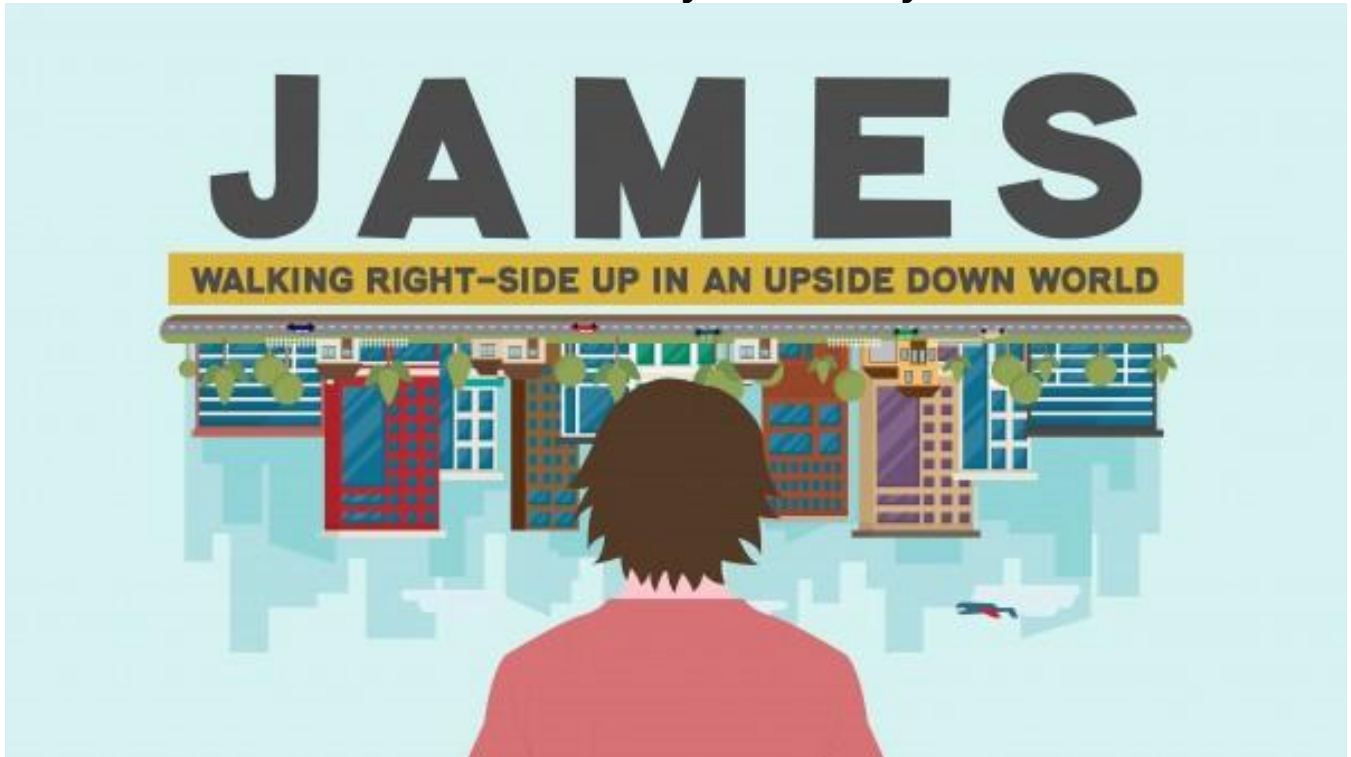




ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH  
LONG NEWTON

**Sunday Worship for 30 August  
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity**



## **Constant Praying: What a Christian Does**

### **Introduction**

Though we cannot come together physically, we gather spiritually as the family of God in our Father's presence to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his holy word, to bring before him the needs of the world, to ask forgiveness for our sins and to seek his grace, that, through his son Jesus Christ we may give ourselves for his service.

