

Messages from the Mountains
Matthew Ch 6 v 5- 15

The Mount of Olives is one of the most important mountains in the New Testament. It lies east of the city of Jerusalem, rising to a height of about 2,700 ft across the Kidron Valley. It received its name from the dense olives groves which grow there and affords the visitor a magnificent view over Jerusalem and the Jordan valley. It is the place from which Jesus preached his "Sermon on the Mount". It is where he ascended to heaven. Here Jesus wept as he looked over the great city of Jerusalem and here also is the location of the Garden of Gethsemane. The later was the place where he often went to pray and he was in this tranquil spot, of course, with his disciples on the night of his betrayal.

It would be impossible to discuss all the happenings and messages to be learned from this mountain at one go so this month we will focus on Jesus' teaching on prayer.

As Jesus went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper, he instructed the disciples who followed to "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial". That is, of course, a direct quote from the Lord's Prayer, part of his "Sermon on the Mount". We may be more familiar with "Lead us not into temptation" or "Do not bring us to the time of testing". I think that was probably his prayer for himself "Father if you are willing remove this cup from me".

(This reminds me of our Dec/Jan paper when Isaac was about to be sacrificed but this time Jesus was the sacrifice so that the offspring of Abraham could be saved.)

Prayer is a serious business – not that it is always sombre – prayer is often full of smiles and laughter but it is our way of communicating with God. It is not just for the elite or bishops and ministers. It is for all and everyone. It takes two to tango and it takes two to pray. It is interactive, personal and intimate between you and God. While the instructions on how to pray in Matthew Ch 6 v 5-8 are basic, praying can take many forms. Some people need silence, some need music. Some need to be still while others pray when running or jogging. Some sit, some kneel and others lie or stand – it really doesn't matter. But making a time and a place is essential – what ever suits you as long as it is sincere and purposeful. Ordinary words spoken to a friend are just as meaningful as any saintly verses and we know they will be received and returned in love. Don't forget to leave time to listen.

The Mount of Olives teaches us that when we meet God on the mountain he wants to communicate with us. Nobody can make us pray but if we do not develop a strong pray life we are like a mobile phone with a bad connection –constantly missing half of what is going on. Abraham had a good relationship with God and was able to "stop" at the appropriate time. Jesus, too, had a well developed pray life and could receive God's strength. The disciples, as we know, fell asleep during their prayers. Let us work towards developing a strong personal prayer life of our own that will not let us down when we most need it.

For Discussion

1. Are you willing to share with the group how, when and where are the best times for you to pray?
2. You may want to discuss The Lord's Prayer in detail or verse by verse.