**The Revd Alison M Bailie**

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25th August 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

I hope that you have felt refreshed over the summer. Sometimes prayer can feel like hard work, but here is a reflection from Matthew Greene, who writes for LICC (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity) on **Refreshing Prayer.**

*‘Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit*.
**JOHN 19:28–30**

On the cross, Jesus’ final cry was: ‘It is finished.’ But for many of us, myself included, soon afterwards it felt more like: ‘It is begun.’ Sure, Jesus has done it all for us, but don’t we now have to be busy praying an hour a day, attending church meetings, spreading the word, praying for the sick, reaching out to colleagues, neighbours, friends, family, loving and serving others?

Of course, I would say I knew I was saved by grace, but there was a compulsion to pray and do ***more and more.*** I realised that my trust was in my daily quiet times or the fervency of my prayers. That’s what I relied on to feel right before God, not Jesus’ death on my behalf.

We often feel under pressure to pray more than we do. Perhaps, however, some of us pray not because we are so committed to God but because – at a heart level, if not a head level – we don’t trust that Jesus’ sacrifice was enough. Our confidence before God comes from making sure we tick the boxes to reassure us that we are committed to him, rather than resting in how committed he is to us.

What if, as we come to God in prayer, we pay him the compliment of believing that he has done enough for the both of us, and showing it by resting with him? Laying down our burdens. Allowing ourselves to breathe. Coming to him as the welcoming Father he is, rather than the performance manager we sometimes treat him as.

The world often says to us, ‘Don’t just sit there – do something.’ Or we feel that pressure ourselves. What if the Lord of the universe is saying, ‘Don’t just do something – sit there. Enjoy my presence with you. Trust that I have done enough. After all, I moved heaven and earth to find you. “It is finished.” And I am pleased you are here. Now, what’s on your mind?’

The assurance that comes through such freedom in prayer carries over into our everyday lives at college, home, and work. Our confidence comes not through our attempts to share the gospel or live in a Christ-like way among colleagues and friends – important though they are – but in trusting that God is at work through us.’

May the Lord refresh you this summer.

With my love in Christ and my prayers

Alison

**Sunday 29th August 10.30**

St John’s 10.30 am All Age/Service of the Word

St Leonard’s 10.30 am All Age/Service of the Word

Zoom 6.30pm Service of the Word

**Wednesdays 10.00-12 noon -** St Leonards open for private prayer