for those you know who are proclaiming the gospel

Opportunities

- But don’t just pray for God to open doors for others ... pray he would open doors for you
- Paul says I v5 ... make the most of every opportunity

⁴ Name changed

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- We all have hairdressers or barbers (I don't but most of you do) ... pray for open doors
 - We all have neighbours ... pray for open doors
 - You go out with friends ... pray for open doors
 - You go to kids sport ... pray for open doors
 - You go to work in the morning ... pray for open doors
 - You pick the kids up from school ... pray for open doors
 - Pray you would make the most of every opportunity

 - **PrayerMate**
 - If you're thinking ...
 - there's so much to pray for ...
 - so many people and ministries and missionaries and opportunities I want to be praying for ...
 - And you're feeling a little overwhelmed ...
 - Let me show something I've found that helps me pray for all the things and people I want to pray for without getting overwhelmed

 - I'm a systems guy ... I like systems, order, structure > that's my personality
 - I find that using an app like PrayerMate helps me to be intentional and deliberate and mission minded in my prayers
 - Create prayers lists / categories
 - Pray for myself > idols, Christian character
 - Family
 - Church family
 - Church ministries
 - Missionaries
 - Friends
 - Urgent > mission week > crisis
 - Each category list the things / people you want to pray for
 - Eg – Church ministries ... Church family ... missionaries
 - Set the frequency you pray for things, how many things you want to pray for each day
 - PrayerMate gives you a list of one or two things from each category to pray for each day
 - Helps me not to forget to pray for things, people ... because my memory is not good enough
 - Update it / make notes when chatting to people ... or get an update from them ... pray specifically for them and their current situation
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- Others of you may not be into that ...
 - For you ... that's way too nerdy, too constrained ... that's okay
- Other ways
 - Mondays > family
 - Tuesdays > GG
 - Wednesdays > Church mission
 - Thursdays > friends
- Whatever helps you pray so you are
 - Devoted
 - Watchful
 - Proclaimers
 - Opportunities

4. Privilege of Prayer

- The danger in all this however is that prayer becomes chore ... whereas in actual fact ...it's a privilege
- When we say the Lord's Prayer ... notice how it starts ...
 - "Our Father in heaven ..."
 - If you are a Christian ... you get to call the creator and sustainer of the universe ... Father
 - That's extraordinary!
- How is that possible?
 - Because the message of the Bible is that through Jesus death for you and I on the cross to pay the price for our sin ... the way has been opened for us find forgiveness and reconciliation with God
 - When you put your trust in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour ... you become adopted sons and daughters of God ... with all the privileges and blessings of being one of his dearly loved children
- We get more excited about the possibility of speaking with our idols or heroes like Steve Smith, Liam Hemsworth and Katy Perry than creator of the universe
- Or we place more value in scrolling though FB and Instagram than scrolling through our prayer list
- I know this ... because I do it
 - I sit down to read bible and pray and first instinct is to pull out my phone

- Yet one of the greatest blessings you have as a Christian ... is the privilege of being able to pour out our hearts to God in prayer
 - To plead with him
 - For the restoration of relationships and communities
 - For the healing of brokenness and forgiveness of past hurts
 - And as we've been focusing on today
 - For the spread of the gospel and his kingdom to come
 - For the salvation of people we know and love
 - For God's mercy on our city
- **Illustration – JFK**
- When JFK was President ... he was arguably the most powerful man on the planet
 - Yet as we see in this slide ... his son was able to sit under his desk and while his dad was at work
 - No one else could do that
 - He had the access to and the affections of the most powerful man in the world
- As a Christian ...
 - You have this unique and intimate relationship with the sovereign creator and Lord of the universe ... because he's your Father
- Just like a good father delights to care for, provide and listen to his children ... our Father in Heaven delights to hear and answer our prayers
- So friends ... when it comes to prayer ...
 - you don't **have** to pray ...
 - you **get** to pray ...
 - you have the great privilege of being able to speak to your Father in Heaven

5. Conclusion

- We are sent ones ...
 - sent with the good news of the gospel to bring glory to God
 - so that people from all nations may praise and worship God
- As sent ones ... how do we go?
 - On our knees in prayer

PRAY
