**St Martins C3 – October 17, 2021**

**Focus on Mission - Pray**

**Sermon Summary:**

In this series we have explored how God hasn’t given up on the world He created. He loves His world and everyone in it. God loved the world so much, that He sent Jesus to redeem it. Therefore, if God loves the world and we have experienced God’s love, then we ought to love the world too. We can do that by introducing the world to the love God has for them. God’s love ought to be what motivates us towards mission.

**How does God intend to spread his message of love to the world?**

God could have chosen a few specially gifted individuals to do this. However, God’s primary strategy is to empower EVERYONE in His church to be His witnesses.

**Read: Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:38**

These verses clearly show that everyone who has received the Holy Spirit is empowered to do mission. The presence of the Holy Spirit is what moved this group of nervous Christ followers out of hiding and into a place of influence in the world.

**Read: Acts 3:1-8 & Acts 4:13-14**

**Through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, God has EMPOWERED ORDINARY people to do EXTRAORDINARY things.**

The early church quickly realised that the presence of the Holy Spirit is how God was going to bring His Kingdom through ordinary people. Their first response was to pray. (Acts 4:31, Acts 13:1-3)

**Through prayer the early church RECEIVED God’s life and power and took that life and power with them into the world.** Prayer and evangelism go hand in hand. Don’t go and share your faith until you have prepared yourself in prayer. In the place of prayer we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to do what God has called us to do.

**In praying for those who don’t know Christ, our heart is aligned with God’s heart and purpose.** Our love for those around us grows. A passion for God’s mission grows.

**In prayer God guides His people with who they are to share their faith with and what to say.** God has assured us that He will give us the words to say, but we need to be aware of His presence and word first in our lives, so that we have something to pass on to others.

Yes, we need to also GO and share our faith with others, but evangelism starts on our knees. Let prayer be the first evangelism action you take.

***Who’s on your prayer radar?***

**INTENTIONALLY pray EVERYDAY for those around you who don’t yet know Christ.** Then as God opens the doors of opportunity, make the most of the conversation that will develop.

**Suggested Discussion Questions:**

*Do you pray regularly for those around you who don’t know Christ?*

*Have your prayers for them shaped conversations you have had with them?*

*When has God opened up a surprising opportunity for you to share your faith with others?*

*Did you feel prepared for that conversation?*

*Has there been a situation where God has led you into a spiritual conversation with someone, because you have been open to Him leading and guiding you?*

**Monday’s Devotion – Alignment with God’s heart**

**Acts 10:34-35**

*I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.*

This was Peter’s dramatic revelation. Previously Peter thought that a relationship with God was only for the Jewish people, but after the vision of the animals and his experience at Cornelius’ house, he now realised that God loved everyone, and anyone could come to faith in Christ.

In a place of prayer God began to align Peter’s heart with His heart. This is an important dimension to prayer and a good place to start, as we look at how praying for the lost changes us and changes the world around us.

We may think that we primarily pray so that other people’s lives are changed, but God start with us first. This account in Acts 10, isn’t just about the salvation conversion of Cornelius, it is also about the mindset conversion of Peter. We like Peter need God to shape our vision of how HE sees the world around us.

Why not put this into practice today? – As you drive, or go to work, or shops, or whatever, ask God to reveal to you His heart for every person you see and meet. You may be surprised at how much prayers like that change you.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Do what God is doing**

**John 5:19**

*Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

There are two very powerful points that Jesus makes in this response:

1. **We are useless without God’s help**

We probably know this in our heads, but it is harder to live out in practice. We like to have control and we like to get the credit for when things go well. Jesus live completely differently. He relied 100% on His Father. He didn’t do anything independently from God. We likewise, are called to live in complete surrender and dependency on God. When that comes to sharing God’s life with others, it means we don’t just say what we think is best, but prayerfully consider what God wants to say to that person in that moment.

1. **We need to be aware of what God is doing around us.**

We don’t need to make God do stuff for us. God is already at work and wants us to partner with Him in what He is doing. The important part we have to play is to be like Jesus and be aware of where God is working. Try giving this a go today. As you go about your day, in your mind pray the prayer, “God show me where you are working right now.” You may or may not get an immediate answer to that question, but you also might be surprised at what God reveals to you.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Learn from others**

**Acts 11:4 & 18**

*Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: …* *When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”*

To start with others in the church were very sceptical of Peter’s actions at Cornelius’ house. So, Peter explains in detail how God has opened the door for the churches mission to the Gentiles. In Peter’s explanation the church received the same revelation as Peter and celebrated what God was doing.

Listening to God in community breaks our individualism. It is a humbling experience. It is where we put aside our agendas and we truly listen, so we can hear what God is saying through others.

I have learnt over the years to listen well to how other people are praying and what they are praying for. I seek to be up to speed on what God is doing in our nation and in the nations. Why? – Because God reveals things in that research that I may miss in my individual ponderings and prayers.

Why not give this a go today? – Ask other Christians how God is leading them to pray for our city or our nation. Do some online research as to what other Christians and prayer groups are saying and doing. Of course we have to be discerning as it may not be all beneficial, but it is worth doing the seeking, because God speaks to us through others.

**Thursday’s Devotion – Change the spiritual climate**

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

We need to remind ourselves on a daily basis that we are praying FOR people, but AGAINST the powers that are deceiving them and hindering them from following Christ.

The last thing Satan wants is for your family member or friend repent and follow Jesus. Satan wants to create an environment around their lives that keeps them distracted, confused and in bondage. We fight this battle in prayer.

I do need to sound a warning here that the spiritual world works by permission (both for good and for bad). Therefore, we can’t control the choices of the person we are praying for. If they want to be in bondage, then God will respect that (even though it is obviously not His will). However, we can still stand in the gap for the person we are praying for and pray that the spiritual climate around their lives changes.

How about giving that a try today? – Ask God to reveal to you a spiritual situation you can pray into. When He reveals something, stand in agreement with God for it to change.

**Friday’s Devotion – Pray for workers.**

**Matthew 9:35-38**

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.**Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

Just after this passage, Jesus sends out the disciples to do what He has been doing, so there is a time and place for us to go, but Jesus also encourages us to pray for more workers.

Jesus’ reason for this, is that the harvest is ready. I need to remind myself of this often as I pray for the lost and harvesters for the lost. When I consider the state of the world in my natural thinking, I can easily become discouraged. I am not seeing the revival conditions that I would love to see. But then God reminds me of these words, “the harvest IS plentiful.”

Let our prayers today be full of hope. God is at work in our world and there are many who are ready to respond to the gospel. Let us continue to pray that we would know when and where to have those conversations and also pray that God would raise up more harvesters.