

THY KINGDOM COME

PRAYER JOURNAL

Ordinary People Leading
Extraordinary Lives

13th-23rd May 2021

st thomas
BRAMPTON



THY KINGDOM COME

Welcome to our Thy Kingdom Come 2021 prayer journal. One of the goals of Thy Kingdom Come is to pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we would be effective in our witness. This prayer journal seeks to do just that. It offers a daily story and reflection to encourage us to seek God and pray about how we might grow and strengthen our witness and discipleship for Jesus.

Thank you to those in our church family who have offered such inspirational stories. We've loved reading them, we hope you do too!

You may like to use this prayer at the end of each day's reflection:

Thank you, Lord, for the extraordinary life of Jesus and his perfect example of how to live our lives.

Thank you too for the stories we read of the lives of ordinary people whose absolute devotion to you has led to them shining the light of Jesus in this world in an extraordinary way, often in the most challenging of circumstances and always with absolute dedication and witness to you. Thank you for their inspiration to us.

Please help us to follow Jesus' example of kindness, love, obedience and humility each and every day. Thank you that you forgive us when we fall short. May we always strive to be extraordinary, ordinary people who are true and loving disciples.

Come Holy Spirit, live in me today and help me to be kind to all those I meet, shining the light of Jesus into our world.

Amen



THURSDAY 13 MAY

TOM LITTLE

I'm going to talk about somebody who inspired me. He was not an ordinary person, anything but. He was Tom Little.

When I retired, Church Mission Society sent me out to do some volunteering in Afghanistan in 2005. I was working for a Christian NGO called IAM out there helping some pretty feisty Afghans with admin input. They were doing Health Education, Water and Sanitation work. Tom had worked for the same organisation as an ophthalmologist for thirty years.

Tom was a quiet American. He was a Yankee for whom the word laconic could have been specially designed. He didn't say much, but what he did say was always interesting and useful. He made no bones about the fact that he was a Christian and that his job was to serve the poor people of Afghanistan.

I found out that Tom and his wife Debbie had worked in Afghanistan since before the time of the communist coup, through the Russian occupation, the civil war, Taliban rule and right into the present. They had brought up three children there. There were all sorts of stories; about Tom rescuing medical equipment from a hospital that was under fire; and about his little girls making cookies for the secret police watching their house. In the seventies, when Kabul was more peaceful, Tom and Debbie had run a sort of rescue operation for indigent hippies as well as Tom doing his day job. I met one such hippy who had become an aid worker himself.

Tom was a fluent Dari speaker and was the sort of person that foreign correspondents and travel writers sought out to get the real story. When he talked about being a Christian it was obvious that he had a very deep and intellectually coherent faith. He became my mission worker hero.

Every couple of years or so Tom would organise a party that would hike off with donkeys far beyond the end of the road up in the mountains to treat the eye complaints of people who never ever saw a doctor or even a nurse. Lots of people would have loved to have gone on one of these eye camps.

In August 2010 Tom organised one such camp in Nuristan in North-East Afghanistan. His party were travelling back, having finished their work when they were held up, robbed and killed.

Taliban Head Office in Pakistan issued a statement saying that they had been executed because they were trying to convert people to Christianity. They were contradicted by the local Taliban who said that they were good people that had worked for the good of all.

So now Tom Little's body lies in the Christian cemetery in Kabul along with a number of his colleagues.

We live in a world where evil things happen. Tom had seen plenty of them and knew that they could happen to him. But he knew he had a job to do and he did it. Quietly and efficiently, because he loved Jesus and Afghans.

Robin Dawson

REFLECTION:

Sit quietly, palms down as you rest in God's presence and reflect on Tom's amazing life of service and sacrifice. Turn your palms upward as you give thanks for his life and pray blessings on his family and friends. Ask Jesus to give you courage and strength to witness to God even when the going gets tough. Rest in His presence and receive His overwhelming love for you.



FRIDAY 14 MAY

THE SMITH SISTERS: PRAYER WARRIORS

In a small cottage by the roadside, in the Hebrides, lived two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith. Peggy was eighty four and blind; her sister Christine was eighty two and was almost bent double with arthritis. Their cottage was their sanctuary and the place where they met with God because they were unable to get to church. They prayed day and night and to them came the promise: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." This became their daily plea.