### **Service leader's intro from Brian Wake**

Welcome to this morning's service whether you are at home or in Church. Today we start a new sermon series with the heading 'What the Church does'. Specifically, today we will be looking at not just prayer but **constant** prayer. It is good to have David Emerton with us to help us with this in his talk.

## Opening prayer

**God of Love, you called your disciples to sit at your feet and learn from you,  
As we gather today, whether physically in church or spiritually where we live,  
Help us to hear your voice which calls us in our homes and our workplaces,  
in our busyness and our rest.**

**As we answer your call and gather wherever we are to worship you,  
we pray for those places and activities.**

**At your invitation we come to sit at your feet and learn from you.  
We do this in the power of the Spirit and in Jesus' precious name.**

**AMEN**

## Song: 89 – Come down O love divine

**Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.**

**O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.**

**Let Holy charity  
Mine outward vesture be,  
And lowliness become mine inner clothing.  
True lowliness of heart,  
Which takes the humbler part,  
And o'er its own shortcomings**

**Weeps with loathing.  
And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till Love create a place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.**

## Confession

We must give an account of our stewardship:  
let us ask forgiveness for our sin and failure.  
Lord, we have not used your gifts wisely:  
forgive us for being unprofitable; in your mercy,  
**Hear us and help us**

Lord, we have not kept brightly burning the light you entrusted to us:  
forgive us for being unprepared; in your mercy,  
**Hear us and help us**

Lord, we have sometimes ended the day in anger or bitterness:  
forgive us for being unrepentant; in your mercy,  
**Hear us and help us**

**Renew our vision, restore our watchfulness,  
Make us faithful as you are faithful  
That when you come in glory we may hear you say:  
'Enter into the joy of your Lord'  
AMEN**

May Almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,  
Bring us his pardon and peace, now and for ever.  
**AMEN.**

## Readings

James 5: 13-20

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

This is the Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

John 17: 20-26

<sup>20</sup> "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

<sup>24</sup> "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### Talk (by David Emerton)

### **CONSTANT PRAYER WHAT A CHRISTIAN DOES**

Our theme today is "Constant prayer- what a Christian does." There is no question mark which is good and I am sure that we all do pray but the word constant is a challenge to us all. The story is told of a Vicar who asked the members of his congregation to stand up if they were fully satisfied with their prayer life- all remained firmly seated!

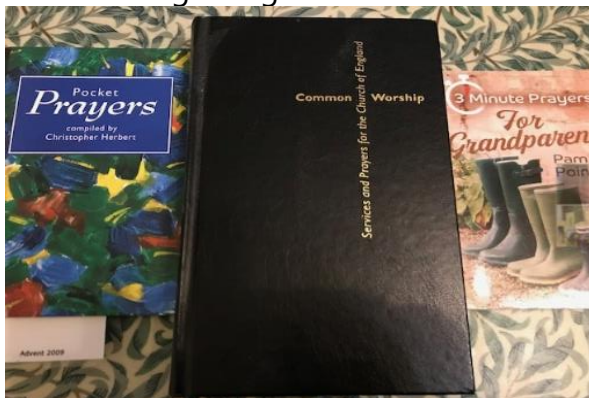
In our reading from John Chapter 17 we are reminded how Jesus prayed for his disciples and also "I pray for them that believe in me through their message" – what an encouragement that is!

Later St Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans-

"Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." That is both encouraging and amazing that Jesus is continuing to pray for us

Today we are considering what the Apostle James wrote about prayer and how we can apply that to our lives today

Near the beginning of his letter James writes about prayer:



In Chapter 1 verse 5 we read:-

***"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given him."***

Likewise he concludes his letter in Chapter five by referring to prayer in six successive verses. In these verses he refers to our prayers as individual Christians, as church leaders and as members of the congregation.

Let us look at these verses and consider what God may be saying to us today  
In verse 13 we read:-

***“Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.”***

Many people certainly do pray when they are in trouble including people who would not normally do so.

