

# Living it out (Application):

**Last week's question:** How have you been a sign of God's kingdom?

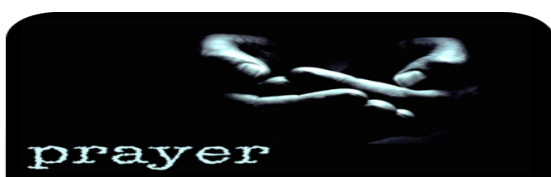
**This week:** When was the last time you prayed, "Give us today our daily bread," and meant it? What would help you to be more dependent on God?

## Coming Up at St Mark's

If you are interested in exploring whether you want to be involved in musical worship, please see **Andy Patrick**, and he will be able to help...on the website a new booklet outlining how worship teams operate is available on the "Musical Worship" page.

**Holiday Club.** Please get a registration form from the office if you are going to boldly go...

**Church hog roast and summer celebration**, for all the family...keep lunchtime on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July. We need to know asap if you are coming...



### *Please pray for...*

Pray for **Anne-Marie Whiting**, Lucy-Ann Kirkham's sister in law, for strength and healing. Give thanks for miraculous progress this week.

Pray for a spirit of **travelling light** for us as individuals, and as a church community, and for utter dependence on our loving Father.

Pray for the people of **Syria and Egypt** – for peace and healing.

Pray for our upcoming **holiday club**, that all those involved, and those who come, could be led not into outer space, but into the grace and experience of God's love.

Continue to pray for **Andrea, David, Stephen, Ruth and Paul** – for God's grace and presence in their lives.

**Mission Partner Focus:**  
**Pray for Paul and Ruth Turner in Peru.** There is a meeting for those interested in exploring going to Peru in 2014 after the 9.15 service on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

*Thank you for your prayers for this church community!*



**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30pm, Homegroup leaders' training. 8.30pm, whole church prayer meeting...Please come if you possibly can...**

## Worship/reflection:

On Youtube under St Mark's Resources I've done a sermon on the use of finance and other resources in the future, and our dependence on God. (also on the website). What is your response to the plans? What are you worried about? Ask God to help you trust Him to provide for you.

### Vision without action is a daydream: Travelling Light, Leaning on God

One of my favourite stories is about a man called George Muller who led a terrific life of prayer and dependence on God. He set up orphanages all over Bristol, living hand to mouth. One of the famous stories about him took place one day when there was simply no food left in the larder. George sat the children in the orphanage down for a meal. Plates, knives and forks were in front of them on the table - but no food. George stood up. "Let us pray," he said. "Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful." There was a knock at the door. The milkman's float had broken down outside, rendering his milk useless unless it was drunk immediately - and he was offering George the milk. Almost straight away there was another knock at the door. The local baker had arrived with his excess bread. God provided a meal. I heard someone talking recently about a time when he felt God asked him to give his car away. He was a teacher and needed a lift to work. He found someone in the staff room who would be able to do so up to February 1st. After that, he didn't know what to do. But he trusted God. A week before he was due to have no lift one of his friends came to him and told him he was going away for six months and would he mind looking after his car. "You can drive it if you like," he said. "When are you going away?" "February 1st."

I remember when I was new to teaching and we had small babies, we were in a position where finances were tight. One month we were facing an overdraft and praying earnestly, "Give us today our daily bread Lord!" We were facing a deficit of about £350. Then my mother rang me "You won't remember this," she said, "but when you were a small boy a friend of mine took out a policy for you and has just let me know that it has matured. He'd like to send it to you. It's for £350."

# INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Here at St Mark's in the past you have experienced God providing for you in profound ways through the generous giving of the congregation. At Emmanuel, Saltburn on the eve of a gift day where lots of money was needed, God encouraged the congregation when £1000 was discovered in a sewing machine someone had bought from a charity shop.

What do all these stories have in common? I believe they are stories of people who really have been praying, "Give us our daily bread." They are experiencing a radical dependence on God. They are travelling light. They know what it feels like when Paul writes, "...and God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." They know what it feels like to be "enriched in every way so that they can be generous." They are being led into a kind of relationship with God where there is no fear that He will not provide. They aren't coming to him, as it were, with crossed fingers, hoping for the best.

