

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 23

Please visit our website for the KBC spoken word Thought for the Day

<https://www.kingtonbaptistchurch.org/>

The government has promised that 'places of worship' will be allowed to recommence services of worship from July 4th. Government guidelines applying to the opening of places of worship have not yet been published. The pastor and deacons hope very soon to be able to share details of our own plans for meeting together again.

We are offered the most wonderful promises in the Word of God – Peter calls them 'great and precious'. (2 Peter 1.4) Many of these promises are about prayer and answers to prayer. They are summed up in the words of Jesus: '*Ask and it shall be given you*'. (Matthew 7.7) That promise is opened-out more fully to assure us that: '*whatever you ask believing, you shall receive*' (Mark 11.24); '*If you ask anything in my name you will receive it*' (John 14.13-14; 15.16; 16.23); '*Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete*' (John 16.24).

But this is not the Christian experience of everyone who prays. Not all who pray receive what they pray for. It's easy to tell people who pray but don't receive that 'God has something better for you', or that 'the Lord is teaching you the lesson of patience'. It's easy to say this – but it may be difficult to hear it said to you! Often people who pray are told they don't receive because what they ask isn't 'in line' with God's will. But it may be perfectly clear that these prayers *are* 'in line' with God's will – they are prayers motivated by love, prayers offered not for themselves but for others; prayers that are 'prayers of faith': '*not my will but yours be done*'. (Luke 22.42) But still those who pray in this way don't receive that for which they pray.

Unanswered prayers are a regular theme in the book of Psalms: Psalm 22 is one such Psalm. Here's a short summary of that Psalm:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, and find no rest. But forefathers trusted you; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were rescued; they trusted in you and weren't ashamed.

But I'm nothing; people mock and despise me. They mock me, telling me to pray and trust God. But all my life I've trusted you! Don't be so far from me! Troubles surround me. I'm desperately depressed and have no one to help. O LORD come and help me!

I will tell my people about you and I will praise you; I will say, 'All who are in awe of God, praise him! He didn't ignore people who are troubled; he didn't turn away from me; he heard me when I cried to him.'

Everyone will remember and turn to the LORD. He rules over the nations!

This Psalm starts with a cry from the heart: 'Why?' We must not be afraid to ask God 'Why?' The Bible is full of people asking 'Why?': Why don't you hear me?; Why don't you answer me?; Why do you leave me with my anxieties?; Why do you let these people suffer so much for so long?

And it's through this heart-rending question – 'Why?' – that the truth is found. It doesn't lie in glib answers. The truth is that the only sound answer to the question 'Why?' is that we're not given an answer! There is no answer to these deep, difficult and troubling questions. The reason we trust God, that we pray to him, praise him and speak of him, isn't because we always get what we ask for, even when we ask for others. The reason we trust him isn't because we know all the answers to difficult questions, like 'Why Lord are you so far from helping me?' The reason we trust him isn't because we know *answers* but because we know **him!** Because we know him to be merciful and gracious and full of lovingkindness we, like Job, cannot help but trust him! *'Even if he slays me, I will still trust him.'* (Job 13.15) Indeed, *'Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise you'*. (Psalm 63.3; Psalm 145.8)