

Service Transcript

31st July 2022

Welcome, notices, birthday box

Opening words:

On this our fourth Frontline Sundays we are going to see that God uses and equips us to reflect his presence and love wherever we find ourselves. Jesus gave us this promise to His disciples in John chapter 14:

16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he lives with you and he will be in you. (NCV)

Whether we are here worshipping as part of this local church, or out in the community doing our everyday tasks, we are assured that the Holy Spirit is with us and He's in us! Let's affirm this promise today, along with the many others Jesus gives us that we may give Him glory and walk with Him day by day.

Prayer

The presence of God should make us very confident as we live our lives. Here's a well-known hymn. It is both an encouragement and a challenge. Can we sing these words from our hearts?

44 Blessed Assurance

FRONTLINE SUNDAYS

We have been exploring the theme of Frontline Sundays recently. GATHERED OR SCATTERED It is founded on the idea that In Christ, we are His church, whether we are gathered together for worship fellowship, prayer or whatever or, during the vast majority of the week, when we are scattered throughout the community in our families, jobs, friendship groups, social activities, sports and so forth. These scattered places LICC call our Frontline Places which are defined as ...

FRONTLINES

... are the everyday places where we live, work, study, or play and where we're likely to connect with people who aren't Christians. We meet far more people who don't know Jesus (yet) in our Frontline places than at Church services or activities.

In the past sessions we have seen that our frontlines are holy places as far as we should be concerned as the Holy Spirit is within us, so others can meet God through our witness. Our session last time challenged us to reflect on our lives and ensure that whatever we do it is as to the Lord. After all, how do people know God is at work? Because they see our lives.

WHOEVER WE ARE

Today we take that onwards as we understand that the being a Christian in a scattered place is not God's will for a special minority, but where He has placed all of us to live among others who don't know Him and reflect what He's like. That is without exception and God has made and equipped us to serve on our personal frontlines. He has promised to be right there with us – His Holy Spirit is with us.

As a result we can know and be confident that He will be with us – and use us – in every frontline situation and we are going to explore that in the context of a very well known part of the Bible.

Before that, the next song is a prayer, that we will allow God to shape us into the sort of disciple He wants us to be.

1184 Beautiful Lord, wonderful Saviour

Reading: Matthew 6:5-14

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’*

2032 Speak,O Lord

Sermon - WHOEVER WE ARE

The whole idea of being witnesses to Christ frightens many Christians, yet we must understand that we are Christ’s witnesses when we are scattered throughout the weak. It’s not that God forces us to be, it’s just a fact of life – we are where we are, doing whatever we do, and unless we are hermits, which we’re not, we are going to meet with others who don’t share our trust in Christ.

WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

But never forget who God has made us, because we are His people, His family wherever we are. I have given you two freebies this week. The first is the sheet on who we are in Christ. Many of you have seen this before as I’ve given it out quite a few times. It reminds us of promises God makes to us, His people in Christ. Take it home and pin it up somewhere and look at it and the verses in it, because to God, each of us who know Him are special and He blesses us in so many ways. He wants us to understand who we are in Christ because that is immensely empowering as we take Him seriously at His word.

I remember in one Church I was part of, we had one man who had a strange view of prayer. He used to say "I get sick of all those people who say that somehow they have a hotline to God because they don't." He saw Christians who spoke much about their relationship with God as somehow arrogant and hypocritical. VERSE 6 I don't quite know where he got his negative view of prayer, because it was Jesus' teaching that all His disciples are privileged with being able to speak to God and gave instructions to make sure that we got the most out of prayer by spending time with God 1:1 and giving this well known pattern of prayer, we call the Lord's Prayer. But it is down to use to cultivate our relationship with Him and learn more of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through doing that.

This is important because God wants us to have an assurance, a confidence in Him, not just when we are here amongst other Christians but when we are out and about doing our day to day stuff.

HOW CAN WE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN OUR FRONTLINE SITUATIONS?

Being sure of who we are in Christ gives us the confidence to know wherever we go and whoever we meet on our frontlines, we are also in touch with Him and aware of what He's doing in the world and through us. Understanding who we are in Christ changes our attitude to God and to others and that's where the Lord's Prayer helps.

LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer can be so familiar that we skate through it without stopping to think about what we are praying, and even less about what it means for us as God's people caught up in what he's doing in the world. So how does the Lord's prayer help us day by day as we are scattered in the community?

ITEM1

It reminds us that we are children of God

Our Father in heaven

It's life changing to know that we're first and foremost sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. It's a key promise! Do you get it? Whoever we are, we're loved with all wisdom and understanding by our Father, Abba, Dad. This will be the main anchor in the storm, the key that unlocks our prisons, the truth that brings us the greatest joy. Is that your experience? If it isn't then grab that promise and pray that God will give you that assurance it's real. Our Father in heaven is also the gateway to purpose. If we will allow Him, He leads us into finding meaning in life when there doesn't seem to be. We often have to deal with all kinds of stuff in our frontline situations don't we? Sorting our all kinds of issues with ourselves or others. Michael is moving tomorrow. One thing I guarantee is that he will be ringing up frequently. Dad will you do this? Dad can I have that? There's no reason why we shouldn't be leaning on our heavenly Dad too.

ITEM 2

It reminds is that we are part of the Father's business

Hallowed be your name

As Christians, we can act and take to God our concerns and causes. However, when we begin to pray this prayer, we're reminded that what's actually happened is that God, through Jesus Christ, has co-opted us into his purposes. His purposes are holy (hallowed) and we align ourselves with his cause and his way of doing things and so glorify him. And of course, his 'family business' embraces

all things – it’s universal, it’s global, it’s redemptive, it’s liberating – and it includes us and our daily situations, pleasures and struggles – and those we meet daily, whether they know Him yet or not.

ITEM 3

We pray for regime change

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

That’s a popular modern term when we think of global politics. Our desire is to bring change in the lives of others as God brings change to ours. Change can be challenging. Safety, security, and comfort can seem very attractive. But followers of Jesus are called to pray for regime change in the lives of others – that God’s will would be done, here and now. This Kingdom clashes with all alternative ways of life we meet daily. When Jesus first taught this prayer there was an all-powerful empire - Rome. The Jewish people were working out what it meant to be the people of God under these difficult conditions. Some believed they should concentrate on personal piety, some thought that they should accommodate the political powers around them, some took to the desert to withdraw completely, whilst most ordinary people just tried to get on with life. But Jesus came and declared that the Kingdom of God had arrived in and through him. We join in that prayer for our times and places. May He use us to bring His kingdom a person at a time to those on our frontlines.

ITEM 4

We pray for today’s needs

Give us today our daily bread

Praying for today’s bread suggests an attitude of constant reliance on our heavenly Father. It’s a description of our relationship with him and affirms our significance to him. We thought of this earlier. This idea can present a challenge to those of us who like to feel in control. But in the background of the world right now with rising bills, coronavirus still and other uncertainties, being in control can be a struggle. But we have a God who promises to be with us as we rely on Him. Always be prayerful about today.

ITEM 5

We pray about yesterday’s mistakes

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

We pray that we will be forgiven and forgiving. I’ve done a few sermons about this over the years. Forgiveness is a key part of Jesus’ teaching because redemption involves our being forgiven by God. We recognise that there are some things that need to be dealt with regularly because we all slip up. We need forgiveness. People do things to us that we need to forgive. We’re not as good as we think we are and people around us are not as good as we wish they were.

Forgiveness is a distinctive of the Christian life because it is a distinctive of Jesus. He is the One who freely forgives because He loves and He’s gracious and we are called to that be God. It is an essential and not an optional extra. Why? We live in a world where forgiveness is far too rare and unforgiveness is far too common. Forgiveness changes lives. It liberates people from sin. It heals and restores relationships. It tells those on our frontlines that we live to a different set of values that when practised are life-changing. So we pray: VERSE *Forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us.* When we feel we can’t obey the command of

Jesus to forgive and be forgiven, we pray these words because God can change our hearts and lives when we do and by the power of His Spirit.

So Jesus breaks the cycles of failure with forgiveness: between us and God, and between each other. It makes us stand out.

