

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups May 13th 2007

Deeper into prayer – with Jesus

....when alone Mark 15:21 – 41. (Psalm 22)



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Of course over the last two weeks news regarding the new building plans has been disappointing but I (Paul Bryer!) have strangely enough been greatly encouraged! Not because I firmly believe that plans for our new buildings will ultimately be approved – which I do, but because I believe that God is up to something far bigger than building a building! Through these times God is building his people here, you and me. He is calling us to wake up and let his voice be heard not just in our individual daily lives at work and home with our family and friends but corporately together here in Dorking and indeed across the world.

At our APCM you may recall I commented that St Paul's was probably the single largest community in Dorking; a community committed to loving God, loving one another and loving the world. But if you walked down the high street on a Saturday and asked people about St Paul's they would not know who we are, where we are or why we are! In some ways we are a sleeping giant and we need to wake up and discover a voice! This is going to be a battle as a secular society does not want the church to speak of Christ and make him known, it does not want the church to have a Christian voice in the way decisions are made and things are done. It is preferable that the church is quiet, unobtrusive, non confrontational and half an hour max on Sunday mornings as long as there is no amplification!

In such a climate it is incumbent upon us to discover a language, to speak up, to have a cutting edge and prophetic voice so that Christ is known and Christian standards are upheld. The local paper reported me as saying "The role of the church is to serve the community and to meet all the needs of this parish." We need to say this again and again not just with words but with actions, not just as individuals but together as God's people, his church in this place so that residents of Dorking will know that St Paul's are the Church who love and care for this town.

At the APCM I gave a picture for our church of seams of rock - the outer layer hard and resistant the lower layer soft. Prayer was the key to permeate the hard rock which will be broken through. Subsequently another picture of rain soaking through porous rock spoke of God's love soaking through. God is teaching us about praying in those hard places.

When Jesus prayed 'My God my God why have you forsaken me' he echoed the prayers of all have felt utterly abandoned and forsaken by God. In doing so he gave permission for us to pray the same words he was praying from the beginning of Psalm 22. Here David cried out to God. The Psalm contains familiar words (read v14 -18) and paints for us the agonies of Jesus that were to unfold at the cross 1,000 years later.

In Jesus we have a suffering God who has gone through hell for us that we might know his presence in the darkest of places. But even in this darkest of prayers there is hope, for Jesus would not just have had the opening words of the Psalm on his lips rather he would have had the complete Psalm in his heart – read v 19, 24,27,29-31.

'Future generations will be told about the Lord' v 30. God has called us to love his world, to be his church in Dorking for this generation and the next, to bind the wounds of the broken hearted and to pray. Let us do so in the strength and grace of Christ.



Witness: questions to discuss

1. What has been your reaction to the Council and Newspaper's response to our new building plans?
2. How can the Church make its voice heard in an increasingly secular world?
3. How can we as St Paul's show our love and care for Dorking?
4. Spend time sharing your response to the two pictures for our church of hard and porous rock. You may want to set aside some time to pray.
5. Have you ever felt forsaken or abandoned by God?
6. Share and spend time in prayer for those you know have felt/are feeling forsaken or abandoned by God?