

When you can't stand it – try kneeling!

Acts 1⁶⁻¹⁴; [Psalm 68¹⁻¹⁰; 1 Peter 4¹²⁻¹⁴ 5⁶⁻¹¹] John 17¹⁻¹¹

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer. [Acts 1¹⁴]

Woodbine Willie (more correctly, The Revd. Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy) wrote the most challenging thing that I have ever read on prayer. His theology growing out of the gruesome experience of having been a Chaplain on the front line during WWI and having to review what he thought of God after lying on his stomach in no-man's land to read the Burial Service where a man lay or of gathering the pieces for burial from a bomb crater. He arrived at the view that the only real prayer was and is, *Thy Will Be Done!*

I think that it is true for many of us that we believe in prayer, but that our understanding is that prayer is a way of getting God to do what we want – and that is exactly the opposite of *Thy Will Be Done!*

How should we pray? Surely, we want to learn from those gathered in that Upper Room and to pray, like them, waiting on God. Two weeks ago we looked at the verse in John's Gospel when Jesus said, **If, in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it**, and we understood that prayer isn't a blank cheque. Nevertheless, prayer is important:

✘ It is to pray for the gift and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, knowing that God is always with us.

I. Those who regularly listen to my sermons will know that I sometimes ask the question, *how much more like Jesus are you today than you were yesterday, or last week, or last year?* I keep asking that because the greatest evidence that we are Christians inhabited by the Holy Spirit is that we become more and more like Jesus: it is the Spirit's primary purpose and it is the evidence of Jesus promise that **I will be glorified in them.**

II. Along with the gift of the Holy Spirit comes the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These aren't ornaments to adorn Christians, but these are tools to enable Christians to carry on Jesus' work.

When that is what we want from God, then there is no question that His will is being done.

✘ We pray in conversation with God. We do not immediately arrive at the point when we can say, *Thy Will Be Done* – it takes time to accept that is what we want to say!

When we pray, perhaps we should listen to ourselves and try listening from God's perspective. We may very well think that what we say is worthy of ourselves, but is it worthy of God?

I am fairly certain that God is a pipe smoker – he fills and fiddles and goes through a box of matches while listening to our prayers and that reassuring presence tells us that he will do the right thing.

✘ We pray with one another in the rhythm of daily prayer. It is part of the discipline of the Christian life that we take time to share in the Psalms and to hear Scripture and to pray for the Church and for one another. Worship is the lung of the Church; Scripture its heart; and prayer its lifeblood.

We pray when we feel like it and we pray all the more when we don't feel like it. How could those in the Upper Room have made sense of any of the events they had experienced – the Passion, trial, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus: that is why the two words **constantly** and **devoting** to prayer are important and something we need to follow.

Thy Will Be Done! Whatever leads up to it in talking to God, that is where we end up!