

CCM 6.30 3rd February 2013

Praying like David 1 Chronicles 29:10-19

This morning I was in London and the church I went to has just started a new sermon series, so you can imagine what was going through my mind when I looked at their equivalent of our What's On and read "Lord, teach us to pray" – my thoughts immediately turned to being here with you tonight as we continue to look at these great prayers in the bible. Well before we get too carried away with my travels this weekend, I want to go back to Thursday of this week, as usual one of my customers has recently had a problem with some defective glass, nothing new there you might think. Well in this particular case they'd asked a company in Spain to supply the glass, as if things weren't bad enough already in Spain! My customer needed me to accompany them to see their factory and inspect the remainder of the glass that was waiting to be shipped over, they now didn't trust their capability to supply what was needed.

So off I go to Alicante on Thursday, I know it was a real tough decision, even with a two hour flight! Well the factory itself was impressive, much better than anything I'd seen in the UK, but it was actually empty, they had no more orders to make. There were a few office staff to answer the phone, but that was about it. A factory that looked good, state of the art equipment, but not being used for anything. It had no reason for being there.

Well I wonder what a visitor to Christ Church here this evening would see if they came to see us gathered here tonight? What impression would they go away with? Would they see us praising God? Would they see Jesus at the centre of all we do? Would they see we have hearts for God? What will our prayers say about us? Just what do we look like to others? Its an interesting question, but one that is important if we want, and I hope this is what we all want, to attract other people to get to know God. Like the factory I visited in Spain, do we look good, but there's nothing much going? Or have we lost our way? Are we failing to imitate Jesus?

Because if that's the case, we need to be reminded what good looks like. That is why we're looking at these three great prayers from the bible. A few weeks back we looked at that persistent prayer of Abrahams when he pleaded with God for mercy, and tonight we 're looking at a prayer of David, so grab a bible and turn to page 434 as Anne brings our reading.

A prayer of David found in the first book of Chronicles. Two books that together give us snapshots of history but not just a repeating of the story that can be found elsewhere in the OT but actually putting in meaning and maybe some interpretation for the reader. And they do more than just give us the headline news, because the themes have been chosen to get a particular message across and because they're written much later than these events in Israel's history occurred. These two books were written to provide the post exile Israel a chance to link with their past and re-establish correct patterns of worship and prayer.

So we can look at these books and we can see what good looks like, what should be on show when a visitor walks in and sees us here in church. And of course David's prayer forms part that has been highlighted. Well to find out what moved David to this great prayer, we just need to turn back a few pages to David's first speech to this assembly on page 425, preparation for the temple, with verse 2 saying

"So David gave orders to assemble the aliens living in Israel, and from among them he appointed stonecutters to prepare dressed stone for building the house of God."

A bit later we have his second speech on page 432 this is the plan for the temple, verse 2

"King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it."

And then his third speech, over the page, "Gifts for Building the Temple."

So the build up to David's prayer is preparation for what's to come, planning for the temple construction and finally gifts so that the building work can commence.

We know how great a leader David was, this is one of his bold projects, he has a great vision to provide his people with a temple so they can worship God, but his prayer takes the focus off himself and onto God. Its made up a three parts, praise, giving thanks and a request.

First praise of God, listen again to David's words of praise, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours."

There is no holding back in this acknowledgement of the character of God and the works of God. This is praise with capital letters, it's the kind of praise that reminds me of how the Lord's prayer ends, words we will say together later, it has that kind of all consuming praise. Doesn't that make you feel good? And I think the significance for us and maybe what we need to remember tonight is that this complete praise, nothing has been left out. We see David's first priority is to praise God, On David's heart first is praising God.

Well the answer you might respond with is, well me too Richard, because of Jesus I am full of praise for God, the Holy Spirit compels me to worship like David shows us. I know what good looks like, and praise is part of my every day life. But I return to the question I asked at the start what would a stranger to Christ Church see? Would they see a people full of God centred praise?

Well from praise David now turn to thanking God, "Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens and strangers in

your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”

So David’s thanks are also God centred, he recognises it is God that has provided all they have, back in verse 3 David leads from the front, putting his personal treasure into the temple project. “Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God”

David has made the preparations, drawn up the plans, and has resourced the temple building that is going to take place in Solomon’s kingship, but he recognises the thanks he owes God for this great blessing. “it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.”

And I suspect that many of you would respond saying, Jesus died for me, a greater sacrifice than giving all my energy, gifts, money and time. And is that what a visitor would see? Well with a bit of imagination that could well be obvious to all in a few months. In our 150th year we have an opportunity to improve our own church building recognising at the same time, that we like David need to remember that not something we will have achieved on our own, but recognising that “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”

Hearts full of praise, hearts full of thanks and finally a request that acknowledges this will only continue if our hearts are continually reoriented towards God, “keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.” A prayer to keep the passion of his people burning for God. David prays for his people because he knows that all their preparations, plans and gifts will only glorify God if their hearts are loyal to God. David has already seen how important this is. Recall what Samuel said to David’s father Saul in 1 Samuel 13: 13-14, “You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.”

Well David at this time would have been tending his father’s sheep, he was a teenager, he would have known the consequence of rejecting God. “But Samuel said to him {that is Saul}, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” and then later in chapter 16, “now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.”

The writer of the Chronicles is wanting to make sure that the reader learns these lessons from the past, to continually pray this prayer, to guard God’s people from turning their hearts away.

What a great prayer to pray that we ask God to give us hearts burning with passion for God, hearts loyal to him.

Is that what we look like tonight, we've seen what good looks like, but how do we compare? What would a visitor see in us? Hearts full of praise, hearts full of thanks, and us continuing to pray asking God to keep our hearts loyal to him, because we want our lives to be just like this great prayer, full of praise, thanks and loyal.

Well what a great prayer, so let us pray it now. Let us pray.