

WELCOME 11th September 2022 – 14 Pentecost '22 C

Lk 65:12-19 & Ps 118:5-14

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! We're continuing our worship/teaching series Spiritual Intelligence as a family of disciples... **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week...Jugglers...even the very best jugglers have limits. Whether it's **balls** bowling **pins** or **blades**...there are only so many anyone can keep in the air until disaster strikes. 3...mine is 3...not 4. 3. Add 1 more & chaos/mess.

You have limits too. You may not juggle like these guys, but you juggle. Work. Family. Household necessities. Appointments. Relationships. School requirements. Medicine. Our high-speed, overloaded, split-focus cybercentric society is a never-ending stream of one-more-thing-too-much. If studies are correct, the avg human attention focus shifts about every 3 minutes, seconds if you're younger than 30 & have grown up around little glass screens...we are a distracted people. Distraction most often leads to disaster...

The Bible speaks to that... **Be still**, & know that I am God! – Ps 46:10... **Jesus** went up on a mountain to pray, & he prayed to God **all night**. – Lk 6:12 Only from that focussed foundation to life can Spiritual Intelligence emerge...Spiritual Intelligence is **NOT** how much you know...Bible verses, Bible history or how to say all the names correctly...SI is learning to discern right/wrong, good/evil, beautiful & true/horrendous & false... Spiritual Intelligence is wisdom leading you to what is life-giving & God-honouring. It's walking the pathway of abundant life & impact in Jesus' Name. Spiritual Intelligence is you maturing in likeness to Jesus Christ. **In** the way of righteousness there is life; in walking its path there is no death. – Pr 12:28

In a "world of distraction" Author/pastor Richard Foster says: "The primary purpose of prayer is to bring us into such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son." God want our hearts open to him, so he invites us into the intimacy of his love & promises to respond more abundantly than we could ever imagine...In our praying God radically transforms our lives & align our hearts w/ his...gives life in full, purpose & meaning to every day, & hope & promise beyond & bigger than this world & silences every distraction to our devotion.

We'll explore & experience 'Prayer in a world of distraction'.

In my distress I prayed to the Lord, & the Lord answered me & set me free."

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, our God, by the work of the Spirit alive in us, open our eyes to behold the power of your word, illuminate our understanding, & above all...quicken our lives in obedience...Quiet the clamouring in our hearts & lives so all we hear & attend is your voice. Set us free from that which would draw our eyes from you & our hearts from your promises. Then send us with your promise & hope to work for your kingdom's expanse in your wonderful wider world. In Jesus' Name...Amen.

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. About what do you most often pray? Why do you think that is? Do you ever pray "big"?
2. If someone overheard you praying, what would they learn or know about God?

14 PENTECOST '22 C – SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: PRAYER IN A WORLD OF DISTRACTION

If you have ever been in a Bible study w/ me...or simply look at the 1st questions each week on the GP & Discussion Qs on the service order...you know how I go about engaging w/ & learning from God's word...**What** do you see in the text? Catches your attention? Holy Spirit make you notice? Always my 1st approach...What has the Holy Spirit put a big flashing light over so that it takes hold & makes me dig deeper? This week for me...1st verses:

One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, & he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples & chose twelve of them to be apostles. Stay w/ me...What do you see in the text? Hold that but let's keep going..

Now I lay me down to sleep... ---- "...I pray the Lord my soul to keep." I suspect most of us were taught that prayer at some point...& whether it was the nightmare inducing "If I should die before I wake..." who plants death in a toddler's mind at bedtime? Or the more assuring, "Guard & guide me through the night..." many of us adopted not only *the content* of the prayer but the *mindset*...Now I lay me down to sleep...We learned to think that once we prayed we could switch off, go to sleep & not think about it again. We had done our part now it was on God to come through...or /not. That my responsibility ends w/ Amen. Now I lay me down to sleep...I'm done here

Yet nowhere in the Bible do we find permission to simply resort to prayer as a way out of distancing ourselves from any further responsibility...dispatch our requests like a letter to Santa, then sit back to wait for results or move on to something else. In fact...Jesus did what? ...**he** prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples & chose twelve of them to be apostles. After praying all night he walks off the mountain & into the mission of the Father. From the scores of disciples, he selects 12 who are to be apostles... "apostle" = "one who is **sent**" not one who sleeps...sit on their thumbs. Throughout the Scriptures...**Prayer** empowers mission. Pray w/ sleeves rolled up

Prayer yokes us to the work of the Father in reclaiming this sin-broken sin-scarred sin-addicted universe for his purpose & glory. Prayer points the pray-er to the next field of harvest for the Father's kingdom...the next place to sow the seed of the Gospel...the next person to engage in compassion kindness encouragement according to God's promise of salvation in Jesus Christ...the next ears to hear of Jesus & his love...

Author Lysa TerKeurst: "My prayers don't change God. But, I am convinced prayer changes me. Praying boldly **boots me out of that stale place of religious habit** into authentic connection w/ God Himself." Precisely how Jesus lived: Jesus did nothing apart from prayer ...nothing apart from an intimate hold on the Father. **Jn 5:19** - Jesus explained, I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. **Jn 5:30** - I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. This is JESUS saying, "I take my cues from the Father. I walk in time to his heartbeat. I live responsive to his

will." Prayer is how your/my life is re-timed re-calibrated re-positioned away from our wills to God's. Prayer empowers mission....multiplies it.

