

St Luke's Newsletter

www.stlukeswhyteleafe.co.uk

February Edition



Does God answer our prayers?

A common notion of prayer is that if we have faith in God, pray conscientiously and if the cause we are praying for is an honourable one (like for someone's good health), then God will supernaturally intercede to make our wish come true. Yet when we delve deeper into this topic, we discover that maybe we are asking the wrong questions.

Thinking of prayer as a means to compel God to act presents several problems. First, the idea that God responds through of our prayers raises the eternal problem of why God responds in some cases but not in others. Innocent men, women and children continue to face tragedies, suffer and die just as countless people have done since time immemorial. It begs the question, if God responds in a supernatural way when we ask through prayer, surely a loving God would simply prevent the tragedy from occurring in the first place?

Second, this view of prayer undermines the very scientific principles that govern God's creation. In the past people performed rites and rituals to please 'the gods' who manipulated what we now understand as natural occurrences, the weather, illness and fertility. Our scientific understanding of the mechanics behind the universe has grown in ways that would surprise and shock our ancestors. Scientific theories like quantum mechanics, chaos theory and evolution demonstrate that not only is the world unpredictable but the inherent chance and probability within the universe is necessary to its creative process.

Third, let us consider the psychological aspect of this view of prayer. As humans, we have a powerful ability to control our environment but we have also evolved a psychological desire to exercise this control. Prayer then becomes nothing more than a psychological aid that provides us with an illusion of control over forces in the world, which we do not and never have had control over.

Fourth, it is fascinating that the scientific data on prayer as a mechanism to influence outcomes is not at all encouraging. Serious scientific studies have examined the influence of prayer on overall outcomes and found no significant difference in recovery from illness or death between those prayed for and those not prayed for.

Now of course there will always be anomalies because randomness and chance are inherent mathematical and physical qualities of our universe and both positive and negative events will simply happen over time. Just as the story of Job warns, we should be cautious assuming that the bad things that happen are divine punishment or that God has positively intervened when good things happen.

So let's name the elephant in the room. Is prayer a pointless exercise?

Absolutely not. Maybe we just need to re-evaluate the true function of prayer.

Rather than seeing prayer as a means of asking God for something we want, however good that something may be, maybe we should look to prayer as the very means of opening ourselves up to God. Prayer then becomes the means of uniting us with the divine image that is the essence of all existence. This model of prayer may require us reimagining our image of God but if we understand God as the creative power that gives rise to all existence, rather than a supernatural being who resembles the Roman or Greek Gods, then our image of God embodies and embraces the physical laws as well as all space, time, matter, and energy, all that governs and defines the universe. I have found that this model of prayer leads us in new and exciting directions:

We may find that prayer becomes the way of opening our hearts to God, not as a being living in another-worldly kingdom, but as the source of all creative energy within us and the universe. Thus when tragedy strikes, we find comfort in prayer knowing that God is with us always, rather than sitting in judgement or purposely causing suffering as part of some cosmic divine plan.

Prayer becomes a method of forgiveness for both the things we are not proud of and for the wrongs we feel have been committed against us. Prayer becomes the means of centring ourselves, accepting who we are, and to becoming more present and aware.

Prayer becomes the way of expressing thanks and through our thankfulness acknowledging that we are not independent, but interdependent creatures, created to be in relationship and thankful for the many blessings we have. Our thankfulness draws us ever closer to the true value of relationships rather than material things; that it is through the health of our relationships that we find true happiness.

Prayer becomes a vital means of connection to one another. It is when we pray for someone in trouble that we connect with what that person is going through. We become empathetic with their experiences and we express compassion. This connectedness is strengthened when we realise that God who is the spark of our being, is also the spark of theirs.

Many may think that re-conceiving prayer in this way is not new at all and they are correct! The themes that I have touched upon, openness to that which is greater than we are, contemplation, thanksgiving, forgiveness and compassion, are all classic traditional Christian themes.

As we prepare to enter into the penitential season of Lent where we focus on prayer, fasting and almsgiving, may our prayer life be revitalised and through prayer our whole life in Christ transformed.

God bless *Tim*

PARISH REGISTER

Baptism

21st Jan Blake Barker

Conversation and Communion at St Luke's Tuesday Evening Eucharists 7.30pm

- 6th Feb 6.30pm Healing & Wholeness followed by a showing of the film 'The Way'
13th Feb Half Term No Service
20th Feb Lent Course Session 1
27th Feb Lent Course Session 2

LENT COURSE 2018

The Long Road to Heaven

This year the course is called "The Long Road to Heaven" by Tim Heaton. It is based on the film The Way. The sessions start on Tuesday 20th Feb at 7.30pm at St Luke's for 5 weeks. The course will also be run at Chaldon venue TBC. starting on Wed 21st Feb at 8pm. Please purchase the book for the course prior to the start, in paperback or electronic format from numerous on-line sellers.

See Lent 2018 leaflet for more details

The Parish Prayer List

We will be publishing a parish prayer list for us all as a congregation to hold in prayer. This will consist specifically of people, who live in the parish or who worship in the church, who are unwell.

If you know of someone who is ill, is a member of the church congregation or who lives within the parish and they wish to be on the parish prayer list please contact Leslie Shannon and they will ensure that their name is on the parish prayer list. Leslie Shannon will be responsible for ensuring that the list is kept up to date. This is so we pray intentionally as a church community.

If there is someone who is not a member of the congregation or who does not live in the parish, but who you would like Rev Tim and Rev Helen to pray for, please let them know and their names will be added to their personal list to be prayed for at Morning Prayer.

Do please speak to Rev Tim or Rev Helen if you want further information.

Hunger Lunch at St Luke's for Lent In aid of "The Bishop's Lent Call" Sunday March 4th at 1pm

A sign-up sheet will be in the transept from 18th Feb. A simple lunch of bread, soup & cheese will be provided.

Our Next Bring and Share Lunch will be on May 6th



Notice: All Age Service Date Change for March

In March our All Age Service will be on Mothering Sunday 11th March.
Inklings will run on the 4th March instead of the 11th.

If you need to contact the vicar Rev. Tim Goode please telephone 020 8660 4015 or email: stlukeswhyteleafe@gmail.com Please note Day of Rest Monday.

The Unparalleled Pancake Party Shrove Tuesday 13th Feb



12.00pm - 2.30pm

Come for lunch

£2.00 per adult £1.00 per child
Eat as much as you like

In aid of the Church Urban Fund helping to fight food poverty in the UK

CHOIR MEETING

18th February 10.45am at St Luke's

David our organist would like to recruit new members to our choir, not only from our congregation but also from Junior Church. Join him young and old to discuss this new opportunity.

St Luke's Church

Ash Wednesday Service

14th February at 7pm



The Corner House Cafe

St Luke's

Tuesday 27th February

2.30 - 4.30pm



The perfect place to make new friends enjoy a traditional English tea and join in a variety of activities.

Services During February

Sunday 4th February – 2nd Sunday Before Lent

8.00am BCP Eucharist
9.30am All Age Service

Tuesday 6th February

6.30pm Healing and Wholeness
7.00pm Film "The Way"

Sunday 11th February – Sunday Before Lent

9.30am Eucharist & Inklings

Tuesday 13th February

7.30pm No Service

Wednesday 14th February

7.00pm Ash Wednesday Eucharist

Sunday 18th February – 1st Sunday of Lent

9.30am Eucharist & Inklings

Tuesday 20th February

7.30pm Lent Course Session 1

Sunday 25th February – 2nd Sunday of Lent

9.30am Eucharist & Inklings

Tuesday 27th February

7.30pm Lent Course Session 2