

Welcome & intimations

CH4 185 Come, children, join to sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUuJfwHVTY8>

Prayer & Lord's prayer

This morning we gather our thoughts for prayer around a verse from the letter to the Colossians (4:2) :

Be persistent in prayer & keep alert as you pray, giving thanks to God.

Father, this morning we praise you for the gift of prayer. As any relationship grows through good communication, so prayer is our way of drawing close to you to strengthen our relationship.

In prayer, we are aware of your dynamic presence with us through your Spirit. In prayer, when we stand at a crossroad in life, with an important decision to make, you are able to guide us along your way.

In prayer, we also receive the strength to follow the way you have shown us.

In prayer, we can unburden all our troubles, knowing that you can ease the heavy loads in our lives.

In prayer we find comfort in times of sorrow & distress.

In prayer we receive your inner peace which allows us to be at one with ourselves.

Prayer is indeed your wonderful gift to us. Yet, Father, you also know that there are times when we turn our backs on prayer, your special gift to us.

Our hearts are lacking in thanksgiving & our desires revolve around ourselves.

When life becomes busy, prayer can too easily be squeezed out.

Or it is only remembered as a last resort when everything else has failed.

We give up praying because we are too busy or too tired or we feel that other things are more important. Or maybe it seems too much of an effort. Or maybe we are discontented with your answers or we are puzzled & disappointed by your apparent silence. Or maybe we have run out of words & are afraid to meet you in the silence. Whatever the reason, we stopped being persistent in prayer. And our minds became dull. And thanksgiving was absent from our lips.

We are sorry, Father. We come asking for your forgiveness.

Thank you for your forgiving love.

May we take heart from the experience of Jesus' disciples. They were not experts in prayer & at times they found praying difficult. They needed Jesus' help.

We need Jesus' help also.

So we ask, as the disciples asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

Give the familiar words new meaning as we join to say together the prayer which Jesus gave us saying :

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. AMEN

Young (at heart) church : When God says 'No' (1)

Sometimes it helps to have something visual to make something memorable. This morning I would like to suggest that traffic lights are like God's answers to our prayers.

Red which normally means 'Stop' would be 'No.'

Amber which normally means 'Get ready' means 'Wait.'

Green which normally means 'Go' would mean 'Yes.'

This morning in the rest of our service we will focus on the red light when God says 'No.'

CH4 547 What a friend we have in Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlv0zzKs_rY

Reading : 2 Corinthians 12 : 7 - 10 read by Sandra Bell

⁷ But to keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many wonderful things I saw, I was given a painful physical ailment, which acts as Satan's messenger to beat me and keep me from being proud.

⁸ Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away.

⁹ But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me.

¹⁰ I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Sermon : When God says 'No' (2)

Lord, open your word to our hearts & our hearts to your Word. Amen.

In this passage God says 'No' to Paul, not once, not twice, but 3 times when Paul finally accepts God's decision. In a strange way, the thorn in the flesh keeps him close to God through his dependence on God's help.

There have been many suggestions about what this thorn in the flesh was. Of the ones I have heard, I think the most likely are either epilepsy or migraine headaches. But we do not know.

What we do know is that it troubled Paul & he felt that it held him back in his ministry. But God said 'no', telling Paul that his grace was sufficient.

God also said 'No' to Amy Carmichael. Here is a quick summary of her story.

Amy Carmichael was a missionary in the 19th century.

She was born in a seaside town in Northern Ireland. Her story shows that even in the 19th century, Amy was suffering with how she looked and she wanted to be different. Her story also shows how God makes us all in his image and for his own amazing purpose.

As a young girl, Amy Carmichael wished she had blue eyes instead of brown. She even prayed that God would change her eye colour and was disappointed when it didn't happen.

At age 20, Amy sensed that the Lord was calling her to serve Him as a missionary. After serving in various places, she went to India.

In India Amy would become one of the greatest missionaries to set foot in that land. In her time there Amy founded an orphanage, school, and safe-house for young girls. Amy played a major role in breaking the ancient practice of abandoning baby girls to the steps of pagan temples to be trained up as cult prostitutes.

Countless girls were saved from lives of prostitution, and instead were taught to read and were given back their dignity that society had taken away—and they were saved eternally to Jesus through the hearing of the Gospel.

Amy learned that her ‘unwanted’ brown eyes were a far more precious gift from God than the value she once placed on blue ones. Her brown eyes enabled her to easily fit into the culture of India. God had wisely given her the features of dark brown hair and brown eyes—just like the thousands of young girls and women that she would one day grow up to rescue.

Amy was able to understand why God had said ‘no’ to her prayer for blue eyes.

CH4 691 Be still my soul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxLV4zRmhm8>

Reading : Mark 14: 32 – 42 read by Sandra Bell

³² They came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him. Distress and anguish came over him, ³⁴ and he said to them, “The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ He went a little farther on, threw himself on the ground, and prayed that, if possible, he might not have to go through that time of suffering. ³⁶ “Father,” he prayed, “my Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want.”

³⁷ Then he returned and found the three disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Weren't you able to stay awake for even one hour?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Keep watch, and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ He went away once more and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ Then he came back to the disciples and found them asleep; they could not keep their eyes open. And they did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ When he came back the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come! Look, the Son of Man is now being handed over to the power of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!”