Jesus never had a second where he worried about where the money was coming from. There is a story in Matthew 17 where Jesus is staying in Capernaum and one of his disciples is asked if he will pay temple tax. Jesus tells the disciple to go fishing, upon which he finds a fish with a coin in its mouth - enough to pay the temple tax for two people. Jesus knew that God isn't short of cash for what God wants to do. God will always provide for His purposes and it was never on Jesus's radar to contemplate that he wouldn't.

Jesus never had a rainy day attitude either - a need to store up, save up, just in case God let him down. Wise stewardship according to Jesus was never about keeping a comfortable cushion. It was always about using what God had given you to invest in his work. In Matthew 25 Jesus told a story about a man who left to go on a journey, and gave his servants bags of gold - five bags, two bags and one bag. The servants with five and two bags used it, and made more. The servant with one bag put it in a hole in the ground. He kept it safe, but he did nothing with it. In the end, he lost it all. Being a steward, in the Scripture, is not about arranging life so you never have to pray, "Give us today our daily bread." It is always about seeking to generously, extravagantly and sometimes riskily use what God has given for His purpose.

So what does this say to us as we've looked at our plans for the future, about our heart attitude towards resources - of time, energy and money? Financially speaking last year by the grace of God we were able to cover our costs. Three quarters of our expenses were covered by direct giving and gift aid. But the future plans we have are asking us to step out in three areas: One is increasing our share to the diocese to the level at which we pay for our own staff costs and fund two stipends within the diocese. Once our share reaches this level it will not increase, but we are not there yet. We are also embarking on doing a survey of our local community to see where we can invest resources in serving, restoring and seeking God's kingdom in the future - this may result in exciting and risky ventures. Thirdly we are expanding our team in order to put into practice the vision that we have and to reflect the size of the church that we are. These three things of share, reaching out into the community, and building a team will require wise stewardship.

At the moment we are in a blessed position in that we have large reserves. We have, if you like, five bags of gold. But if we step forward in following the vision that we've been given then within a short space of time we will be needing to invest greater resources than we currently have as we seek God's kingdom together. Having said that, the new staff costs we are creating would be covered by 200 people giving an extra £15 a month. The first question in all of this isn't, "Where will the money come from?" The first question has to be, "Is this God's vision for us?"

So we have set out some basic principles in deciding in the future how to use God's money. The first is that we want to bless our community. The second is that we really want to invest in the plans we have for the future. And the third is that we want to travel light - to be in a place of utter dependence on God. Practically speaking this means that as a community we don't have a rainy day attitude. We don't store up "just in case". I've been struck by the experience of David Redhouse from a previous church in which at the end of each year, having spent the money that they had budgeted, and having thought about capital expenditure they definitely knew about, if there was any money left over, rather than keeping it as a cushion in reserve they would give it away for the Kingdom. This meant that year by year they were constantly in a place of dependence on God to provide for the mission He had given them afresh. It's travelling light.

Travelling light is of enormous spiritual importance to us. Because it's all about where our heart lies. Jesus knows that money can be a god. He knows it can stop us from living in a place of dependence on our loving father. It can make us too cautious to step out of the boat. That's why it's more blessed to give them to receive - because every time we give, it makes us more thoroughly dependent on the love of God. We are, if you like, uncrossing our fingers when we come to Him. As I was preparing this I was struck by the amount of times that I have prayed, "Lord give me today my daily bread," without having to really mean it. I wonder how many times you and we and I have prayed this? How would it feel to pray it and really mean it? That's what we mean by travelling light. As we finish looking at our plans at this stage of our church community's life may we know that the "church's money" is not ours. It's God's. We don't own a bean. The only thing that bothers Jesus about money is - will it enable us to express our love of God and for those in need? May we together, and may you and I, be led to that place as we pursue the vision God has given us.

## Study

Read 2 Corinthians 9.

What does Paul imply about where God wants our hearts to be when it comes to giving?

Why is cheerful giving important?

What are the purposes of generous giving for the believer?

What should be the results of giving?