

Sunday 7th March 2021

Daniel 9: 1-27 (Praying nationally)

Talk by Kemi Ogundipe, Prayers by Betty Friend

Good morning, welcome to our online service. I am Kemi.

We will begin our service with a short prayer. Betty wrote the prayer of intercession, but Sue will read on her behalf. I will read the bible passage, preach and conclude with a prayer.

Let us pray.

Holy Father and creator of heaven and Earth, we are here to worship and praise your name. May our worship be accepted before you. Amen.

Sue will lead us in prayer of intercession.

Prayers

Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone.
Dare to have a purpose firm, dare to make it known.

Let us pray.

Almighty and loving Father, we bring our cares and concerns to You, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. We bring to you our world which is in chaos with millions of people suffering as a result of violence, famine, climate change, oppressive governments and the coronavirus pandemic. Lord, only you can change the world, but we can make a difference. Help us to do what we can in our own small ways.

We thank you for health and aid workers, for missionaries, thinking especially of the Day family in Thailand, and for all those who carry on with the necessary jobs in transport, serving in shops, postal worker and those emptying our bins.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

We lift to you our persecuted brothers and sisters suffering discrimination, torture, imprisonment and death because of holding their faith in You. Thinking especially of those in Pakistan, Nigeria, Iran, North Korea and China. We ask for your divine intervention to stop the violence in Myanmar, Ukraine, Nigeria and Yemen. Raise up honest brokers who will speak truth to power. We pray too for the peace of Jerusalem.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

Father we pray for our country. For the queen and the Duke of Edinburgh; give wisdom to the doctors who are treating him and have your healing hand upon him. We ask you to give wisdom to our government as they try to balance the need to suppress the spread of corona virus and revive the economy. We ask your comfort for those who are grieving the loss of loved ones and the inability to visit loved ones. We thank you for the vaccination programme, which is being rolled out at a fast rate, but give people patience as the

lockdown guidelines still need to be followed. Help those who are suspicious of the vaccine and help them realise that this will help them and not harm them.

We thank you that the furlough scheme is to continue, and we pray that the proposed plans to create jobs will come to fruition, and that those who have lost their jobs will soon find employment.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

Finally we pray for your congregation here at St. John's. We thank you for those who are facilitating and attending the Alpha course and pray that they will come to an understanding of you. Thank you for all those donating to the food bank, which is able to bless those in need at the school and the C.A.P. clients. Thank you for the work of Rachel, Lin and Gareth and the volunteers seeking to support those looking to find a way out of debt. Thank you for the work of our church wardens, PCC and home group leaders and for the blessing of zoom. We ask that you have your hand of protection on students and teachers as they return to school on Monday. Lord have your healing hand on those of our congregation in need, including Audrey, Anthony, Val, Sue, Andy and Emma.

Let us take a moment to remember those who need God's healing and peace.

We look forward to the time when we will welcome a new vicar to lead the merged congregations of St. John's and Holy Trinity. Give those who will make the final selection your clear guidance as to who should fill this post.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**

As we prayed at the beginning: Dare to be a Daniel.

We are sorry that we have not been bold enough to proclaim the good news, and have not lived as you would wish, we ask your forgiveness and that you will help us to live more like you.

We will now join in the prayer that Jesus taught us

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Reading

The reading is from the book of Daniel Chapter 9:1-27.

Daniel's Prayer.

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (Eksis) (A Mede (Mid) by descendant) who was made ruler over the Babylonian Kingdom, in the first year of his reign, I Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the Prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So, I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and Confessed.

“O lord the great awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our Kings our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.

O lord, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore, the curses and sworn judgements written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out to us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

“Now, O lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. O lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us. Now, our God, hear our prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your mercy. O lord, listen, O lord, forgive! O lord hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your name.

The Seventy "Sevens"

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his Holy hill; while I was still in prayer Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: Seventy 'seven' are decreed for your people and your Holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

"Know and understand this: from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed one, the ruler comes, there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'seven' It will be rebuilt with streets and trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'seven' the anointed one will be cut off and will have nothing. The end will come like a flood: war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

This is the word of the Lord - thanks be to God.

Talk

Today's sermon is focused on praying and prayer. Daniel's life was centered on prayer like our life at St John's, where our first core value is "Living in intimate relationship with the father". We experience intimacy with God in prayer, worship, home group, monthly prayer meeting, a time when we pray to ask God for the needs of our parish and from time to time a national prayer by the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York. Recently we were told of a continual prayer after more than one hundred thousand people in our nation lost their lives to coronavirus Covid-19.

God listens and hears our prayer in St John's, except for once as far as I know when we prayed and fasted as Daniel did, but no answer, and only God knows the reason for that - the building project; we continue to pray, and God continues to answer our prayers.

In today's passage, we have first Daniel's prayer for restoration of the Jews who were in captivity, in which he confesses sin and acknowledges the justice of God in their distress and suffering but pleads God's promises of mercy for them.

Secondly, an immediate answer to his prayer had sent him by an angel and he was assured of the quick release of the Jews from their captivity.

Thirdly, he was informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished; the prophecy takes place 539 years before the birth of Christ.

Darius was the first king of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians; once Belshazzar was dead, the kingdom of Babylon ended (Daniel 5:29-30).

In chapter 6, Daniel served the Medes and Persians, in the first year of Darius the Mede who was newly appointed King of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew Cyrus. In this year, the seventy years of the Jews captivity ended but the decree for their release was not yet issued, so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been made in that year, and probably before he was cast into the lion's Den. Though it could have cost him his life, Daniel had lately experienced the benefit and comfort of God's faithfulness, so this was one powerful inducement to keep so close to the commitment of prayer.

