

Prayer –

Father God as we join together in worship on this Mothering Sunday, when many of our plans for today and in the future are in question. When we do not know what the future holds, be our Rock and strength, help us to lean on you, the Unchangeable hope. For this time of worship let us try and put what is in our minds to the back, and bring worship in your name for however long we can. Help us to find peace in a time of uncertainty, help us to be your light to others, help us to be compassionate when others are greedy. If we have done wrong this week, forgive us, and help us to move forward in Your grace.

Jesus in your name we pray

Amen

Thank you for joining us at Christ Church as we prepare for a very different kind of service. Please join if you can to sing:

Be still and know that I am God (3 times)

I am the Lord that healeth you, (3 times)

In you, O Lord, I put my trust, (3)times)

Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

This is what the Lord says:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in man,
 who draws strength from mere flesh
 and whose heart turns away from the Lord.

That person will be like a bush in the wastelands;
 they will not see prosperity when it comes.

They will dwell in the parched places of the desert,
 in a salt land where no one lives.

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
 whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water
 that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
 its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
 and never fails to bear fruit.”

Sermon

The remote control. We all have them don't we? We probably have three or four because even though you have the best universal remote on the market, there's one piece of electronics it won't control, right?

Growing up, if you were like me, we didn't have a remote, we had to actually get up to turn over the channel, not that there were that many channels! Channel 4 started in 1984, I was 21...sky in 1989, amazon prime in 2007 and Netflix in 2007 in the US and only 6 years ago 2012 in the UK, but I digress,

So, what's with all this talk about the Remote Control? Well, a lot of go through life on remote control. We have a daily routine or procedure. It's not that we have OCD, it's just that we've fallen into a comfortable habit. You set the alarm for 6:00 am so you can hit the snooze button twice before you really have to get up. The first thing you do is pour a cup of coffee or tea and then head to the bathroom to get ready for work. You pop something into the toaster or (my husband puts milk on his cereal) switch on the TV as you walk by, to watch the morning news while you eat breakfast, Then it's in the car and off to work, or time to get the kids up and dressed for school. We sort of do it all on remote control, out of habit.

And there is nothing wrong with that. It's part of who we are. It's part of being human beings. Most of us like the routine. It feels safe and comfortable. There's no challenge except what you're going to have for breakfast (and sometimes even that has its routine – cereal during the week and cooked at the weekend! Life is stress free at that point. And that's good because there's so much stress in our lives. We need that breathing room of being on remote control.

But we come to today, what happens when that life on Remote suddenly goes haywire? What happens when everything comes from together to apart all at once? What do we do? How do we handle it?

In Jeremiah 17:7-8 the prophet Jeremiah has this to say:

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”

When our remote control lives suddenly go on the blink as we are now, when life has changed so completely in a matter of days, how do we handle it? How do we get through it?

One of the best ways to deal with life when it throws us a curve is to prepare ahead. However the life we are living at the moment, finds all of us unprepared.

Bear with me for a moment – but when Harland Sanders began his Kentucky Fried Chicken business, he had little capital and no money for advertising. So he grew a little beard, got a white suit, and as a Kentucky Colonel he became a walking advertisement for Kentucky Fried Chicken.

As Christians each one of us is a walking advertisement of the Christian faith. We probably would prefer not to be, but we are. That's why Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col. 3:12) (4)

And how do we do that? How do we clothe ourselves in these things? By planting the seeds that will grow into them today through prayer, worship, Bible study and service. Jesus prayed to his father everyday. He had prepared.

So often the first thing response to a disaster is prayer – this may be as simple as a cry out to God, even those who do not profess faith will cry to God in tragedy.

How did Jesus deal with this? When it all seemed to be going wrong - Imagine Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal and arrest. In the midst of the struggle of dealing with what He knew was going to happen to Him, the first thing Jesus did was go to God in prayer. And the first prayer he uttered was "Lord, take this cup from me."

And if you read the Psalms you'll see that a large percentage of them are prayers in the midst of struggle that ask the same thing, or cry out wanting to know where God is. Psalms 10:1 "Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"

Psalms 22:1 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?"

I have prayed this when I didn't know what to pray – many of you may know that although I have a Son, my husband and I wanted to have another child. We went through 5 rounds of IVF. Trust me when I say that it is a very involved process medically, and that while it is going on the woman's hormones are increased and

emotions run really high. The excitement at times when we thought I might be pregnant, then complete and utter sadness when it failed later. Each time we would seem to get a bit further and then it failed. I had an ectopic pregnancy and had an urgent operation, we had one or two eggs implanted each time. The process is a really difficult one. At first my prayers were for success, but as failure came after failure, my prayers changed and each time I prayed but not my will but yours....

And this is what Jesus prayed in the end, in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, Lord, not my will but Yours."

And as we Come Humbly To God and ask for the guidance, strength and wisdom to use the gifts God has already poured out into our lives. In that prayer of humility that we discover that, while we may be in the midst of crisis, we are loved more than we ever dreamed of and that allows us to say a radical "yes" to both the human condition and God's vision for our salvation through Christ..

But what if we do not have a prayer routine?

And therein lies the problem, in order to grow our deep roots of faith and have them watered or drenched in the Holy Spirit, we need to communicate with God – our Father.

Well, its all about those deep roots.

Think back to Jeremiah

In verse 5 he compares people to bushes in a wasteland, the bushes have shallow roots, they are small, they are the people who believe that humankind has the answers, who trust in what man can provide, in what this salty earth can provide, but Jeremiah contrasts this with a tree, in verse 7-8 which has deep roots, strong roots growing towards the water. As it grows bigger its roots develop. These are those that trust in God. That have no worries in a time of drought.

Both the bush and the tree are in a harsh environment, but the one that has deeper roots, Go to the source of life – Water. And Jesus says that he is the living water that if we drink the water he gives that we will have eternal life

This is when I come back to my opening. How do we drink deeply from the living water?

I struggle with this daily. But I have some suggestions for your daily prayer life. A couple of things that I am trying. We all do our morning routine without thinking about it. Prayer should be part of what we are doing every day, and after our churches awayday and our Pastor Ruth's recommendations – I have two for you that may help.

There is an app that you can download on your phone, its called Pray as you go, there is a website too, it takes a bible passage and music each day, and gives you suggestions for prayer, helps you to focus. It takes 10-15mins per day.

NorthumbriaCommunity.org – search for celtic daily prayer. This information is available in print, but also on this website for personal use.

CONCLUSION:

Remember what Jeremiah said: "Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit."

As Christians our faith needs to be planted deep.

We believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and that means something. If Jesus is resurrected, then life is stronger than death, hope is stronger than despair, good is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate and life is much greater than we ever imagined. If Jesus is resurrected, then God really is in charge.

And if God is in charge, then we don't have anything to worry about when everything in our Remote Control world, comes from together, to completely apart, because we can know and count on the fact that God will see us through.

Let us pray – prayers of intercession – when I say Lord hear us -please respond out loud saying Lord graciously hear us.

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,
through illness or isolation or anxiety,
that they may find relief and recovery:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,
and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,
that through their skill and insights
many will be restored to health:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and peace:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

I hope that you find this useful. I want to wish all Mothers a happy Mothering Sunday, although not as expected I hope that you can have some time with family even if that is just on the phone. If your Mother is no longer here, I pray that as you think of her, you are comforted.

We are in an exceptionally challenging time I hope that you will continue to pray and help each other, our neighbours, our community, wherever you are.

To finish – let us pray

Abba Father

We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.

We are your people God, giving and loving,

wherever we are, whatever it costs, For as long as it takes, wherever you call us.

Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Conference

Blessing: from Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.