One night Peggy had a revelation, revival was coming and the church would once again be crowded with young people. She shared this with the minister and asked that he call together members of the church to pray and wait in God's presence for this revival. This they did. After many months of prayer an awareness of God filled their place of worship and a stream of supernatural power was let loose in all their lives with an implicit belief in revival. However, the villagers did not share this belief but the sisters carried on praying and urged the church to continue to pray for revival too. In the face of fierce opposition, the sisters continued to pray the promise and encouraged the church members to do the same.

As a result of the power of intercessory prayer, between 1949 and 1952 a widespread revival swept through the islands in answer to the prayers of God's people. Instrumental to this revival were the two sisters and a young evangelist, Duncan Campbell, who went to the Isle of Lewis to conduct a two week evangelistic campaign but ended up staying two years. At times Campbell became unsure and despondent mainly because of the attitude of the villagers but at these times the sisters rebuked him with Peggy saying: "Mr. Campbell, if you were living as near to God as you ought to be, he would reveal His secrets to you also."

Finally, there was a great outpouring of the Spirit as God swept into the church and the floodgates of heaven opened.

REFLECTION:

Once again, God used ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things, this time throughout the period of revival in the Hebrides. Answer to prayer did not come instantly. The prayer warriors waited on the Lord with total conviction that the prayer promise given to the sisters would be honoured. They ignored the noise of the disbelieving and uninterested villagers.

Sit quietly, waiting on the Lord reflecting on how much time you devote to prayer each day. We have so very much that makes our lives easier (ipads, phones, household appliances etc) and yet although we have these labour saving devices we don't always find time to pray as we might and wait upon the Lord and truly listen to him. How much richer our lives would be if we did.



SATURDAY 15 MAY

FOSTER CARERS

I worked for fifteen years as a social worker with foster carers; both carers for mainstream children and for those with a range of disabilities. Some of the carers went on to adopt children – to secure their futures.

Some of the people I worked with were Christians – but most of them would not have described themselves as such. The unconditional love shown to all the children cared for, the personal sacrifice- in terms of change of lifestyle, involvement in their lives of multiple “professionals, “ the emotional and physical strain and tiredness that they faced daily made me reflect on Jesus; how he taught us to live our lives; how he suffered for us.

The main feeling though was one of joy. Joy in the achievements made by the children; joy that they had a new piece of equipment to make everyone’s life easier. But mainly just joy in them as people – unique, talented in their own ways – all God’s children. Remember Jesus’ bidding to let the children come to him and his encouragement that we should experience the Kingdom of heaven as children.

Awesome people doing an awesome job utterly selfless. A true inspiration.

Marie Witham

REFLECTION:

Here is sacrificial love, lived out day in and day out, week after week, month after month, year after year. Perhaps put on some music that helps you to immerse yourself in God’s love and talk to him about the unique gifts and talents he has given to you. How you will respond more to Jesus’ love and grace in your life. God makes it clear in his word that every person who believes and follows him has been called to something extraordinary.



SUNDAY 16 MAY

PASTOR AADI

It is all too easy to forget about other Christians who live under fear of persecution for their faith. We get caught up in our own thing, it doesn't happen on our doorstep so it doesn't feel like an immediate concern for us. For me that changed when I met Pastor Aadi (not his real name). I met him in a rural village in West Bengal, India over a decade ago. God had spoken to him about planting a church and a school in the village whose residents were considered as lower-caste or Dalit (as known as 'Untouchables') in India's caste system. Many lived lives of bonded labour and had no opportunities for a formal education. Pastor Aadi was working to change the life chances of people in the village and the surrounding area.

Meeting him he was a gently, humble, and kind man who gave a hugely warm welcome. What I wasn't expecting was his story of persecution. On several occasions he had received threats on his and his family's life because of his Christian faith. On several occasions he had also been intimidated by a mob who had surrounded his house at night scaring him and his family and voicing these same threats.

Despite this, there didn't seem to be any resentment or bitterness towards these people from Pastor Aadi. He stuck unswervingly to what he felt God was asking him to do. I will always remember and pray for him and the parts of the church in India that live constantly under the fear of persecution.

REFLECTION:

To continue to witness to God when in fear of persecution is the most amazing example of an extraordinary, ordinary Christian. Sadly, there are many Christians living in such fear. Pastor Aadi is a wonderful example of a God centred life. Focus your prayers today on him and all those living with the fear of persecution:

Pray that they will feel the comfort and encouragement of our Lord at all times.

Pray that their persecutors will come to know Christ

Pray that in the midst of persecution, the church will be strengthened and continue to grow

Pray that Pastor Aadi and all those persecuted Christians will hear God's word at all times and that His blessing will be upon them always.