A survey published in the UK in 2018 reported that over 50% of the population pray including some who would describe themselves as agnostics or atheists and the most frequent reason for praying was due to some sort of crisis. They do not have to be complicated prayers- help!!!; what should we do; etc- are enough

So James encourages his readers ( and indeed us ) to pray when in trouble and in happy circumstances too- in other words to pray about everything in life. There are varying reactions when people are happy- some are very spontaneous saying- “Praise the Lord” or “God is good.”

Many years ago when Linda, my wife and I worked in Tanzania we were struck how people appreciated small things such as a cup of tea and a few peanuts and would thank the Lord for them with a short prayer before eating and drinking.

So the first responsibility for Prayer rests with us as individual Christians to pray in all circumstances. The how and when we pray varies. The survey that I referred to reads:

*“People are likely to call on God while engaged in activities such as cooking or exercising, according to the poll. Although one in three people pray in a place of worship, and a third pray before going to sleep or on waking, others combine prayer with daily activities. One in five pray while doing household chores or cooking, 15% pray while travelling, and 12% pray during exercise or other leisure pursuits.”*

That is particularly relevant to our theme- “Constant prayer- what a Christian does.”

We should not think that we need special places or complicated language when we pray. Prayer is simply conversation with God- listening and talking. There are many guides to help us to pray as individuals- prayer books, prayer news etc as well as lists and diaries that we can write ourselves. Reading the scriptures and reflecting on them is a good way to turn to prayer- to be able to listen to God as well as talk.



James continues- In verse 14:

***“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.***

Nowadays the elders or leaders of our church may not be the first people that we think of if we are sick. We may well be calling our GP, or NHS 111 or the Ambulance service on 999. We are thankful for the knowledge and skills that God has given to health professionals and the availability of good health care in this country.

However, when we are sick it is good to let our church leadership know so that they can pray for us. The practicalities of how that happens are different at the moment due to restrictions on visiting and face to face contacts but prayer is equally effective when made down the telephone or in a message on a phone or written on a card.

A few weeks ago a member of All Saints church with whom I had prayed previously after church services, phoned me up and I prayed with him over the phone.

Use of oil in healing is mentioned earlier in the New Testament:

-In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.34) we read that the Samaritan poured oil and wine (to sooth and disinfect) the wounds of the injured man.

-Also the disciples when sent out by Jesus (Mark6.13) anointed many people with oil and healed them.

James was following on this action by the early disciples to anoint with oil with his instruction for the church to continue to do the same and a specific instruction for church leaders.

(Over the centuries Church leaders have interpreted this in various ways introducing special services and even restricting anointing with oil to people who seem to be dying. However, we won't spend time thinking about those controversies.)

So a responsibility for church leaders to pray for the sick and when appropriate to anoint with oil.

We come to verse 15:

***“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.”***

In some ways this is a difficult verse. In New Testament times there were many healings- Jesus healed; the disciples were given authority to heal when they were sent out and there were many healings after the Day of Pentecost.

Likewise today in some parts of the world there are reports of many healings when God's Holy Spirit has been working in a miraculous way. We may well know people who have been healed quite miraculously after prayer. We should not doubt that God CAN heal miraculously today and DOES heal.

But we will also know many others who have not been healed physically despite the best of medical care and much prayer. This was true in New Testament times too.

In the second letter to the Corinthians St Paul wrote:-

***“I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”***  
***(2 Corinthians 12.7-10)***

So although St Paul was not healed of his “thorn in the flesh” he was spoken to by God and given his peace and strength to carry on.

Likewise James wrote “the Lord will raise them up”. These words can be interpreted as being raised up from the sick bed. But there is also a sense that God does answer our prayers in His way- as we pray in the Lord's Prayer - your will be done. When we pray for the sick they can and do know God's peace, strength and help. I can certainly give testimony to that with my wife Linda's current illness. Overall she has not got significantly better but she has continued to know our Lord's strength, ability to cope and help.

