

From the Minister

‘One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.’ Luke 6:12

We have been thinking about prayer during the last few services, the different ways of praying and the importance of finding the time and space to pray. But still we have to admit sometimes we find it difficult.

If we look at scripture we can see that even Jesus had to make time and space for prayer, whether it was finding space in a garden, going up a mountain, or even shipping himself off on boat. Unfortunately often the crowds followed even then. So it seems even Jesus had a hard time finding space in the pressures of life to pray. But he saw it as so important that he MADE time, even if it meant staying up all night! Now I’m not suggesting that we always go without sleep, but it does beg the question: ‘When do we find time to pray?’

During a recent service I also asked questions about what prayer was; reflecting that it wasn’t just about us talking, but also listening. The above passage (and its following verses) suggests that Jesus was willing to be shaped by prayer. He had an important decision to make, in this case he was about to choose his core team – Jesus had many disciples (learners), but he chose only 12 apostles (messengers). The apostles were his inner circle, to whom he gave special training and whom he sent out with his own authority. To choose these took some careful consideration. For Jesus that was in prayer. He took the decision to God, not in a quick prayer, but rather he took time to consider it before God, and time to allow God to influence his thinking and decision making. We have to allow God to influence us. Part of our praying must allow time; time to be with God, time to think with God and time to listen to God.

But even then the most crucial part is to allow that prayer to shape us. I have often heard the phrase ‘Prayer changes things’ and I sincerely believe this to be true. But I am becoming more and more convinced that the thing prayer changes is us! When we truly open ourselves up to God, when we allow time for God to speak to us, we then have to allow that to make a difference - to change us; our attitudes and our actions.

If we read on from the passage above this seems to be the exact thing that Jesus is trying to teach his new ‘apostles’. He immediately starts to tell them how their new ‘status’ should affect their relationships with others, and exhorting them (and us) to ‘love your enemies’ and ‘Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.’

It is the relationship with God, cultivated and influenced by our time in prayer that converts us from ordinary folk to people who live as children of God – loving and merciful just like our Father.

So let us pray, but let our prayer not just be words, let it be time with God, and an opportunity to allow God to influence and change us, that we then may also live out the call to be his children.

Rev Rick