

24-7 PRAYER WEEK – Saturday pm & Sunday am

We spent time thanking the Lord for this week and what He has been doing visibly and invisibly in us as individuals, as a church, and then as a nation and in the world. It was interesting to note that Kim Jong-un (N. Korea) is very ill and we prayed for the persecuted church there.

A number of strong themes were highlighted this morning, including;

- Re-imagining / catching God's vision
- Re-building (Is. 43 & Neh 2)
- Your love is better than life
- Humility – recognising that we are totally reliant on the Lord
- Shared Bible passages included;
 - Haggai 2:6
 - Acts 2:17-21
 - Mark 6:31
 - John 17:15
 - Daniel 9
 - 2 Peter 2

▪ FROM JILL & COLIN

Here is our mind-map from this morning. The prayer guide for today asked us to get a pen and paper and write 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the middle, and then add thoughts from the week on spokes radiating outwards. At first, I thought, Wow! What am I going to write? But a phrase or two came to me and then they flowed thick and fast.

We also spent time thinking on some of the Scripture passages from earlier in the week, especially Psalm 91 and the picture of being in the fortress, and that we need to be clothed with God's armour (Ephesians 6:10-18) in order to let down the draw-bridge and be prepared for all we meet outside. It's no good just enjoying the security of being within the walls. We are to use our time wisely so God can fill us and equip us for the task ahead.
– JILL

One thing I have been studying a lot recently is about the "tension" between two different aspects of a spiritual truth. On the one hand is "Be still and KNOW that I am God". With that comes the tension of power in the Spirit to go out, leaning on Him, with him holding us and going on before, to love others as He has loved us. In this way we are, "able to do immeasurable more...". Coronavirus might have brought us to this point, but we have learnt so much more by "doing" in this week of 24-7 prayer than a sermon series or a book will ever achieve. And when the coronavirus has gone, and we re-enter "church", the promises we have stood on and the hope and love that has been stirred in during this time, must lead us to pastures new, to the glory of our Father, who through Christ has called us to turn, that our land might be healed. – COLIN



- Reflections on the Week of Prayer

I've been making notes throughout the week and writing down any passages that seem significant and used these to try and discern what I think God has and is saying to me and others.

At the beginning of the week with so much uncertainty, I have pictured the story Jesus told in Matthew 7 of the two houses one built on sand, the other built on rock. I am so grateful that we have an unchanging, unshakable all-powerful God who holds me fast through the storms of life.

I've had a real sense of God saying "*Behold I'm doing a new thing*" Isaiah 43: 19. On Friday's prayer session I felt compelled to share this BUT my microphone wasn't working so I just noted it down. A few moments later Lee Bray shared exactly the same passage. Later that same day the verse in John 2: 19 (I had to look this up as it was the words that came to me!!) Jesus saying to "*Destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days*" which although was a reference at the time to His future death and resurrection gave me a picture not of physical ruins of church buildings but of silent empty church buildings no longer used. Over the last few weeks I have never felt so connected with God's people and even though meeting in person is not possible, through the wonders of modern technology we are able to meet together to pray, worship and listen to God wherever we are in the world. We are the church built upon the unshakable faith on which we stand.

I've had a real sense of needing to pray and lift to God those friends and family who have fallen away, where they once had faith, but life has drawn them away. In Matthew 16 Jesus asks Simon "*Who do you say I am?*" at that moment Simon has a divine revelation of exactly who Jesus was, and He replies in verse 17 "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*"

This comes full circle to the key passage for this week, 2 Chronicles 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

What a promise and what a hope. I am humbled that God has chosen me with every other believer to be part of His kingdom here on earth. Praise be to the one who saves and makes new.

- Just felt that God would have me share this. It was a very blessed time for us as we prayed on Thursday and on Friday, and the time just flew by! I felt that as we meditated on a Psalm 46 that God was really speaking through Verse 10 and on to the end, how He would be exalted in the nations and that we must continue to 'be still'.

The only other thing I would share is after Steve's address I felt I should confirm something that happened to me a number of years ago. God spoke one Sunday afternoon, "You must pray for..... a member of our church", but being me, I answered "but why Lord?" The message came again, "you must pray for..... now!" I went ahead and did so and left it at that. Some weeks later I saw that person and I told her of that odd conviction. She said, "you

were right to pray, it was a very difficult time for me". She was in a very troubled marriage situation. I didn't ask her what the situation was, figuring if God knew that was enough.

Thank you guys, that was really helpful this morning and encouraging -
BRIDGET

- This morning Mary shared that she had a picture of their shed full of tools covered in cobwebs.

I had already been drawn to Jesus's prayer as recorded in John 17:15-19. Jesus says, 'Sanctify them (us in this context) by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.'

If we at UV allow God to sanctify us God will be able to shine through our shared love, unity and the maturity we will have as we follow the instruction of God through the words of Hebrews 5:14. Don't you love the analogy/ picture of this which the author paints in Hebrews 6:7-8?. We here in Devon know that persistent light rain that gently soaks the ground and brings much more growth than a rare heavy shower on hard dry ground which actually does harm, washing plants away. We must surely soak ourselves daily in the truth/ word/ Spirit- which are the same-only then, overtime can God make us discerning and mature, growing and rooted and firmly established in Him, who gives the growth.

Also, 2 Peter 1:20-21 came to my mind. If the Bible is the words of God himself, and living and active and able to even divide soul and spirit, to open our eyes and reveal God to us personally then should we at Upton Vale put more time aside each week to listen together to what the spirit is teaching us as someone who has studied the passage talks us through it/ something interactive/ using zoom?? Looking at it in detail and context?

David Trim also brought us to Romans 15:4 'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and encouragement we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

So often when I read the Bible I come to a passage and read what I expect it to say. When friends have challenged me to re-read it and look at the words used and what it actually says I find I had misunderstood it or missed a much deeper meaning, especially if I have ignored the context.

May God use us to bring Him glory, even if we do not live to see the fruit in our generation. - RACHEL