MONDAY 17 MAY

MINISTER AND HIS WIFE

The people who have inspired me are a Methodist minister and his wife through whom I became a Christian twenty one years ago.

In some ways they were misunderstood during their five years of ministry in that church as they didn't particularly go in for initiatives or programmes, but to me they modelled listening and being open to what God may be doing, whether in the church or during normal day to day life and then trying to be obedient to His direction. There was no 'hype' about them, but Jesus worked through them! It seems to me to be the life Jesus calls us to, but personally which I find very difficult to live out and, I suspect, they would say that too ... but it didn't stop them trying.

Julie Sparks

REFLECTION:

God delights in using ordinary people for extraordinary things so that we know that we serve an extraordinary God. Over and over again, from a shepherd boy named David to the twelve apostles, God shows us in the bible that he loves to use "ordinary" souls to be his disciples. We don't have to be rich or wise; we don't have to be perfect or even close to being perfect for God to delight in using us to be his hands and feet. We are not all called to do flamboyant or grand things in the name of Jesus. Remember, Jesus also loves a quiet, reflective, sacrificial, humble servant. Reflect today on how you follow Jesus and how you make him a priority in your life.

TUESDAY 18 MAY

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor, theologian and anti Nazi dissident based in Germany at the time of the second world war. Bonhoeffer spoke out loudly and defiantly against Hitler despite the terrible, inevitable cost to his own life. He was arrested in 1943 and held in the notorious Tegel prison for one and a half years before being taken to a concentration camp where he was executed, aged thirty nine, just one month before the end of the war. He continued to teach even while in prison. Bonhoeffer is a powerful witness against the injustice of his day.

REFLECTION:

Where do we see injustice in our world today? Think, pray and act to bring about justice and freedom to someone or to a situation that you know is happening right now.

"Let it not be said that I was silent when they needed me" William Wilberforce.

Check out www.churchmissionsociety.org to find out how you can get involved.



THY KINGDOM COME

WEDNESDAY 19 MAY

ANDY AND JUDY BARKER

I was inspired by an amazingly humble, unassuming couple who joined St Thomas' in their retirement. Andy and Judy Barker shared an inspirational testimony that led to a totally God centred life.

Andy, a retired Anglican minister co-led an Alpha course in 1996/7 and I was fortunate to find myself in the discussion group both he and his wife Judy happened to be leading.

With Judy's ministry having focused primarily (though not exclusively by any means) on women and their importance within the family, it was no surprise to find our discussion group made up mainly of young mums, with a view to Judy starting a small group following on from Alpha - God's wisdom always leading their thinking!

Having been told as a young married couple that they could not have children of their own, they decided to start the process of adoption. Meanwhile, on a cold and wet weekend, though both non-Christians, they found themselves in a Christian house party (in Andy's words "simply because it was drier and warmer than walking in the Lake District") and, totally unplanned, found themselves committing their lives to Jesus.

Soon after that life changing event, as the adoption process came to its conclusion and they were about to receive a child into their care, Judy fell pregnant with the first of six healthy children – an amazing blessing for two ordinary people.

Andy later became ordained, and Judy spent her 'spare' time speaking at women's groups, sharing her testimony and the way in which their lives had been so abundantly blessed.

Well into retirement Judy led many of us young mums through the bible, inspiring us with her challenges and God's strength, encouraging us with ours; never judging, simply guiding. She constantly reminded us of our value as mothers. Emulating Jesus, she lived her life with truth and integrity, and helped us understand and believe that if God made a promise, he made a promise, full stop – but that had to be believed with faith in our hearts, not judged in human terms.

Prayer, study, reading the bible and following the principles of tithing, trust, obedience, love, thankfulness and faithfulness led to a full and meaningful life of devotion; such an example to aspire to (yet sadly fall far short of). Not only did Andy and Judy believe in the gospel message, but they gracefully walked it, shared it, taught it and truly owned it – with faithfulness, joy and humility.

I thank God for the privilege of knowing this amazing couple, and for the way in which their inspiration for, and dedication to Jesus and the gospel instilled a quiet confidence within me. I am grateful to God that they showed me the relevance, importance and reassurance of John 14 v 6 as a fundamental part of my living faith and future certainty.

Sadly, and all too often there is a 'but'. Did I tell them enough of their inspiration, encouragement, example and love? Did they know how much I valued their friendship, faithfulness and wisdom? I pray yes, but ask God to prompt me in future, so that I might always be reminded to encourage those who encourage me.

