

13th March 2022 – Morning Service

Inquiring of the Lord

Rev Helen Croft

Call to Worship – Psalm 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation who shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life of who shall I be afraid?

StF 40 – Blessed be the name of the Lord

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| 1) Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Most high. | 2) Glory to the name of the Lord,
Glory to the name of the Lord,
Glory to the name of the Lord,
Most high. |
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| Ch) <i>The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous run into it and they are saved.
The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous run into it and they are saved.</i> | 3) Holy is the name of the Lord,
Holy is the name of the Lord,
Holy is the name of the Lord,
Most high. |
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Prayer of Adoration¹

Eternal God, We trust you for today - inspire us to stay focused and to follow your plan for our lives.
We trust you for tomorrow - empower your people to protect the vulnerable and to proclaim the truth.
We trust you for every day - be with us as we journey through life towards your great heart of love in which there is no fear, no failure and no limits. **Amen**

Prayer of Confession¹

Dear God, forgive us when the words we speak expose our self-interest.

Help us, forgive us, and deepen our faith.

Forgive us when the things we do compromise your integrity

Help us, forgive us, and deepen our faith.

Forgive us when the way we use our resources clashes with your core values.

Help us, forgive us, and deepen our faith,

For Christ's sake. **Amen**

As a hen covers her chicks with her wings, do you cover us with your forgiving love: drawing us into a new beginning, a new way of being, a new way of serving; strengthening, sustaining and surrounding us with your power and your presence each day of our lives and beyond. **Amen**

StF 98 – Your love is amazing

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| 1) Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging,
Your love is a mountain, firm beneath my feet.
Your love is a mystery, how you gently lift me,
When I am surrounded, your love carries me. | 2) Your love is surprising, I can feel it rising,
All the joy that's growing deep inside of me.
Ev'ry time I see you, all your goodness shines
through,
I can feel this God-song, rising up in me. |
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- Ch) *Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah, your love makes me sing.*

- Br) Yes, you make me sing.
Lord you make me sing, sing, sing,
How you make me sing.

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Reading: 1 Samuel 23:1-12

When David was told, 'Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing-floors,' he inquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' The Lord answered him, 'Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.' But David's men said to him, 'Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!'

Once again David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him, 'Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand.' So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. (Now Abiathar son of Ahimelek had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)

Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, 'God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars.' And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, 'Bring the ephod.' David said, 'Lord, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? Lord, God of Israel, tell your servant.' And the Lord said, 'He will.'

Again David asked, 'Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?' And the Lord said, 'They will.'

Sermon

Acts 13:22 God raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My Will'

Psalm 27:4 One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, and (instantly) require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord (in His presence) all the days of my life, to behold and gaze upon the beauty....of the Lord, and to meditate, consider and inquire in His temple

Over the past few weeks, Brierley Hill has been doing a preaching series on prayer. We have been looking at the various aspects of prayer from adoration, thanksgiving, confession (to name a few) as well as the Lord's Prayer. We are also grounding it in practice by doing 'challenges' through the week which we try and correspond with what we've learnt on the Sunday. Last week, I was presented with the topic entitled 'prayer practicalities.' Now, I could have prepared a 'to do' list of how to pray and even backed it up with Scripture but I think over the last 20 plus years, the more I've learnt about prayer, the more I realise that there's no formula for an effective prayer life, except practice, make mistakes and learn but that said, the one thing that I have become convinced about is the importance of 'inquiring of the Lord'.

A few years ago, God reopened a door that had previously been shut – that door reopening allowed me to go to International House of Prayer in Kansas City to spend time in 24/7 devotion to God. God allowed me to return every 2 years – so, as I started planning some holidays, and it was 2 years since my last visit I asked God if, I could return? His response – No...But Lord, you said....No (I heard clearly)...Ok God, if not where? He led me to a conference in Western California instead. Boy, am I glad I listened and that God knows me better than I think myself. Why? Because during the time I would have been there, there was severe earthquakes – I probably wouldn't have known what to do, if I'd been there. I recall many other stories of God's work in my life by learning to inquire from Him.

David in our Scripture reading was in a sticky situation and so, he asked God the question what should I do? If I do this, will it be successful? Do I need to do this? In fact, there are nine accounts of David enquiring of the Lord what he should do in situations to be successful. There is also an account in 2 Samuel 6 of a time when David didn't inquire of the Lord and it resulted in the loss of a life.

I believe, if we want to have a successful spiritual life, then we need to learn to inquire of the Lord and follow Him in all we do. Now God knew that David would fail, in fact we know David messed up BIG time but God also knew that David would try again. God didn't just see David's sin, he was also aware of His shortcomings but he also saw into David's spirit and knew that David would run back into His arms – the arms of a Loving Father – willing to do and obey all that He would command. God knew that David was a man of absolute faith and resolve in Him. I wonder if God can say the same thing about us? Over the coming few years, churches and the Circuit are going to face some difficult decisions but are we prepared to inquire of the Lord, and follow his leading no matter if they don't make sense to us – Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that His (God) thoughts and ways are higher than our ways – so, are we prepared to trust God no matter what or will we ignore his voice and go the way we want to because it suits us better?

