

Thy Kingdom Come Prayer – Homecoming

During the year's *Thy Kingdom Come*, we are being encouraged to pray for those who do not yet know Jesus to encounter Him and for those who have lost their faith, especially in the hardships of this past year, to come back home.

Choose the names of 5 people that you want to pray for over this 10 day period. It could be family or friends, work colleagues or neighbours. In this leaflet, which is designed to help you pray during a 1-hour slot in our virtual 24/7 prayer room, we sometimes refer to our 5 people as prodigals.

One hour prayer slot focusing on the return of the prodigal - Text: Luke 15:11-32

Create a space in your home where you can take time and meet with God. It may be somewhere that you usually go to for prayer and reflection. Or you might want to create a space especially for *Thy Kingdom Come*. You could use your favourite chair or perhaps you need to choose a room in which you won't be disturbed. Remember that you can go for a prayer walk too.

Here are some examples of how to decorate the space:

- a) Create a heart shaped piece cardboard with a cross on it. On it write the names of the five people that you want to pray for – so they are all connected to the heart and surrounding the cross. The heart signifies the love of God and the cross speaks of the price Jesus paid for them and each one of us.
- b) The prayer space may include a bible, something to play music on, and a notebook with pen. Sticky notes will also be helpful so you can take notes of what God may be saying at any point.
- c) An alternative could be a cross standing or lying on the table with pipe cleaner people representing the people we wish to pray for sitting at the foot of the cross or attached to the cross.
- d) It would be great to have some candles or tea-lights in this prayer space. It is always a reminder of the light that Christ brings into our darkness.

Beginning

Why not listen to some music as you settle yourself down to pray:

Power of the Cross: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPFv-ywTY-c&list=RDMM&start_radio=1

Thy Kingdom Come 2020 anthem: <https://youtu.be/CWhL6v8oQZ0>

Thy Kingdom Come 2021 anthem: <https://youtu.be/2Lp2mMpSa1E>

Read through the whole story slowly as it is found in Luke 15:11-32. Don't rush, notice the language and the activities taking place. Take some time with the questions below – you could write down your thoughts if that helps.

As you read it slowly, what strikes you about the story? How does the story make you feel?

What images does it conjure in your mind? Who do you most relate to in the story – the younger son, the older son, the Father, those listening to the story?

Is there a time when you ran away from (or rejected) your family or God? Can you remember why? How did it feel?

Can you remember a time when you experienced a homecoming? For example, coming back from a trip abroad or returning home from university. What was the best thing about it?

Imagine yourself in front of the father – he has run to greet you – his arms are wide open – and his eyes and face are full of love – what do you want to say to him?

If you are in need of a 'homecoming', take time to pray now to the Father, asking for his help to return. Know that He is always waiting to welcome you back into full relationship with Him.

Let's take some time now to pray for other people.

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

The prodigal is a son who wanted to manage his own life. He made up his mind and wanted the father to acquiesce to his wants. The father would not stop him. He allowed him to take the wrong steps until he came to his senses.

Music: The goodness of God <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0FBb6hnwTo>

We give thanks for the life of each of our prodigals (5 people we have named earlier). The Lord is and continues to be good in keeping them and us. We can give thanks for them follows:

- a) Give thanks that they are alive and whilst they are alive, there is hope. Give thanks for the relationship you have with them and reflect on why God has placed them on your heart to pray for them.
- b) Give thanks that time away from the Lord can be a time to learn and gain experience. It is perhaps an opportunity for them to realise what they are missing; and
- c) Give thanks for the Father who has not given up on them.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The love of God for prodigal is extremely reckless. We pray that they will feel the love of God that leaves the 99 to seek for the one missing.

Music: Reckless Love <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc6SSHuZvQE>

We take time to pray in turn for each of our people, using the following pointers, as they are appropriate:

1. That the prodigal will come to their senses
2. That they will see the need to return home
3. That they will be sorry and repentant over their rebellion.
4. That they will find the courage to return home
5. That they will take steps in the right direction
6. That they will return home safely
7. That those who had never been a part of the fold will come in and belong

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you if there is something that you could do to encourage those you are praying for in this week.

Scripture reminds us to pray for those who have wandered far from God but also that we are in a battle against the enemies of God. Take time to look up these scripture verses:

James 5:19-20, Gal 6:1-2, Hosea 14:4, Ephesians 6:11-17

As you are led by the Spirit, ask the Lord to arise and deliver the prodigal from the oppression of the enemy. Pray earnestly for the souls of the prodigals. We trust God that there will be a turnaround in the lives of those we have prayed for.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Where appropriate, we pray for the families of our five people, which may include ourselves. This may be particularly appropriate where the families are estranged from one another or relationships are strained because of the prodigal. This will not apply to all the people we are praying for – but we do want each of them to experience a reconciliation with the Father and a restoring of relationships that comes when we become children of God.

1. Give thanks for the Father who is always there, waiting and expecting his prodigals to return home.
2. Pray for the families that they will be happy, open and willing to welcome the prodigal back home. To love and care for them.
3. Pray that they will celebrate the return of the family member who was lost but now found.
4. Pray that the prodigal will reunite with the family.

Music: No longer slaves <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k&list=RDMM&index=29>

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

It may be that the people we are praying for, are more like the elder brother than the younger son. They may never have left home, and yet are still in need of reconciliation with God the Father.

Pray that they would hear the loving reassurance of the Father that they are loved beyond measure and that they matter to him.

Pray that their hearts would be softened, and they would find themselves at home in the Father’s house.

We pray especially for those who have found their faith in God weakened during this pandemic and who are struggling to hold on to God whilst enduring the suffering/pain/grief or heartache.

We pray for those within our 5 who walked away from God because of bereavement – the death of a loved one – or disappointment in God – the death of a dream or what has been perceived as the breaking of a promise.

Father God, where disappointment and hurt have gotten in the way of a relationship between you and someone I care deeply about, I pray for your love to be revealed in a new and beautiful way. I pray for restoration of hope and the healing of wounds. I pray for bitterness to lessen and your light to enter into the dark places. I pray for the person by name. May _____ experience today your grace and care for them. May they know that you are waiting for them to return home to you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Close your time of pray by reflecting on the words of Amazing Grace:

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Benediction

(May) Christ dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:17-21

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 23:6