ITEM 6

We pray for tomorrow's walk and 'work'

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

There is much about our dependence on God in the Lord's Prayer. Why? Because in spiritual terms, the world we are in presents many dangers for us. There's an enemy who wants to seduce us away from the ways of the Kingdom, and so times of testing will come and here we are called to pray for protection and deliverance. Most of us are all too aware of how much we need the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. For those of us who have been around a long time, there is also the danger of being over-confident about our own ability to keep going as disciples. In my experience, it's more of a problem with older Christians, than younger ones who are vulnerable because of their lack of experience in the ways of God – and they know it. Remember this however long we have been walking with Jesus. We don't go onto our frontlines alone but the powerful, protecting, life-giving presence of God is with us, so remember and pray to be delivered from the evil one.

ALLOW GOD TO WORK IN OUR LIVES

This dependence on God that comes out so clearly in the LP reminds us that we scatter to be His witness on our frontlines is not about 'trying harder'. It's about learning to allow the resurrection power of God to work in and through our lives as we embrace the things that God has asked us to do. If we know Jesus, then whoever we are, we are of His promises and power.

WHOEVER WE ARE

Here's a video that crystallises what we have thought of today.

LICC Video

PRAYERS

PRAYER We close our service today with PRAYER CARD. You have the second freebie of the of the day in the form of this card. On the right hand side we have another version of who we are in Christ. Knowing that, we have confidence to scatter to our frontlines this week. But in each of our frontline situations we have a role to play in our relationships with other people. We may be a parent, a helper, a workmate, a confidant, a carer, a helper, a team member, a leader, a teacher, a friend, a supporter. Whatever it is, God equips you for that role you play. When you get home do write your Job Description as it were on the card and the people you connect with so that you can be reminded to pray daily for them. Use the other side to remind yourself of who you are in Christ and ask God to work in His power through your life and your words.

We are going to have a time of silence now so that we can each bring before God those on our frontlines who we will be meeting this week that we will be blessed by meeting them, and most importantly, that we will be a blessing to them.

HOPE VIDEO

MRBC – we also pray for the church at this time, particularly the Leadership Team who will be meeting our Regional Minister, Graeme Ross, who will be discussing the church profile with them. Pray too for those who need our prayers at the moment – Ingrid, Margaret, June, Michael. Let's have a time of silence again as we lift the needs of the church, these individuals and any others we know before God.

HOPE VIDEO AGAIN

Finally, we close by saying the LORD'S PRAYER together

2244 Christ be in my waking

Blessing 2 SLIDES

For Reflection & Discussion

The sermon reflected on the Lord's prayer – much the same as you will do below. The Lord's Prayer can be so familiar that we skate through it without stopping to think about what we are praying, and even less about what it means for us as God's people caught up in what he's doing in the world. The wonder of the prayer is that it starts with an assurance of our identity. And that makes all the difference in the world.

Read Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father in heaven

- What does it mean for you that you are a son or daughter of your heavenly Father? How easy or difficult is it for you to trust God as your heavenly Father? Why is that? Are there times in your life when it's made a great difference to know God as your heavenly Father?

Hallowed be your name

- When we become Christians, we can act as though we've enlisted God for our lives, for our concerns and causes. However, when we begin to pray the Lord's Prayer, we're reminded that what's actually happened is that God, through Jesus, has drawn us into his family business. Do you agree with this statement? To what extent? Why?
- In what ways do you think that your life on your frontline matters in God's purposes? Can you think of something that happened this week in your life on the frontline that you think delighted God?

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

- What could be some of God's kingdom purposes on your frontline? How would you turn this into a prayer?

Give us today our daily bread

- What needs do you have on your frontline that keep you dependent on God? How easy or difficult is it to depend on God in this way? Why is that?

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

- Think about your relationships on your frontline. Is there someone to forgive? Is there someone to ask forgiveness of?
- Think about your relationship with God. Take a moment in silence to talk to God about anything you regret and repent of. Ask for his forgiveness.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

- Think about one pressure point and one kingdom purpose on your frontline. How are you tempted not to trust your heavenly Father for these things? What protection do you need from God in these situations?