

“Prayers from the Bible” Programme – Spring 2019

March 18: The Lord’s Prayer: Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6: 9-13: Best known or just most misused? Holy Communion in the Book of Common Prayer starts with the shorter version of the Lord’s Prayer (originally part of the priest’s personal preparation) and then repeats it for all to say immediately after receiving Communion. Common Worship offers a more traditional and a more modern version of the prayer – the only two version short prayer. St Luke and St Matthew have slightly different wording; and some versions of Matthew include the familiar full version of the prayer, but most don’t. (Luke has only the shorter version.) It is very likely that Jesus was offering *to His close disciples* a pattern for prayer rather than precise words to use. Although the Lord’s Prayer is the prayer most often scheduled to be said by everyone at the service (any sort of service), it is really a very odd prayer for anyone other than a fully committed adult disciple. There are umpteen variants of the traditional prayer, as Andy has shown very effectively in Open Door Prayer, We might share these.

March 25: The Magnificat/Mary’s Song: Luke 1: 46-55: Perhaps the best-known Christian praise prayer. Anyone who thinks that Christianity ought to keep out of politics, and that the Mary and Jesus story is all cuddly, really needs to listen hard to the Magnificat. Even in Latin, it is pretty radical: a manifesto for major change in the established order.

April 1: Hannah’s Song:1 Samuel 2: 1-10: It wouldn’t do to study the Magnificat without looking back to its Old Testament predecessor. With Hannah and Samuel, as with Mary and Jesus, a baby is special to its mother and special to God and special to the human race.

April 8: The Lord is my shepherd: Psalm 23: Another must have. This psalm has collected at least three magnificent tunes, and those tunes in turn have enhanced the popularity of the psalm. It is worthwhile asking why folk who couldn’t say anything else about the psalms know of this psalm, and what it actually means.

April 15: The Crucifixion psalm: Psalm 22: Immortalised by Jesus on the cross, this psalm richly captures the range of feelings that are represented in the Psalms. It’s Ok to shout at God as well as to praise Him: Take it to the Lord in prayer.

April 22: Easter – No Meeting

April 29: Prayer as Blessing: Numbers 6: 24-27: “The Lord bless you and keep you...” (“The Aaronic Blessing”) is reported as having been given by God to Moses for his brother Aaron and his priestly sons to use.) It is still in use today, and has a unique thrill. Jacob in Genesis 48.15-16 and Daniel in Daniel 9.19 also use the threefold blessing; and it is unsurprising that Christians have linked this to the Trinity. (In ancient Irish tradition too, there is a Trinitarian tradition.)

May 6: Bank Holiday – No Meeting

May 13: Worship on the Grand Scale: 2 Chronicles 4.19 – 2 Chronicles 6.3: The dedication of the First Temple has enough noise, mass slaughter, glitz, incense and formalism as you (if you are inclined that way) could ask – with the King giving the blessing. (Kings and High Priests did tend to overlap at times – sometimes with prophetic rebukes, sometimes not.) You can shout Halleluiah! Or you can wonder how many meals on wheels and council houses might have been provided at less cost and with no pollution.

May 20: Alone with God in the stillness: 1 Kings 19: 9-13: Elijah listens to the still small voice of God: the sound of silence.

May 27: Bank Holiday – No Meeting

June 3: Jesus prays (not for the first time!) for his followers: John 17. Whether John is quoting Jesus, or is recording faithfully what he knows Jesus would have said, this is some of the most powerful prayer material in the Bible.

June 10: Psalm 8: We really can't "leave" the Psalms without looking at this one. In praising the Creator God, there is a reminder (varying according to which translation you use) of our responsibility for God's Creation.

June 17th: Slightly cheating! The Psalms in the Bible often contain a little professional music note. The Psalms in Common Worship are accompanied by prayers written by an unnamed author or authors. Many of them are "good" and some are great. We can share some of these; and you might like to take up the challenge to write your own psalm-based prayer?