

Biblical Reflections and Prayers for the 'Eight Days'

5 June – 12 June 2011

Day 6 – Friday 10 June

EMPOWERED TO ACTION IN PRAYER



Reading

Jonah 2:1-9

Deliverance belongs to the Lord!

Psalm 67

Let the peoples praise you, O God!

1 Timothy 2:1-8

...prayers should be made for everyone,
for kings and all who are in high positions...

Matthew 6:5-15

Your kingdom come, your will be done...

Commentary

Following devotion to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship and the breaking of the bread, the fourth mark of the earliest Church of Jerusalem is the life of prayer. Again, this new depth in prayer is made possible by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Before Pentecost, the disciples struggled to pray, asking Jesus time and again to 'teach us to pray' (e.g. Luke 11.1). Prayer is experienced today as the necessary source of the power and strength needed by Christians in Jerusalem – as everywhere. The witness of Christians in Jerusalem today calls us to a deeper recognition of the ways we face situations of injustice and inequality in our own contexts. In all this, it is prayer that empowers Christians for mission together.

For Jonah the intensity of his prayer is met with dramatic deliverance from the belly of the fish. His prayer is heartfelt, as it arises from his own sense of repentance at having tried to avoid God's will: he has abandoned the Lord's call to prophesy, and ended up in a hopeless place. And here God meets his prayer with deliverance for his mission.

The Psalm calls us to pray that God's face will shine upon us – not only for our own benefit, but for the spread of His rule 'among all the nations'.

The apostolic Church reminds us that prayer is a part of the strength and power of mission and prophecy *for the world*. Paul's letter to Timothy here instructs us to pray especially for those with power in the world so that we may live together in peace and dignity. We pray for the unity of our human societies and the oneness of humankind. Our prayer for unity in Christ reaches out to the whole world.

This dynamic life of prayer is rooted in the Lord's teaching to his disciples. In our reading from Matthew's Gospel we hear of prayer as a 'secret' power, born not from display or performance, but from humble coming before the Lord. Jesus' teaching is summed up in the Lord's Prayer. Praying this together forms us as a united people who seek the Father's will, and the building up of God's Kingdom here on earth, and calls us to a life of forgiveness and reconciliation.

For Reflection/Discussion

- What might be another expression for the 'Kingdom of God'? What are the signs of its presence?
- "The only thing that prayer can change is the one who prays." Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
- What forms of prayer do you practise: Alone? With others?
- What opportunities are there in your area to come together and pray with Christians of other denominations? How can these opportunities be created and encouraged?

Prayer

God our Father, we rejoice that in all times, places and cultures, there are people who reach out to you in prayer. Above all we thank you for the example and teaching of your Son, Jesus Christ, who has taught us to long in prayer for the coming of your Kingdom. Teach us to pray better as Christians together, so that we may always be aware of your guidance and encouragement through all our joys and distress. We pray in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.



National Council of
Churches in Australia
Faith and Unity Commission