David I believe gives us a road map for helping us to inquire of the Lord – he helps us find the spiritual guidance we are seeking, he helps us run after the heart of God and obtain favour in our life. He helps us in gaining success and behold the gaze of God. So what is the roadmap? I briefly want to suggest 10 things that I believe form the roadmap for us to inquire of the Lord and live in expectant answers and gain a successful spiritual life.

1. **Begin with assurance** – know that when we call upon the Lord he answers Psalm 18:6 - *In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.*
2. **Live with a repentant heart** – Psalm 25:11 - *For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.*
3. **Embrace humility** – step into agreement with God, follow his leading which'll help us grow in wisdom and we receive his guidance. Psalm 25:9 - *He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*
4. **Chose to trust** – trust is a valued character trait that the world lacks, and because of this, we find it difficult to trust an invisible God. However, when we chose to lean into God by learning of His heart and His ways, we begin to rely on Him in every circumstance and in every area of our lives. As we learn we are able to remember his faithfulness, which increases our capacity to trust Him. Psalm 20:7 - *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*
5. **Chose to Love him** – David understood that the choice to love God comes from recognizing and agreeing with the truth that God is the one who gives us the strength to do - and God's strength never fails and never gives up. Psalm 18:1 - *I love you, Lord, my strength.*
6. **Practise devotion** – being devoted to something means being focused on that particular thing almost exclusively. Psalm 16:8 - *I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*
7. **Give God the recognition that belongs to Him.** Psalm 9:1 - *I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.*
8. **Know that He is faithful.** Psalm 23:6 - *Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*
9. **Live obediently before Him.** Psalm 119:34 - *Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart*
10. **Be intentional in your pursuit of him** – Psalm 63:1 - *You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.* This is David's purpose to pursue God earnestly as his one desire, his one delight and his one defence.

We can achieve success despite life's obstacles and challenges when we keep our eyes on the Saviour and make Him, as David did, our one thing. He is the one who holds our course steady and He will complete His work in our lives – so let us inquire of the Lord.

Song – You are here (Waymaker)

1) You are here, moving in our midst
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, working in this place
I worship You, I worship You

Ch) *And you are Waymaker,
Miracle worker, Promise keeper,
Light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are*

2) You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, healing every heart
I worship You, I worship You

Br) Even when I don't see it, You're working
Even when I don't feel it, You're working
You never stop, You never stop working
You never stop

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Prayers of Intercession²

Mighty God, you are a very present help in all our troubles, we put our trust in you. Teach us your ways, O Lord, and show us your paths. Guide your church, that it may lead others to behold your love and glory. We pray for those who care for seekers, wanderers and the lost: Bless all who work as counsellors, Samaritans, and in marriage guidance. We pray for all those who are persecuted for their faith.

L: Lord we put our hope in you **R: You are our protector and our shield**

Loving Father, we remember before you all who are refugees, all who have been driven out of their homes by violence or disaster – we think especially of the people of Ukraine. We pray for those who had had their homes repossessed, for those who have never known the shelter of a home. We ask you to guide and strengthen all who work with the homeless

L: Lord we put our hope in you **R: You are our protector and our shield**

We give thanks for all who have provided for us: we give thanks for parents and loved ones. We ask your blessing upon our families and community, upon all who seek to strengthen the bonds of family life and love. We pray for any who are suffering from the breakdown of their relationships

L: Lord we put our hope in you **R: You are our protector and our shield**

Lord, you are our strength in times of weakness, you are our hope in times of darkness. We pray for all who are struggling at this time, all who are finding life hard and the outlook bleak. We remember friends and loved ones who are ill

L: Lord we put our hope in you **R: You are our protector and our shield**

We rejoice in the hope that our earthly bodies may be changed and become like your glorious body. Change us Lord and we shall be changed. We pray for all our loved ones departed this life, that they may now share in the glory that shall be revealed to us

L: Lord we put our hope in you **R: You are our protector and our shield. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 455 – All my hope on God is founded

- 1) All my hope on God is founded;
He doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, He alone
Calls my heart to be his own.
- 2) Human pride and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray our trust;
What with care and toil we fashion,
Tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.
- 3) God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep his wisdom passing thought;
Splendour, light, and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore, from his store
New-born worlds rise and adore.
- 4) Daily doth the almighty giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth,
Pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand, at his hand;
Joy doth wait on his command.
- 5) Still from earth to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call, one and all;
Ye who follow shall not fall.

Robert Bridges

CCL No. 515642

Closing prayer²

Know the Mighty God as your strength and your shield: he is your fortress and your might. The Lord protect you from all evil and keep you in his love and peace. And the blessing of God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always. **Amen**

¹ From Roots

² From Radiance of His Glory by David Adams