Verse 15 ends with the words- ***“if they have sinned they will be forgiven”***

It would be wrong to imply that illness is often due to “sinning”. However, Jesus said to the man that he had healed near to the pool – “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” John 5.14. Illness is a time for reflection and hearing what God may be saying to us and acting on it. In my years as an A&E Consultant I saw many people who had become ill due to so called “lifestyle” issues- alcohol excess, smoking, drugs and overeating- some of them did reflect on that and start to make changes.

James continues in verse 16:-

***“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”***

In earlier life I was taught the mnemonic ACTS to use as a model for prayer:

**A for Adoration**

**C for Confession**

**T for Thanksgiving and**

**S for Supplication or asking**

James has already referred to the Adoration, thanksgiving and supplication and now comes to the Confession. We would normally think of our confession as privately saying sorry to God. James has previously emphasized the importance of Christians getting on with each other and I think that is the reason for the words “confess your sins to each other.”

Then the instruction to ***“pray for each other so that you may be healed”***

We do have responsibilities to pray for each other in our churches, local communities or workplaces. Practically speaking- prayer calendars and diaries are really helpful; they can include the “wider church” such as the Mission Partners that we support as a church.

Praying with each others is a great way to put prayer into action. When there are opportunities to do so it is great to meet together to pray.

Continuing to pray for someone who is sick has been compared to adding another brick or plank to a building that is under construction. God uses our faithfulness in prayer to achieve his plans and purposes.

James writes in verse 16:

***“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”***

We should not underestimate the effect of our prayers. My late mother used to say- Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees!

Church leaders over the years have said a lot to encourage prayer:-

William Temple- Archbishop of Canterbury during the Second World War said:

“When I pray coincidences happen, when I don’t they don’t.”

More recently Justin Welby has said:- “Without prayer there is no renewal of the church. And without the renewal of the church there is no hope for the world.”

Then in verses 17 and 18 James reminds his readers one of the great prophets in the Old Testament. He describes Elijah as “a man just like us”. That is a big encouragement to us all. Elijah was a “righteous person”. But he had his lows with times of weakness and doubts. Nevertheless, he was greatly used by God and his prayers were answered in miraculous ways.



So let us be encouraged and challenged by the Book of James and remember that our prayers are used by God; as individual Christians, as church leaders and as members of the church.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father, creator of all that is,  
Whose mystery is beyond our understanding,  
Whose love is always around us.  
We believe in God the Son, Jesus the incarnate word,  
Who suffered and died for us, our risen and loving Lord.  
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth and love,  
God's power in the Church and the world,  
Within our hearts to strengthen and sanctify.  
Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.**

### **Song: 133 – Father I place into your hands**

**Father, I place into Your hands  
the things that I can't do.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
the times that I've been through.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
the way that I should go,  
for I know I always can trust You.**

**Father, I place into Your hands  
my friends and family.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
the things that trouble me.  
Father, I place into Your hands  
the person I would be,  
for I know I always can trust You.**

**Father, we love to seek Your face,  
we love to hear Your voice.  
Father, we love to sing Your praise,  
and in Your name rejoice.  
Father, we love to walk with You  
and in Your presence rest,  
for we know we always can trust You.**

**Father, I want to be with You  
and do the things You do.  
Father, I want to speak the words  
that You are speaking too.  
Father, I want to love the ones  
that You will draw to You,  
for I know that I am one with You.**

**Prayers (written by Lewis Ayers)**

Jesus, you prayed for us and all believers, that we may see your glory and that our heavenly Father's love may be in us. Father, through your messenger James you taught us to seek healing and forgiveness for you sins, to sing praise when we are happy, and to pray when we are in trouble. We now pray for everyone in the world.

As we join in praise and prayer this morning, some of us in our church building and some of us in our homes, we ask your blessing on all your church in its many forms around the world from large gatherings to home groups.

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of everyone involved at Long Newton, from our local leaders through the Area Dean, Archdeacon, and Bishop Paul.