Sermon : When God says ‘No’ (3)

Before we turn to our gospel reading I would like to offer you another illustration of when God says ‘No

This is a modern example which comes from Jim McGuigan in his book ‘Applauding the Strugglers.’

Jim speaks of meeting a young man called Dirk Clay. Dirk was sure that God was calling him to be a preacher. There was only one problem for Dirk. He had a pronounced stammer. And the more nervous he became the more he stuttered.

Dirk came to Jim terribly upset. He poured out his frustration, disappointment & pain. He couldn’t understand what was happening.

Surely God needed ministers to share the Good News.
Dirk was equally sure of his calling to share the Good News.
So therefore God should cure his speech impediment.
Why was God saying 'No' to his prayer to be healed of his speech impediment?
Jim had no easy answers for Dirk. All he could suggest was that Dirk could try & serve God as best he could in other ways.
Time passed & Jim met Dirk again. Dirk was radiant. God was able to use him after all. He was training to become a minister to those who are deaf. In that ministry, signing not speech was paramount. His speech impediment would not get in the way.
God knows what he is doing. When God says 'No' there is always a good reason though it may be hidden from us for quite a while.
Now we turn to our gospel reading.
All of history hinges on this occasion when God said 'No'.
Jesus prays in Gethsemane for the cup of suffering to be removed.
Jesus prays 3 times, each time with increasing intensity.
God, his heavenly Father, still says 'No'.
And Jesus then somehow is able to pray, 'Not my will but yours be done.'
And we know how important these words are.
And we know what they meant for Jesus.
We know the suffering he would then experience for our sake.
And we know from that suffering, there is no limit to God's love for us.
And we know that Jesus' suffering was not the end of the story.
Soon there would be the glory of the Resurrection.
And we understand why God said 'No' to his Son's prayer.
And so when God says 'No' & we don't understand,
we remember Paul's thorn in the flesh & how God's grace was sufficient.
And so when God says 'no' & we don't understand,
we remember Amy's prayer for blue eyes
& how important it was for her mission that they were brown.
And so when God says 'No' & we don't understand,
we remember Dirk's stammer & how it lead him into ministry for the deaf.
But most of all when God says 'No' & we don't understand,
we remember Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane
& how he suffered to overcome death for us.
And we trust that when God says 'no', God knows what he is doing.
Amen.

CH4 557 O love that wilt not let me go

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biHQVoAUTtU>

Prayer of thanksgiving & for others led by Sandra Bell

Loving Father, we thank you for the countless blessings we have received, the innumerable good things that surround us every moment of each day.
It is hard to find words to fully express our thanks for all you do for us, so in gratitude we bring you our offering as a token of our love, and a symbol of our discipleship offered to you in joyful and thankful praise.

We thank you for everything you have given to us and for the rich promises in your Word that assure us of your continued love, faithfulness, daily presence and care. Over the last few weeks we have become so very conscious of the economic turmoil affecting us all. We think especially of those on low income who are already struggling and anxious about how they will make ends meet, especially when later this month the proposed weekly £20 withdrawal in Universal Credit takes effect. We pray for those already incredibly anxious who face a winter of immense hardship. We pray for the Government and all who have the responsibility of leadership, influence and power that they would take the decisive steps necessary to avoid real hardship for low-income families.

Creative Father as we embrace a new month heralding the start of Autumn and approaching winter activities we pray that as restrictions continue to lift, so too can the commencement of church and community groups. We pray for the Craft group, meeting in Fortrose, under the gifted leadership of Sylvia and we remember the Blythswood Shoebox Appeal giving thanks for the inspirational example of Ethel. Bless the fellowship of meeting together and open our hearts to receive the joy that comes from giving to others and transforming lives through sharing your love.

Loving Shepherd, we know that in every season of life you are with us. During covid it was especially difficult to celebrate together family milestones and special occasions. We remember those in our families and church family who had a special event – birthday, anniversary, wedding, birth of a child and in the silence of our hearts we hold them before you and ask you to bless them. This morning we remember June and Owen who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary last week. Bless them today and fill their lives with your joy, peace and love in the years ahead. God our Refuge and Comforter hear our prayers for the many who struggle to find the right path because life has taken them a different, difficult route.

We think of those who turn to crime through desperation.

Of children whose home life is chaotic and violent.

We think of those in broken relationships

those who live with sickness

those who are afraid of the future and of being themselves and hide behind masks of pretence.

There are many who have lost hope that light will ever penetrate their darkness. We think of those who live with the pain of rejection, loneliness, grief, and bereavement. Father, open their eyes to the reality of your presence and your love that enfolds and surrounds them. Remind them of how precious they each are to you and that you welcome them as an honoured guest at your table.

God of peace and hope we bring now ourselves and those we love to you.

Sometimes our personal worlds seem very dark places. We feel hemmed in by our fears and worries. You are our Light and Shelter. Through our tears of darkness and doubt help us to focus on your faithfulness and love that never ends and so find in you peace and strength to go on.

Father, we are your cherished sons and daughters and we know that you always want the very best for us, so help us to accept the times when you say 'no' to our requests. When disappointment and questions fill our hearts and when your will, your answer, is not what we would choose or want. Give us the grace to keep trusting you and to remember that, you see what we don't, and that it is always from a heart of

faithful, immeasurable love and care that you answer us. We bring these our prayers
to you in the Name of Jesus our Saviour and Lord. Amen

CH4 737 Will your anchor hold?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQQO8v-0VBo>

Blessing