

## **Colossians1:1-8**

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*

*2 To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

### **Paul Thanks God for the Colossians**

*3 In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, <sup>5</sup> because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel <sup>6</sup> that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. <sup>7</sup> This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, <sup>8</sup> and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*

## **Pslam34:11-18**

### **Luke 4:38-end**

#### **Healings at Simon's House**

*<sup>38</sup> After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. <sup>39</sup> Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.*

*<sup>40</sup> As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. <sup>41</sup> Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.*

## ***Jesus Preaches in the Synagogues***

*42 At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. 43 But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." 44 So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.*

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When I read this passage from Matthew, I was struck by the way Jesus prayed.

First of all, he prayed in the synagogue - as was his custom it says elsewhere.

The synagogue was the place where the local Jewish communities gathered to hear the scriptures, and greatly revere them, I'm sure you have seen pictures of the scrolls and beautiful scroll covers kept in a special cabinet called a tabernacle, in the synagogue.

The people would recite the psalms, the local rabbi (teacher) would comment on the scriptures that had been read, or they would invite a visitor to do so. It was also a gathering place for the community.

And of course, they would pray. Prayer is communicating with God, worshipping, speaking, listening, making an offering of service. Many of the psalms are prayers Jesus would have done all those things, and as we know he was invited to speak on at least one occasion, and was ejected for his unorthodox teaching.

Here at Capernaum, on the shores of lake Galilee, his teaching and the authority he shows in healing a mentally disturbed man seems to have led to "news about him spreading throughout the area".

We next meet Jesus at the home of Simon. Mark tells the same story but includes the fact that Andrew went too, so we can know It was the apostle Simon-Peter's home. Here Jesus is also to pray for his

Mother-in-Law who had a “High fever”, and she was immediately cured and served them. By rebuked we can say he prayed against this illness which at the time might have been credited by evil.

We too pray for healing, even curing of people with disease. We may have greater scientific knowledge of disease, but we do not have the Godly Authority Jesus had. But we can in prayer offer those who suffer to Gods healing power. Jesus’ reputation at the synagogue led to crowds gathering asking for healing. You can imagine a middle eastern gathering, noisy and pleading, and Jesus accomplished many healings. Obviously with much prayer, more communication with God.

The consequence was that early the next morning, while it was still dark, he had to go and be alone to “be with” God.

We can only guess at how he spent that time, probably as we could, just bringing himself, this extraordinary life he had just begun, seeking guidance, thinking of those he had encountered perhaps acknowledging how inadequate he felt in the face of such need (he was human!) but above all praising and thanking God for his power, love and greatness.

These are just the same things we can do when we pray. Praising God, worshipping him for who he is, thanking him for what he has done, and is doing in our lives, confessing our shortcomings, asking for those in need, for those we love, and for ourselves.

You may have learnt a code help for praying ACTS:  
**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication. Or another one.

Jesus gave us the Lord’s prayer as a pattern for our prayers.

When we say it together at the end of this service, we can take it line by line, to enjoy and remind ourselves again what it says.

We heard a passage from the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, commending the church there for their faith and love. He

encourages them, and towards the end of the letter he tells them – “devote yourselves to prayer”.

Jesus’ time of prayer along gave him the guidance about his next, way forward. So, when the crowds find him, he is able to tell them he has to go to other places and continue his ministry of teaching healing. That was his purpose.

And he will go first to the synagogues, the places where God’s faithful gather for worship and prayer. Then his ministry will be fed and encouraged.

This pandemic time has meant many people have not been to church, gathered to worship, pray and get together, with others for many months, and are still anxious. But that is such a loss.

Of course, we can pray on our own, but great discipline is needed - I know! and ‘like Jesus we need others to be side us to be able to fulfil God’s intended purpose for us.

Since Jesus died and rose again, we have the Holy Spirit available to us so get into the habit of knowing his willingness to listen and guide us: however and wherever we pray.

To be in your presence - to sit at your feet, where your love surrounds me, and makes me complete - this is my desire O God, this is my desire.

To sit in your presence, not rushing away, to cherish each moment

Here I would stay

This is my desire

*[Janet Lawrence]*