Jane Simmons

REFLECTION:

We often don't realise the impact we have on another person's life and yet every day many of us have opportunities to interact with others (even through these Covid times). Think about how your daily interactions are a witness to your dedication to Jesus and think about how you can encourage others to know they have touched your life with their kindness, thoughtfulness and compassion. Make your house "a house of prayer" as a reminder; pop a bible verse, a prayer or a reminder of someone you need to contact all around the house to prompt you to witness to Jesus love at all times.



THURSDAY 20 MAY

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Florence Nightingale found great comfort in her religious beliefs. At the age of sixteen she experienced one of several “calls from God.” She viewed her particular calling as reducing human suffering. She determined that nursing was a good way of serving both God and humankind.

She accomplished so much in her life often through working long hours and in difficult places. In the Crimean war she served in the first field hospital ever run and tended by women; she established schools for training nurses; she fought for better conditions for men in the armed services and she set up a system for extending nursing care to the poor and the criminal underworld in the slums of English cities. Through all of her work and achievements she experienced what she called “dreams” of how to fulfil her mission. She acted on her inspiration and thus improved the lives of so many who were suffering.

REFLECTION:

Florence Nightingale wasn't a demonstrable Christian. She didn't go about her work explicitly in the name of Jesus but implicitly she embodied a life of service with great humility and with a passion for being inclusive. Take time today to reflect on how you implicitly exude your love of Jesus to everyone you meet. Maybe use a favourite image that inspires you or moves you as a prop and visual reminder.

FRIDAY 21 MAY

MY GODMOTHER

One person of faith who inspires me is my godmother, Jane. Jane was one of the first women to be ordained as a priest in the Church of England. For years before this she had been pursuing God's call on her life despite the barrier to priesthood that existed for women at that time. As part of this she had served God and the church as a deacon for many years. Interestingly, that is what the office of deacon in the New Testament was, someone who had dedicated themselves to a life of service.

One of the ways she served me as her godson was to pray for me on a regular basis, something - it turned out - she had done all the way from my childhood and into adulthood. I only discovered this years later after a conversation with her. She was delighted to hear that I had made a decision to follow Jesus and she revealed to me her commitment to prayer. I strongly believe that her persistent prayers, along with those of others that I know who prayed for me, were instrumental in my coming to faith in Jesus. What a gift from a wonderful godmother. And what a challenge for me to pick up the gauntlet and pray for others to know Jesus too.

David Owens

REFLECTION:

The best things in life are free, so Luther Vandross said anyway!

Ok, these well known words are taken somewhat out of context but there's truth in them. How awesome to be the recipient of such lifelong persistent prayer - a free gift but wonderful gift that we can give to people. Throughout the eleven days of “Thy Kingdom Come” we are encouraged to pray for five people we know to come to faith. Answer to prayer doesn't always happen overnight, and sometimes not even in our lifetime, but God listens and always answers our prayers. Have faith and pray!



SATURDAY 22 MAY

NELSON MANDELA

“Until I changed myself, I could not change others”. These words encapsulate much of who Nelson Mandela was. He lived several lives including revolutionary leader, pacifist prisoner and charismatic president. The thread linking all of these successive and sometimes contradictory lives was his Christian faith.

He realised that only internal renewal could bring outward change, and the teachings of Jesus were crucial to this understanding. In his book ‘Long Walk to Freedom’ he writes about this realisation and what it meant when he was freed after many years in prison.

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”

On his release there was much work of reconciliation to be done to address the wounds of apartheid in South Africa. It was the shared belief in Jesus between Mandela and F.W. de Klerk of the then ruling National Party that helped to bring these two men together and for the healing of a nation to begin.

Jesus became Mandela's inspiration during his long years in prison and God used this man to bring about reconciliation and peace. Our God is a God of forgiveness and abundant grace.

REFLECTION:

Often, we struggle to accept God's forgiveness and we can find it difficult to forgive those who offend us. Prayerfully read these verses from the bible and reflect how we can practice forgiveness and experience the peace it brings. Only then can we accept His grace and be true servants bringing glory to His name.

“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him”. Daniel 9:9

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said: “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”
Luke 5:20

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37



THY KINGDOM COME

SUNDAY 23 MAY

On this day of Pentecost we celebrate the most extraordinary man:

OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Paul sums up the humanity and the divinity of Jesus, the juxtaposition between humiliation and exaltation, in these beautiful words taken from his Letter to the Philippians Chapter 3 verses 4 – 11:

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who though he was in the form of God
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Therefore, God also highly exalted him
And gave him the name
that is above every name
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord
to the glory of God the Father.