Remember the last 2 prayers on Jesus' lips: "**Not** my will but your will be done" & "Into your hands I commit my spirit." The Father who claims us as his own through the life, death & resurrection of His Son...who wins us from darkness to life/light through the suffering & triumph of Christ seeks to bring our lives into alignment just like that, so that we are in full harmony w/ him – in complete likeness to him – our hearts & his are completely in synch...our longings are his longings – our desires are his - what brings God pleasure is our delight...The work of the kingdom is to carry out the agenda of the King & the specifics of that agenda can only be accessed in prayer... in that place where our hearts are fully devoted undivided undistracted to the Father.

But we are a distracted people...Our high-speed, overloaded, split-focus cybercentric society is a never-ending stream of one-more-thing-too-much. Our hearts are perpetually churning over many things. Odds are pretty good that at this moment... many of us have "other things on our minds." Not fussing just honest.

Hear God's word to that; **In** my **distress** I prayed to the LORD, & the LORD answered me & set me **free**... "Distress" Heb word literally means "in a vice-grip/tight squeeze" – surrounded hemmed in no clear way to turn...Psalmist says so himself **vss 10-13** "...hostile nations surrounded me...surrounded & attacked me...swarmed around me like bees; they blazed against me like a crackling fire..." I think most of us might know the feeling...maybe not so much under attack, but nowhere quiet to turn...so much crowding in & clamouring for your attention...one thing after another...stop what you're doing to handle this crisis or that intrusion...one thing/another/another...until you just can't move/stuck...I prayed and...

the Lord answered me & set me free..."free" literally "set me in a spacious/wide place." God put me some place where I could breathe again. **Prayer** enlivens relationship. God gave me room to see to listen to acknowledge my total dependence on him... Prayer gives me the wisdom to absolutely surrender to his power instead of mine... Prayer acknowledges my complete confidence in & reliance on the Father not just in emergencies but in every moment...**AND THAT** is precisely how God invites us to live ALL THE TIME. I forget who said this...found it in some notes: "**The** one who prays must wage almighty warfare against doubt & murmuring that arise from faintheartedness & unworthiness within us." The one who prays is always going to be best by worries fears guilt things to do places to be people to see...distractions aplenty...but in praying...total dependence – absolute surrender – complete confidence in & reliance on God - the Father enlivens our relationship with him & renews his life & his Spirit within us.

And in the joy of that enlivened relationship & empowered multiplied mission we can see as plain as the nose on our face...

The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?
Yes, the Lord is for me; he will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me.

My enemies did their best to kill me, but the Lord rescued me.
The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory.

They had come to hear Jesus & to be healed of their diseases; & those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, & he healed everyone.

God wants good for us. God wants good stuff to happen to us. God has it in his heart to bless his human creations immeasurably. God does not go out of his way to think up crummy stuff to unleash in your/my life. God's not sitting around saying to the angels, "You know...I haven't hit anybody with Covid in a bit...Where's that Krieg fella...he hasn't had it yet?" In a broken world where sin has corrupted everything...people get sick, relationships collapse, tragedy & war knock the stuffing out of us, flood, fire, volcano...insert your catastrophe here. But God desires that his abundance comes to us...enough to suffer as one of us & die unjustly as one of us so that ultimately car wrecks & cancer & calamity all come to an end & the scales of justice tip in favour of life & good...and evil is destroyed once & forever.

God wants to encourage our hearts & strengthen our souls & equip us to bear witness to his love...and it may be for most of us have to slow down long enough for God to catch up with us...That we actually have to look around & turn around turn away from our own pursuits voluntary distractions to discover where God is...cos we've just outrun the place where he wants us to be – close to him – near to his heart...We tell ourselves that our days are so full & our lives are so busy & it's all so important & we've got to get from music to sport to dance to more this & more that & it's all important so our kids get the most out of everything...

Martyn Lloyd-Jones once wrote: **Prayer** is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. A person is at their greatest & highest on their knees face to face with God" God wants good things for us & invites us into the intimacy of his love... where he alone can bring wholeness & healing: **The** High & Exalted One lives forever, & his name is holy. This is what he says: I live in a high & holy place. But I am with those who are crushed & humble. I will renew the spirit of those who are humble & the courage of those with repentant hearts. Is 57:15...God lives high & loves down low where we are... Why?

“...So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more** will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.”

How much more...Jesus asks...how much more will God care for our needs & feed & clothe & protect & forgive...rebuild & restore...How much more when our distracted divided hearts are focussed/stilled. Just hang on to that promise of “how much more...”

You cannot out pray God's generosity. You cannot out pray God's ability. You cannot out pray God's goodness & grace. You may not see the answer you want to your prayer but God will bring more than you imagine or think...Because he has already destroyed sin & death & evil for you...He has already opened eternity for you...He has already provided everything you need in this world for life & godly living so that you can bear his image, carry his presence, & fulfil his purpose & show the folks all around you a glimpse of God's rule over all things here on earth as it is in heaven in you.

God wants our hearts open to him, so he invites us into the intimacy of his love & promises to respond more abundantly than we could ever imagine...In our praying God radically transforms our lives & align our hearts w/ his...gives life in full, purpose & meaning to every day, & hope & promise beyond & bigger than this world & silences every distraction to our devotion.

TAKE IT HOME –

If prayer is as important for our lives as we say it is,
what distraction will you eliminate this week to increase your stillness before God to listen to him?

Let's pray...

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

The Lord is for us, so we will have no fear. The Lord is for us; he will help us.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in people.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.

Father we turn to you...trusting your enduring faithful love & your presence & power for us who believe. We take refuge in you & trust nothing on earth for our salvation or our hope for good. Silence within & around us the noises & voices of distraction so that our day is spent attending to you as you move in our world & shape our lives to your glory. Give us only you...for in you all our strivings find satisfaction & our needs are met...in Jesus' name...Amen