

Free Press

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Thought for the weak



with the Rev Preben Andersen

Dear Friends,
 "God answers prayer, but we may sometimes fail to realise that He has done so." This is a quote from that little red and white gem of a book called the Catechism, for Methodists, which most of us in my tradition have on a shelf somewhere but forget to dust off and read.

Why do we sometimes doubt that God answers prayer? Because unless the answer is precisely the one we pray for or expect, we often cannot accept that God may reply differently.

And how in all the confusion and humdrum of life can we hear what He says anyway?

A Hindu once praised a boy for saving a girl from drowning.

When asked why he himself had not rushed into the water, the Hindu replied: "I could not. I was saying my prayers for her."

I guess that many in today's society would say that the boy saved the girl and by being in the right place for her at the right time. But where does that leave the Hindu?

Many church people would say that had it not been for the Hindu praying, God might not have been able to work so well through the boy. Then again, many of us will probably say that both the boy and the Hindu in unison saved the girl. But what does that say about God?

I want to leave you with this thought from an essay on prayer I wrote during my ministerial training all those years ago, particularly trying to define prayers of intercession, which are prayers for others, and for ourselves.

"Intercession is setting ourselves alongside God and against the powers of evil. It is to lift situations up to Him, and prevent them from going bad. It is to bring people in line with God. It is being active and be seen to be active in a world where God is already in control and acting through the prayers we bring to Him and the efforts we are prepared to make as a result."

I offer these thoughts to you in moments of weakness, and believe me, I have those too.

Preben