

Service Transcript

SUNDAY APRIL 18th 2021

Service Leader: Delyth Mayhew

Speaker: Pete Greig – Unanswered Prayer Course

Latter part of service: Mark Reid

Welcome

Good morning, and a very warm welcome to you all. I trust this has been a good week for you all. Please make sure you read the notices for today – it will help you to know what is happening here and further afield, and inform your prayers.

Today is the first Sunday in the series on Unanswered prayer, where we will be led by Pete Gregg speaking from personal experience. I hope that we will all, over these next 5 weeks, find comfort and encouragement from what he teaches.

Call to worship

*Come let us sing for joy to the Lord;
Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before Him with thanksgiving
And extol Him with music and song.
It is good to praise the Lord
And make music to your name, O most high,
To proclaim your love in the morning
And your faithfulness at night.
For you make me glad by Your deeds, O Lord,
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands.*

PRAYER

Heavenly Father - we worship You, and we thank You for Your faithfulness, Your constant love and care.

Most of all, we thank You that You loved this world so much that You were prepared to send Your Son to die for us, to rescue us from sin and to bring us the hope of life with You for ever.

He is the One who shows us who You are, and with the Holy Spirit enriches and fills our lives.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we worship you.

AMEN

We read in Philippians chapter 2:

*Christ Jesus, being in very nature God,
Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
But made himself nothing,
Taking the very nature of a servant,
Being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled himself
And became obedient to death - even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place
And gave Him the name that is above every name,*

*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
In heaven and on earth and under the earth,
And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father.*

JESUS - is the expression of GOD's love, the grace of God, the word of God, revealed to us.

In the early 1990's life wasn't too good for us. We both had ongoing health issues, work was very stressful, we were both very busy, and my mother was very poorly, which meant weekly trips to South Wales to see my parents.

I felt as though I was going under. I prayed, O how I prayed. I cried out to the Lord – but I received no answer.

Nothing helped - no word of scripture, no hymn, no friend's words.

I started to ask why - where are you Lord – even, do you care?

A year or so earlier, we had had a holiday in America and had discovered Country music. We subsequently bought a number of CD's – easy listening and good tunes.

One day, I was listening to a song by Garth Brooks - one I'd heard before, but this time, I really heard the words.

And God spoke to me then - through the words of a simple country music love song.

Here it is – maybe you can hear what I heard.

Garth Brooks “Unanswered Prayers”

Just the other night at a hometown football game
My wife and I ran into my old high school flame
And as I introduced them the past came back to me
And I couldn't help but think of the way things used to be

She was the one that I'd wanted for all times
And each night I'd spend prayin' that God would make her mine
And if he'd only grant me this wish I wished back then
I'd never ask for anything again

*Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers
Remember when you're talkin' to the man upstairs
That just because he doesn't answer doesn't mean he don't care
Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers
She wasn't quite the angel that I remembered in my dreams*

And I could tell that time had changed me
In her eyes too it seemed
We tried to talk about the old days
There wasn't much we could recall

I guess the Lord knows what he's doin' after all

And as she walked away and I looked at my wife
And then and there I thanked the good Lord
For the gifts in my life

*Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers
Remember when you're talkin' to the man upstairs
That just because he may not answer doesn't mean he don't care
Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered
Some of God's greatest gifts are all too often unanswered...
Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers*

Songwriters: Patrick Alger / Garth Brooks / Larry Bastian

Two lines:

Just because He may not answer doesn't mean He don't care

AND

Then and there I thanked the Good Lord for the gifts in my life.

And by those words - I was reassured that I was not alone in the midst of all that was going on.
God was there with me, He did hear my prayers, and He would - and did answer, when the time was right and with what I needed not what I thought I wanted.

Recently I read this:

Happiness isn't getting what you want – it's wanting what you've got.

And I knew that I MUST always remember to thank God for the many things that were good in my life and trust in His unfailing wisdom and love..

Psalm 13 says it like this this:

*How long O Lord?
Will you forget me for ever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
And every day have sorrow in my heart?
Look on me and answer, O Lord, my God.*

*But I trust in Your unfailing love;
My heart rejoices in Your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
For He has been good to me.*

The Unanswered Prayer Course 1 – God On Mute

This week we are starting the first of five weeks on the Unanswered Prayer Course which comes to us from Pete Greig of 24-7 prayer. It's the second of two courses they produce the first being The Prayer Course which is a great introduction to prayer for those relatively new to the faith or who

have realised that they need a more dynamic prayer life. If that's you, you may like to consider that course first and details are below.

For those of us who have been around longer, we often find that we get what Pete calls "winter seasons" in our lives where we find life painful or disappointing and we struggle with hearing God and finding Him in our situation. This is where the Unanswered Prayer Course comes in.

