



Prayers & Readings for this week

- Pray that our national leaders will make wise decisions about the stages of transition back to a 'new normal'; we believe that such important decisions can be spirit-directed and not purely for political purposes.
- Pray for Nat & Chris (Nat's brother-in-law died last week)
- Pray for Jon F having a procedure at The Christie hospital this week; and for John B awaiting his next stage of treatment.
- Pray for our board as we discuss the next stages of transition in line with government regulations.
- Margaret G has been in the hospital for treatment but is now improving
- Pray for Mat A who dislocated his knee
- Pray for David Gilmour and his church in Llay, north Wales

Monday	Reading John 21 Pray for Sebastian, Claudia & Nathan Ianos
Tuesday	Reading Acts 1 Pray for Emma Ion
Wednesday	Reading Acts 2:1–13 Pray for Tim & Alison Ingram
Thursday	Reading Acts 2:14–47 Pray for Annette & Mike Jones & family
Friday	Reading Acts 3 Pray for Huw Jones
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Vivienne Kenyon
Sunday 28 June	Reading Acts 4:1–22 Pray for Beverley Mitchell & family

We come, once again, to another special annual day in the calendar - when we remember our dads. *Father's Day* reminds us of the importance of fatherhood in our world today. We can't help but think of those who have lost their fathers recently in the COVID-19 pandemic, or perhaps there was some tragedy that took your dad from you some time ago. Indeed, both motherhood and fatherhood are two of the greatest privileges and experiences we can have, along with the **responsibilities**, of course. For many of us, our dads are still in our lives today - and they may, in fact, now even be granddads, or even great granddads! Lest we seem insensitive on this day, we acknowledge that some have not had good experiences of fatherhood in their lives for a variety of reasons.

Despite all this, one of the most remarkable aspects of 'Fatherhood' is that God Almighty deemed it appropriate to allow Himself to be referred to using the term '*Father*'. Furthermore, Jesus, God's '*only begotten Son*' referred to his Father as '*Abba*', a lovely endearing Aramaic phrase meaning '*dear daddy*'. What an amazing and beautiful expression for him to use of his relationship with his heavenly Father. Somewhere between both extreme phrases is indeed the grand truth about God! One is the unapproachable '*Heavenly Father*' (a reverent and awesome term relating to the Almighty – an Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent God) and the other, a very approachable '*dear daddy*' which seems so natural and loveable that we think merely of a little child when using the latter.

The longer I live as a pastor the more of these extremes I find myself trying to honour. God both *acts justly and loves mercy* and calls us to do the same (Micah 6: 8). His patience and longsuffering are right and true while his judgements are beyond questioning. Philosophers in their godless wisdom are foolish in his eyes, while the simple innocence found in children is blessed with grand revelations.

Jesus revealed an awesome side to the God of all creation when he said, '*learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart*' (Matt 11: 29). Genuine Fatherhood has these mind-blowing aspects to it. When the love between father and child is experienced, we enter the unique realm of the Father-Son relationship - that of Jesus and God Almighty!

Long ago, in 1742, Charles Wesley wrote a hymn that began, 'Arise, my soul arise, Shake off thy guilty fears...' and ended, '*With confidence I now draw nigh, And Father, Abba, Father cry.*' May **Confident Grace and Peace** be with you ALL!



Message: Rev David Gilmour **Reading:** Psalm 139:1-24

For anyone whom I haven't met, my name is David Gilmour, I'm the pastor in Llay Nazarene in north Wales. For the first time in my life, I am preaching in two places at once today, through the means of grace that technology has become for us. We especially want to acknowledge fathers today, or those who are like fathers to us- we hope you've been having a lovely morning so far, and that today is a very special day for you and for those who love you.

One of the things I love about the Scriptures is just how real they are - just how raw they are, because the Biblical authors make no attempt to sugarcoat anything. Like Cromwell's artist, the authors present people and events warts and all.

