

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups June 3rd 2007  
Deeper into prayer – with Jesus  
...with thankful hearts Matt 14:13 -21



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The feeding of the 5000 (recorded by all four gospels) is one of the most spectacular of the miracles of Jesus. In John's account the crowd's immediate reaction is that they want to make Jesus King! A far cry from the rejection of Jesus by his own home town immediately preceding the miracle (read Matt 13:54 -58). Hard on the heels of this rejection at Nazareth Jesus has to come to terms with the bloody and brutal murder of his cousin John the Baptist (Matt 14:1 -11). Is it any wonder that Jesus needed to seek out a 'solitary place' (v13) where he could pray privately.

We are just over half way through our series 'Deeper into Prayer' and today's reading gives us three practical pointers on going deeper into prayer with Jesus:

**Firstly - Prayer is Personal** – Jesus *withdrew ...privately* to a *solitary* place. Jesus created space and time for prayer, to be in particular conversation with God. Rejected by his friends and family, unable to do any miracles and now John killed, Jesus was in a hard place. He needed to get personal and private with God – his heavenly Father. This is a pattern repeated throughout the gospels. The way that Jesus prayed had a major impact on his friends and followers. Luke 11:1 -2 details the birth of the Lord's Prayer which came as the disciples observed how Jesus prayed in 'a certain place.' The challenge for us is that amidst the busyness of life in Dorking how can we put into practice this principle of personal prayer modeled by Jesus? How can we withdraw into a private and solitary space with God as he did?

**Secondly - Prayer is Practical** – Read Matt 14:15 -16. It's late, the crowds are hungry, they need food so lets feed them! Whatever this is it is not a life or death situation! The disciples plan was for the crowd to disperse to the nearest villages and buy provisions but Jesus had a plan B that more effectively and immediately met the need! Read v 16. In a very real sense this was a practical bread and butter (excuse the pun!) 'give us each day our daily bread' approach to prayer. A practical everyday need that had to be practically met. Someone once said that if God isn't interested in the everyday practical realities of our daily lives then he isn't interested in us at all.

**Thirdly – Prayer is Powerful** – Read Matt 14:17 -21. There is a direct link between private prayer – the times Jesus spent alone with God – often late at night or early in the morning) and the remarkable and powerful things that Jesus was able to do. Jesus specifically taught his disciples that prayer was a source of power. (read Mark 9:28-29). The disciples were puzzled and confused that they'd been unable to drive out a demon. Jesus managed to do it. The disciples asked why and Jesus replied that 'this kind can only come out by prayer.' So in Matt 14:18 Jesus takes the 5 loaves and 2 fish, looks up too heaven, gives thanks, breaks the loaves, gives them to the disciples and the people eat and are satisfied. An ordinary and pitifully inadequate picnic meal transformed by Jesus over and over again so that there is more at the end than at the beginning!

Lives are saved, people are changed and healed, mountains are moved as we grow closer to the Lord involving him in the practical everyday details of our lives, as we seek his wise intervention through our prayers and as we watch with wonder and worship as he works out his will and purpose in our lives and the lives of others.



Witness: questions to discuss

1. Amidst the busyness of life in Dorking how can we put into practice this principle of personal prayer - modeled by Jesus? How can we withdraw into a private and solitary space with God on a daily/weekly/monthly basis? Share your own private solitary places.
2. Share some practical answers to prayer. What do you think of praying for a parking space?? Is God interested in these practical details of our lives? What happens if no parking space materializes??!
3. Is your prayer life powerful? Share some powerful answers to prayer.
4. Why do you think we see so few miracles these days?
5. How can today's passage help you/your group pray tonight/today?