At the moment, apart from a few, most of us are not meeting as small groups but the best way of getting the most out of the course is to share with one another afterwards. If you watch with someone, you have an opportunity to do so straight away. Or maybe you can find a prayer buddy for the duration of the course to ring or even Skype, WhatsApp or Zoom after each session to talk and pray. Sharing with one another helps us grow.

If not, take time personally to reflect on the questions that will appear in the description below if you are watching this on the church website. If you are on YouTube, then the link to it is below.

Much recommended is Pete's book "God on Mute" which is available as a paper book, on Kindle or as an audiobook on Audible – details also below.

The aim of these sessions isn't to give you all of the answers to our questions, but to share and care for one another, to taking us deeper into understanding God and His ways and finding His presence. It's a basic principle of being a Christian: when you struggle with your faith, share with someone you trust and pray together.

So, without further ado, let's go over to the first session which is called God on Mute.

We don't have a transcript for this part of the service, but here is Pete Greig's summary.

Bible passages

Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 5:3-5

Key points

- It's a sign of faith, not doubt, to wrestle with unanswered prayer
- We need to talk about unanswered prayer for three reasons:

Emotionally – most of us have pain we need to process

Intellectually – we may also have questions we need answered

Culturally – sadly the church can be less honest than the Bible

- 'Grace groweth best in winter' (Samuel Rutherford) – Harsh winters are often the seasons in which we mature and become more fruitful

"Faith says, 'Even though I don't understand you right now, God, I love you. I believe your heart for me is good.'" – Bob Sorge

For Reflection & Discussion

1. Pete Greig said that we need to talk about unanswered prayer for three reasons: emotional, intellectual and cultural. Which feels most relevant to you at the present moment as you begin this series?
2. The words of Jesus in the book of Matthew teach us to expect blessing in the midst of challenges – how does this encourage (or discourage!) you in your faith.
3. Pete says that “there’s so much faking it” at church. If you could ask God one totally honest question about something you find difficult in your life, what would it be?
4. When have you experienced a ‘winter season’ in your relationship with God? How did it affect your faith?
5. What, practically, do you think is needed for persevering in faith and prayer through the ‘winter seasons’ of life?

Prayer

We have been given much to think about this morning. We are going to continue for a moment to silently reflect on what we have learned and allow God to speak to us.

In the video it was said we are stories in progress. Who we are spiritually has been shaped by the different seasons of our lives. Let’s reflect for a moment on the people we have become in Christ through these seasons.

Perhaps we are in a winter season right now. We know that God says He loves us but we are finding that difficult right now. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring out of you those words of “I love You” to God. Ask Him too to give you the understanding and strength to deal with things that need to die in our lives?

Finally let’s ask God to deepen His roots in our lives.

Amen.

Here is a song written by someone who was going through a winter season in her life and how God spoke to her.

Eileen Walker “What do You say

What do You say what do You say when all I feel is pain
What do You say what do You say when I can’t see your face

I hear You say

I’m the God who’s close to the brokenhearted

I’m the God who weeps with those who weep

I’m the God who knows suffering and pain

I’m the God who’s always gonna stay

That’s what You say, that’s what You say

What do You say what do You say when all I feel is rage

What do You say what do You say when all I hear are lies

I hear You say ...

Let's take time to continue to bring up the needs of this turbulent world before Him, but also recognise that which is positive and give Him thanks.

Father,

we thank you this week that we have seen a relaxation of the covid restrictions and we have been able to do some more normal things in our lives. We continue to pray that the vaccines and other measures will be effective and particularly that vaccines may be shared quickly and fairly with poorer countries.

We also remember the Royal family at this time as they mourn the loss of Prince Philip. Thank you that he had faith in Christ, and the way in which he has encouraged the Queen to so strongly testify of her personal faith in You over recent years. Be with the family we pray.

Let's just take a few moments to pray for those we know of who need prayer right now.

Thank you Lord that You are a God who listens and answers prayers, help us to understand more over the next few weeks a little more of how we hear Your voice and how we find strength in You day by day.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen

In a few moments this service will end, but please continue to reflect on what you have heard – there are the usual items for reflection and discussion. If you are watching with someone take time to share and pray with them.

Here's a prayer for trust in Jesus, by Ignatius of Loyola:

*O Christ Jesus,
when all is darkness
and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of Your presence,
Your love, and Your strength.
Help us to have perfect trust
in Your protecting love
and strengthening power,
so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You,
we shall see Your hand,
Your purpose, Your will through all things.*

Amen.

That's it for today. See you next week.