Because we can find ourselves there- we can see ourselves in their failings and mistakes; we can see ourselves in Peter's denial and Moses' fear and so many others. And today especially it's worth remembering the unflattering way the authors of Scripture present and portray fathers. Abraham, the father of all who have faith, who couldn't trust God enough to protect him and his wife so he convinced Sarah to lie for him, setting such a bad example that his son Isaac would later do exactly the same thing.

Isaac, whose favouritism between his children left such an impact that it almost led to murder, but who so failed to teach his children to do better that his son Jacob would go on to make the same mistake, so clearly favouring one child over the others that it tore the family apart. Samuel, who would spend so much of his time travelling the country that his sons strayed so far from the path of God. Even David, the gold standard for leadership in the Bible, who failed so miserably as a father that one son murdered his brother, and then tried to overthrow his father, plunging the kingdom into civil war.

Time and time again, the Scriptures remind us of the brokenness of earthly fathers; of how they can let us down; how they can fall short; how they can fall flat; how they can so often be so far from what our reading from Ephesians 3 reminded us of- the divine Father who gives all fatherhood its name. And then we come to Psalm 139, where we see that perfect heavenly Fatherhood in action. We see what God our Father does, what God our Father gives; we see how He helps, how He blesses, how He provides. We see a Father whose eyes and mind are never far from His children; a Father who pursues them relentlessly and unfailingly wherever they go, even however far they run in their attempt to leave Him behind. We see a Father who cannot and will not be separated from His children by troubles and challenges- when we make our bed in the depths, when darkness closes in around us like an impenetrable wall, even there we will find this Heavenly Father with us and for us.

We see a Father who painstakingly, intricately, intimately knit us together in our mother's womb, fearfully and wonderfully making us with care and attention.

We see a Father who knows us inside and out- who knows who we've been, and where we've been; who knows how we've stumbled and how we've fallen; who sees when we've got it wrong, hurting ourselves and hurting those around us.

And yet who still desperately and unfailing and incessantly loves us, with a love higher and wider and longer and deeper than we could ever imagine; a love that never runs out, a love that we can never outrun. In Psalm 139, we read of a Father who sees us; a Father who knows us; a Father who is with us.

I don't know how you've been coping through this Lockdown world. If you are anything like many of our folks here in Llay, it's been hard. It's been tough.

Being so far from so many we love; being unable to meet together as the Body of Christ; having the rhythms and routines of life being so disrupted and damaged. It's hard.

And yet through every day of Lockdown, God has been closer than our next breath; He has been more intimate than the next beat of our hearts. Because this good, good Father sees His children; He knows what they face, and He knows what they carry, and He has bound Himself to us with a never-ending, never-failing, never giving up, never running dry love. Because did you notice how the psalm ends? Everything is so beautiful and so wonderful until v19- the author is celebrating who God is and what He's like and what He does, and then suddenly the switch flips and he launches into this blistering tirade against their enemies.

And it seems so out of step with the rest of the song. But it nevertheless testifies to the enduring faithfulness of God our Father, who doesn't leave when things get ugly; who doesn't walk out when things get tough. Who can take our anger, our resentment, our frustration and disappointment- against our neighbours, against the world, against the lockdown, even against Him. And yet who remains enduringly, unfailingly faithful through it all.

He's not like so many earthly fathers, who are present as long as things are going their way but bail out at the first sign of stormy waters. God is with us and for us to the very end. The One who had us on His heart and mind since before the first dawn won't give up on us when things get ugly; He won't even give up on us when we get ugly because He is a good Father- He is *the* good Father. And wherever you find yourself today, He sees you; whatever you face today, He faces it with you.

Whatever burdens you carry and scars you bear, even in the ugliness and mess that we so often make for ourselves, in it all and through it all God remains the good and gracious Father who knit us together, who knows us by name, and who has promised that even should the impossible happen, and the mother forget the babe nursing at her breast, even then and even there, He cannot forget us. He cannot forget you.