

“Standing in the Gap”

Introduction:

When God becomes our joy and exceedingly great reward, prayer will no longer feel like a drudgery. It will be something we actually look forward to, rather than something we feel guilty about avoiding.

1. The Priority of Praise

Priority comes from the word “prior—which means to come before something else. A priority is something that is very important and must be dealt with before other things. It takes precedence over lesser responsibilities.

Why should praise—or worship—be the priority of our lives?

Mark 12:30 – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

- Putting God first... valuing him above all else... loving him supremely—that is the ultimate definition of worship.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.”

- Everything we do—or don’t do—in this life is supposed to flow out of the priority of worship in our lives. We’re called to glorify God in everything.

Lessons from Martha & Mary:

Luke 10:38–42 – “Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.’ ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.’”

Martha – the worker.

- Distracted with much serving (v. 40)
- Anxious and troubled about many things (v. 41)

Mary – the worshiper.

- Sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching (v. 39)

THE MAIN POINT = “one thing is necessary” (v. 42).

- Why is worship the one absolute priority of our lives? Because without a heart of worship, nothing we do glorifies God. And therefore, nothing we do is spiritually pleasing or acceptable to him.

2. The Power of Petition

Standing in the Gap

Context:

- In Ezekiel 22, God presents a list of charges against the people of Judah (ca. 591 BC).

Call:

- Ezekiel 22:30 – “I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.”

Conclusion:

- God found no one to stand in the gap, so he brought judgment upon the nation. Within 5 years, Jerusalem was annihilated by the Babylonians.

ANNUAL RHYTHM OF PRAYER

21 Days of Prayer & Fasting (January 8–28)

40 Days of Life (February 14–March 24)

America Prays (15th day of each month)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe the current condition of your prayer life? What does your daily prayer life look like? Read 1 Peter 3:15. If a non-Christian asked you why you have hope, what would you say?
2. Why should worship be the absolute priority of our lives?
3. What lessons or insights are you going to take away from the story of Martha & Mary?
4. Pastor Kenton highlighted three prayer strategies that our church participates in annually. Which are you most and least excited about? How is God calling you to take a step of faith and get more involved?