What led him to God in prayer was what he understood from books, that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuation of the desolations of Jerusalem. The book from which he understood this was the prophecies of Jeremiah, which expressly foretold the dates (Jeremiah 29:10) "This is what the Lord says when seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place". It was likewise said in (Jeremiah 25:11) "this whole country will become a desolate wasteland and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years."

Daniel was a great prophet and one who was familiar with the vision of God, he was a diligent student of Scripture and thought it to consult Jeremiah's prophecies, he was a great politician, a true public servant, and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon Earth; he could find both the heart and time to live by the word of God.

The greatest and best men in the world most not think themselves above their bibles; the seriousness and solemnity of his talk to God arose naturally when he understood that the seventy years were just about to expire, so he set his face to seek God by prayer. God's promises are intended not to override, but to excite and encourage our prayers, not to take away our desire to pray when we see the effecting of them approaching, we should more sincerely plead them with God and put them into action so did Daniel he prayed three times a day and no doubt, in every prayer made mention the desolation of Jerusalem.

In every prayer, we must confess, not only for the sins we are guilty of, but, because of our faith in God and dependence on him, we must confess our regret for sin and resolutions against it, our confession must be the talk of our convictions.

In Daniel's humble serious devout talk to God, he gives glory to him as a God to be feared and as a God to be trusted, we should in prayer, look both at God's greatness, his goodness, his majesty and mercy.

Daniel's prayer is a penitent confession of sin, the cause of the troubles the people for so many years groaned under; all who would find mercy must confess their sins, belittled by acknowledgement of the righteousness of God, and finding it is a way of true penitence to justify God.

Afflictions are sent to bring men to turn from their sins and to understand God's truth. Whenever we make a prayer of believing appeal to the mercy of God, it is a comfort that God has been always ready to forgive sin, it is encouraging to recollect that righteousness belongs to him, there are so many mercies in God not only forgiveness, but forgiveness's. He is a God of forgiveness (Nehemiah 9:17) and he multiplies to forgiveness's (Isaiah 55:7)

Daniel pleaded for the restoration of God's people and of the ruins God's sanctuary, using the pronoun "We" throughout. In times of adversity, it is easy to blame others and excuse our own actions, if any Israelite was righteous, it was Daniel, and yet he confessed his

sinfulness and need for God's forgiveness. Sin is a reproach to any person, but especially to God's people.

The desolations of the sanctuary grieved all holy persons, so he requests to God to restore the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyment, "O Lord, hear and do, not hear and speak only, but here and do that for us which no one else can do, and postpone or suspend our suffering". God makes his face to shine on us when we repent and turn to him. In all our prayers this must be our plea. We must mention his righteousness only and the humble fervent and believing seriousness of this prayer should ever followed by us.

Verses 20-23 An answer was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer and it was a memorable one, when we pray with fervency, for that which God has promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer, for he is faithful that promised. Daniel had a far greater and more glorious redemption revealed to him that God would work out for his people in the final days. Those who would be acquainted with Christ and his grace must be much in prayer, Daniel prayed to God without ceasing, his prayer was accepted and for the sake of that this glorious discovery, redeeming love, was made known to him.

The son of man in Daniel 7 became the son of man Jesus Christ, who would die for the sins of the world fulfilling the words of Isaiah 52:12 to 53:13 it revealed the exact month and year of Messiah's death 539 years before his birth. One of the most remarkable prophecies of his coming and salvation, it shows the Jews are guilty of most obstinate unbelief, in expecting another messiah so long after the time expressly fixed for his coming.

The seventy-seven means the 490 years, clocks begin with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, this probably refers to a decree issued by the Persian King in 458 years before Christ giving Ezra permission to reestablish Jerusalem as an official recognized city.

(Ezra chapter 7:3-26) the angel said that once the decree was issued, seven "sevens" and Sixty-two "sevens" this period a sacrifice would be offered making full atonement for sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness for the complete justification of every believer. Then the Jews in the crucifixion of Jesus would commit that crime by which the measure of their guilt would be filled up and troubles would come upon their nation. All blessings granted on sinful man come through Christ's atoning sacrifice, who suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This is our way of access to the throne of grace and our entrance to heaven. This sets the seal on the sum of prophecy and confirms the covenant with many and while we rejoice in the blessings of salvation, we should remember what they cost Christ our redeemer.

To conclude, Daniel had a method to his prayer and approach to God, he prepared himself before he approached God in prayer, although he had every reason to rest on his laurels. He prayed to God, talked with him and made his supplications known to him, he asked God to accomplish his will according to his word, by fasting his attention was completely focused on God, he wore clothes made from rough inexpensive material to focus his mind and mourn for the sins of his people by wearing ashes, Daniel humbled himself in appearance because his concern was for God's word and holiness.

Daniel understood God operated through his faithful people, and he understood his part of the plan's fulfillment. Through Daniel's prayer God would accomplish his plan, he came to

God with prayer and according to his word that his will might be done. Daniel did not magnify his heart or position but approached God in humility and with awe.

St John reflects Daniel's way of praying, we confess our sins, we present our prayer request to God and God hear our prayer. May God continue to help and teach us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, how to approach, present our request of prayer and pray before him the right way. Amen.

We conclude our worship with a prayer.

Let us pray:

May the grace of God uphold you,
his peace, love surround you
and bring you safely through this day and always. Amen.