

Westfield Sermon notes

Title: Prayer

Readings: Mark 9:14-28, Matthew 17:14-20

Preacher: Elaine Murphy

Date: 30th April 2017

This sermon can be found at: <http://www.westfieldurc.org/worship/sermons/>

Sermon Notes / Comments:

- The two readings are about what happened after Jesus' transfiguration, when He came down from the mountain. Mark quotes the father as saying, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus' reply was "Everything is possible for him who believes. Matthew's account is slightly different. When the disciples ask why they couldn't drive out the demon, Jesus replies that their faith is too little and if they had faith as small as a mustard seed they could move mountains. FAITH AND BELIEF!
- Just a little faith, just believe and prayers will be answered and miracles and signs and wonders will be possible.
- Only 16 per cent of eight hundred pastors in America said they were satisfied with their prayer lives. 84 per cent weren't sure if God listened when they prayed and were generally frustrated in their prayer lives! The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. One of the most important prayers we can pray is "Lord, teach me to pray." "We are individuals and God has a personal plan for each one of us. The disciples had spent a lot of time with Jesus, listening to Him, learning from Him and watching Him work miracles, yet they still felt the need to ask Him to teach them to pray.
- Everything about our spiritual lives depends on our personal faith in God and our personal relationship with Him. We have free access to God at any time through prayer, wherever we are and whatever we're doing.
- Andrew Murray, With Christ In The School Of Prayer: 'None can teach like Jesus, none but Jesus; therefore we call on Him, "Lord teach us to pray." A pupil needs a teacher who knows his work, who has the gift of teaching, who in patience and love will descend to the pupil's needs. Blessed be God! Jesus is all this and much more. Jesus loves to teach us how to pray.'
- When we let God's Spirit take the lead, we are in for a lot of surprises in life. We need to be determined to be ourselves and refuse to spend our lives feeling guilty because we're not like someone else. When we pray for others we need to seek what God wants for that person instead of praying for what we see. We all have doubts when we pray but God can do immeasurably more than we can think or even imagine. All things are

possible for Him. He is the One to turn to when we have a need that is outside human help.

- Smith Wigglesworth said: 'Begin to believe in extravagant asking, believing that God is pleased when you ask large things. Nothing but yourself will hinder you.'
- A quote from Selwyn Hughes: "(Jesus) waited upon His Father for the spiritual strength He needed for whatever He wanted Him to do. That's the way it is with prayer. Little prayer, little power. A lot of prayer, a lot of power.
- The more time we spend with God in prayer the more we will know His will. May God help us to be willing to spend more time with Him in prayer.

Questions / thoughts and areas for discussion

- Read through the two passages and note the differences.
- Do you believe your prayers are making a difference?
- Do you ever wonder deep down if God is hearing you when you pray?
- Are you certain that your prayers achieve something?
- Are you happy with your prayer life?
- Do you long for a deeper, richer, more exciting relationship with God through prayer?
- When you pray for/with others, do you pray what you know about the person, or do you seek God for what He wants for them?
- Do you believe in 'extravagant asking'. Smith Wigglesworth said that God is pleased when you ask large things. Can you think of a time when you asked God for large things? What happened?