Please help them all to be strong. Please grant them the wisdom, understanding, vision and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and spread the Gospel.

We also pray for all those involved in the selection of our replacement minister at All Saints and here in Long Newton. Please speed and smooth the appointment. Father God, you gave us the true Good Shepherd in Jesus Christ your Son, and you continue to call suitable people to lead your sheep - we ask that in due time you bring us a person of wisdom with a bible-based servant spirit who can lead us by example, for your glory.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our Prayer.**

Father, we pray for the Royal Family and our Government. Bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen and all who govern our nation, nationally, regionally and locally, that they may always follow your will and walk in your way.

God of hope, as our schoolchildren and their teachers prepare to return for the Autumn school term and as we all continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, inspire all our leaders with your wisdom so that our communities will be protected as far as is possible.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our Prayer.**

Father, we pray for all our brothers and sisters around the world, and especially those who are in need of any kind, so that they can really know your presence and feel your love.

We think of, and bring to you, all those affected by tragedy or disaster, including the Covid pandemic, and extreme conditions that range from bush fires in California to storm Laura in other States.

We also bring before you those who continue to suffer poverty, persecution (including persecution for their Christian belief), slavery, oppression, injustice and the effects of war.

We ask you to give compassion, wisdom, courage and relief to all your people throughout the world. And we ask you to bless those who work to help and relieve the needy.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our Prayer.**

We ask for healing for all who suffer illnesses, both physical and mental. Please make them well, Lord, if it is your will.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, and especially those known to us, who we bring to you now .....

And we ask for your comfort and support for all those who love them, care for them, and look after them, whether they do so professionally or simply out of love.

Lord Jesus, who healed the sick, please be with doctors, carers and nurses as they act as the deliverers of your healing touch whether within our hospitals or in other situations. Keep them strong, and when their work is done be with them in their weariness.

Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our Prayer.**

And we bring before you the faithful who have now finished their journey on earth. May the souls of the faithful departed by your mercy rest in peace.

We also bring before you all who mourn and suffer the loss of a loved one. Heavenly Father, please comfort the bereaved.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.**

### Collect for the day

**God of constant mercy,  
who sent your Son to save us:  
remind us of your goodness,  
increase your grace within us,  
that our thankfulness may grow,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

### The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

#### **Our Father in heaven**

Remind us constantly that you are parent to all your children,  
Whoever, or wherever they are or come from,  
And that you are with us and in us here on earth.

#### **Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come:**

Establishing peace and justice, hope and life for all peoples.

#### **Your will be done on earth as in heaven:**

Stirring us to act and speak when others are silent.

#### **Give us today our daily bread:**

And disturb us into awareness of the needs of others.

#### **Forgive us our sins:**

Our pride and our prejudices; our silence in the face of injustice.

#### **As we forgive those who sin against us:**

Loving our neighbour as ourselves.

#### **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil:**

Especially keep our hearts and minds open to see the good in others.

#### **For the kingdom:**

Just and true,

#### **The power:**

Gracious and renewing,

**And the glory:**  
Shot through with the colours of love,  
**Are yours, now and for ever.**  
**Amen**

### The Peace

At this point, we would normally share God's peace with each other. We cannot do that physically but please spend a few minutes now praying for specific people at St. Mary's...

### Song: 132 – Father hear the prayer we offer

**Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength, that we may ever  
live our lives courageously.**

**Not for ever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be ;  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.**

**Not forever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay;  
but would smite the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way.**

**Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
in our wanderings be our Guide;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Saviour, be thou at our side.**

### Final prayer

**God of hope, you filled your disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Fill us with that same spirit and send us out.  
Help us to see your hand at work on our streets and in our homes,  
In the lives of our families, friends and colleagues.  
Give us seeds of hope to take wherever you send us and  
through what we do bring the fruit of your kingdom.  
In Jesus' name.  
AMEN**

Go in peace to love  
and serve the Lord.  
In the name of Christ,  
**Amen.**