

Prayer for Ourselves

Father God,

We thank you that we can be here tonight to think about our world and how we can respond well to the events that are unfolding around us. We are confronted again by the realities of what it means for us, human beings living in your world. We aren't the people that you made us to be. We are fallen. In the deepest parts of our hearts, we are selfish and wicked, and we make decisions that reflect this in the highest levels of government down to the everyday decisions we make that seem to us to affect no-one. Father, we are sorry that we are like this.

You have shown us ourselves, so that we might see your kindness towards in Christ for what it is: your gracious generosity. You have loved us, you do love us beyond what we can imagine, let alone expect. For all our sin, you have given your Son. We praise you for him. We thank you for a Saviour who is better than we are, who is the friend of sinners, who is not selfish, who has taken all our sins, our evil and died for us. Thank you that he came down, lived here in the mess and pain of this world; that he was willing to become poor for our sakes. We are so grateful that you have loved us and do love us so well.

Father, we long to know your Son more and more. We long to understand how to put him solidly at the centre of our thinking, of our decisions, our lives, our desires. Yet, we know the pull towards living comfortable lives, away from dissonance and frustration. So, we ask you to ignite our hearts with love for Christ this night. We pray that his words to follow him, to count the cost, to give up our lives for him, we pray that they might ring deeply in our hearts and motivate us to live lives that are compelled by his love. We pray that you might make us good at loving our neighbours. Give us strength to be patient, to listen well and carefully. Give us words to speak into people's lives that show them Jesus. We pray for opportunities to speak about the hope we have in Jesus. Fill our hearts with courage to live for him, to speak his words, to stand by his message.

As we think about life in the future, we are filled with all kinds of fears. There is so much potential for negative change for those we love, for ourselves. So much possibility that people will be damaged by policy decisions or lobby groups. There are so many things to fear. Father, we pray that you will give us the peace that we need, that comes from knowing that you hold all things in your hands, that nothing is new under your sun and that you have rescued and redeemed and kept your people through far worse days, with far worse loss than we are likely to face. Give us brave hearts, to face each day with the knowledge that you reign in the heavens, you have already won in the death and resurrection of your Son, and no day casts such a dark, dark shadow that the dazzling brilliance of Christ's glorious return can be overcome. Speak your peace to our hearts, we pray.

And as we continue through this world, waiting for our Jesus, help us to see our brothers and sisters for who they truly are. Remind us of the hope we share in the Lord Jesus. Give us grace to look past the political differences and stand together, united in Christ as perhaps the only love we share in the Spirit. Make us peacemakers. Help us to be wary of ourselves, ready to listen, slow to get angry, better and better at loving others. We pray for a genuine expression of the real union we share in Jesus.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of living for you in this world. Enable us to do it on your terms, fearing you. We pray that our lives will glorify your Son and we will be found in him when he returns. Amen

Jennie Baddeley

Prayer for Our Community

As Paul writes to Timothy (1 Timothy 2)

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

Almighty God; and Loving Father

We turn our minds towards our neighbours, our communities. Our Country. We know that the Lord Jesus has given us a great commandment; and a great commission.

AND We confess; we wrestle with the temptation to turn in on ourselves. To go private.

It's easier; to allow the fear of man to keep us silent about the Lord Jesus; and to keep us from loving and serving our neighbour and making disciples of Jesus.

Once again; forgive us.

But give us the grace to see that you've put us here for the good of our community;

AS we submit to the authorities you've placed over us – giving them the respect they're owed.

AND as we devote ourselves to doing what is good, being peaceable, considerate, showing true humility towards others, taking on the posture of Jesus as he demonstrated your love by giving himself for us. Help us give ourselves to the good of our neighbours.

Father as we anticipate the release of the Ruddock Report, we thank you that all of this is taking place under your sovereign and careful oversight; an extension of your rule through earthly government; part of the way in which you work all things for our good, as you conform us to the likeness of your Son.

We thank you that we don't have to wait, therefore in fear.

Help us believe that whatever this report brings to us; the government's response and the legal implications; even what we might stand to lose, is necessary in your sovereign purposes for our good; and for the good of our community.

Father as Paul urges us; we pray in thanksgiving for our government. We thank you for the good that they do.

We thank you that we live in a time and place where we are able to meet freely and publicly. We thank you that the church is able to serve the community openly in organised structured ways – in ways which perhaps government and big businesses won't or can't.

We enjoy a freedom that our brothers and sisters elsewhere in the world would dearly love to have.

So, we pray then, that you'd be pleased to work so that this freedom is preserved. We pray that as our government; our lawmakers, consider the report's recommendations; we ask that you'd work through them; so that we may live quiet and peaceful lives in godliness and holiness. Living for Jesus faithfully; with freedom to serve our neighbours.

Grant Father, that people on all sides of politics; people with differing convictions and different visions of life; would see that religious freedom is good for the flourishing of our community; that it's worth thinking through carefully and talking about respectfully.

Father as the report is released; and as people reckon with its recommendations, we pray that our neighbours, our friends and family who don't know you might be stirred by this matter.

We ask that the conversation wouldn't just end in discussion or debate:
about the place of religion in society, or
about the right of faith-based organisations to discriminate in some way...

Father God our prayer is that you'd be at work in this moment so that people's eyes are opened beyond the freedom of religion issue... to see the great spiritual realities

We pray Father that we'd be having conversations about the reason for the hope we have in Christ Jesus; about why he is Lord; and about how his death and resurrection is of ultimate importance. Help us to show people that we're most free, living under Christ's good and gracious rule.

We pray that people would be coming to a knowledge of the truth; the truth that they need the one mediator, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

We pray for courage to speak clearly and compellingly about these things when the opportunity arises.

Father we pray these things in Jesus' strong name. AMEN.

Jeff Keighley