

# Prayer walk

## Part 3 – inner prayer life

### Psalm 16

- <sup>1</sup> *Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.*
- <sup>2</sup> *I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."*
- <sup>3</sup> *I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*
- <sup>4</sup> *Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.*
- <sup>5</sup> *LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.*
- <sup>6</sup> *The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*
- <sup>7</sup> *I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.*
- <sup>8</sup> *I keep my eyes always on the LORD.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,*
- <sup>10</sup> *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*
- <sup>11</sup> *You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Last week was our vision Sunday. As we head into 2016 we want re-invigorate our vision for PUC.

Engage, Grow and Go:

- Engage people with the truth of Christ;
- Grow people in the life of Christ;
- Go for the cause of Christ.

Last week we talked about love liberate lead, as part of our vision for 2016. Love liberate and lead, really is a distillation of what the Gospel means for the world because in the vision of our church lies the vision of God through his gospel: to love the world, liberate it from sin and lead us to be new creations.

As we push towards our vision Engage Grow Go – love liberate lead, the gospel, fills out how we can get there because our vision for PUC is nothing without a God vision for the gospel.

Love liberate lead is a way of thinking about our vision statement in terms of the Gospels good news for the world.

Today we are looking at the inward walk of prayer – how prayer has an impact on us internally.

So we are going to look at the Psalms because the psalms are the only book where we get a real look at the internal thoughts and prayers of God's people – so we can get a real insight into how prayer works.

Politics in this day and age is a pretty entertaining affair – things don't always go smoothly for our pollies. Malcolm in his few months in office has had to sack a number of MP's due to travel rorts, wild behaviours, drinking etc. Politics can be more dramatic than the soapies – back stabbings, alliances made, broken. People getting voted into power and out of it, it's like a reality TV show – like an episode of Survivor.

But the most interesting thing about politicians is that almost no one believes a single word that comes out of their mouth. Polls show in the Australia only 27% trust pollies, USA 24%, UK 13%. They are known for spin, dodging questions, masking how they really feel about everything, so you never know what they really are like.

At the moment in the USA Trump is leading the Republican nominations even though he says these ridiculous things – racist comments, sexist comments, calls Mexicans murderers, wants to kick all Muslims out of the country – but he keeps on leading in the polls and winning votes. Trump even said about his popularity once, "I could go shoot someone in the street and I wouldn't lose any votes". Why is there this following? It's because Trump is totally honest, you know what you are getting – he doesn't put on some fake mask to talk to the people.

After the liberals lost in 2007 I heard an interview with Peter Costello, the exiting treasurer, and in all his time in office I never liked him more than after this interview because he was actually honest, he actually said what he thought. He talked about why they lost, about his battles with John Howard, about how bleak it looked for the Liberal party at the time and I actually felt like I knew the real him because he wasn't just repeating some party line, or pushing a new policy, for once he was being honest.

Honesty is a valuable commodity.

The sermon today I want to take a look at one of the most honest passages in the Bible. A passage that we don't often read in church and find it hard to place in our faith. Just listen to this as a prayer:

### **Psalm 58**

*<sup>1</sup> Do you rulers indeed speak justly?*

*Do you judge people with equity?*

*<sup>2</sup> No, in your heart you devise injustice,*

*and your hands mete out violence on the earth.*

- <sup>3</sup> *Even from birth the wicked go astray;  
from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Their venom is like the venom of a snake,  
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,*
- <sup>5</sup> *that will not heed the tune of the charmer,  
however skilful the enchanter may be.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;  
LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!*
- <sup>7</sup> *Let them vanish like water that flows away;  
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.*
- <sup>8</sup> *May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,  
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.*

Pretty ugly – occasionally in the psalms we get these psalms of vengeance. The psalms have a huge variation of emotions, joy, thankfulness, despair, anger, and sometimes a calling for revenge where the psalmist begs God for the destruction of their enemy, in graphic detail. What do we do with these psalms? A psalm of revenge, a psalm crying out for blood? How do we respond or understand psalms like these?

The psalms probably teach us more about prayer than any other book in the Bible because what you see in psalms, ones like Psalm 58 is total honesty before God. The psalmist pours out a completely uncensored prayer to God, warts and all and in doing this we learn that prayer is not about putting on a mask before God – but is about total honesty ... warts and all.

And what I want to suggest is the prayer we see in Psalm 58 is the psalmist drawing God into the deepest corners of his life. He is drawing God deeply into his soul, into his being through complete and total honesty. He doesn't come before God wearing a mask, "O God I know these people are evil, but I should love them and forgive them", saying the things he knows God would want him to say but he pour out the horrible truth about how he feels, "I hate them I want to see them destroyed slowly,, so they suffer".

And what we learn here is that God wants us come before him openly and honestly. He doesn't want us to hide the ugly stuff, pretend it's not there – to put on the mask of a good Christians, just pretend we love every one and have no gripes. Because in our total honesty **we find true intimacy** with God. God stops being a policeman we report to and becomes **a close confidant** who we can tell anything to.

Coming before God with our struggles is not showing a lack of faith but it shows a strength and maturity of faith. Denying the reality of who we are before God, putting on the mask is a sign of immaturity. Telling God all our grievances, the good, bad and ugly sets us free – we are freed from those feelings of anger or hate **because we can hand them over to God.**

Walter Brueggemann, who I read a lot for this sermon uses this analogy:

There are two brothers in the yard playing rough. One brother goes too far and hurts the other. The hurt brother races inside and says to his dad, “he did this and this, he always does this, he’s so mean”. The dad listens to all he has to say and says, “Ok, thanks I’ll deal with it”. And the dad does what is appropriate. This dad listens to all the anger and frustration, says **give it to me**, get it all off your chest so it doesn’t boil over into a fight between the boys.

Just as God says to us **pour out that anger to me**, get it all out, and don’t hold back. I will keep it, I will hold on to it and I will deal with the problem. So when it come to the dark thoughts of our heart God says give it over to me because in prayer we call God into the deepest darkest parts of our life.

In the Gospels people invite Jesus into their home – their lives – to do some miracles. People like the centurion, Jairus, and the family of Lazarus call Christ into their lives to do something amazing. **And in prayer we are doing the same – calling God into our lives to do something amazing.**

Prayer is summoning God into our hopes, dreams, fears and angers – the transactions of life. In prayer we are provoking God to be present in us and with us and the more honest we are the more access we give God, the deeper he is called.

### **Rhythm of life**

Have you seen the movie *Groundhog Day*? Bill Murray is stuck in this loop, repeats the same day over and over again. Life is a little like that, we see the same things happening over and over again. We have our ups and downs, our victories and our defeats, there are times to rejoice and to morn. And they happen time and time again – life has this rhythm, these things that just become part of the background noise of day-to-day.

In the psalms we see that prayer is a part of the rhythm of life. There are happy psalms, sad, angry, thankful psalms. And we are taught that **prayer is a part of this rhythm of life**. Prayer should be in the background noise of all we do. We are to make it a part of the loop. Something we just do without thinking.

Because when we engage in prayer in all things we are inviting Him deeper and deeper into all aspect of what we do, who we are. And in prayer we can draw God closer into the church we are here at PUC because in prayer you are calling God to act in a way in which he wouldn’t have otherwise. In prayer we are provoking God in intercede, we are calling him deeper, deeper into our live, thoughts, actions and we are calling him deeper into the ministries of PUC.

So let me challenge you this year to call God deeper into your life – come to him in full uncensored honesty and give him to that we are. Make prayer part of the rhythm of your life that we might draw closer and closer to God in all we do.