I was thinking about this question.

What do you suppose our greatest opportunity to make a difference is in the world?

Is it, for example, you, is it your freedom?

to live in a free country where you can practice your faith and things like that?

Is it the opportunity to get a job that matters to you and matters to God?

Is it the opportunity to serve people, to give money to finance God's kingdom?

I mean, how can you make the biggest splash in the world?

That's a pretty important question.

You know, I don't think it's any of those things.

I think our greatest opportunity to make a difference in the world is through prayer.

I want to give some quotes in just a little bit in this message about how important prayer is.

And I don't want you to tune me off and think, okay, another message on prayer, but that's what we're up to in the Sermon on the Mount.

But think about this illustration.

You remember in the Old Testament,

There's a book called Esther, and the context of Esther is King Xerxes I.

So think about that time period in Greek history with the Spartans against the Persians and the 300 and all of that.

It was that time period.

And the thing about King Xerxes is that according to the laws of the Medes and the Persians, no one could enter his throne room and have an audience with him unless he first gave them permission and extended the royal scepter to them.

Otherwise they'd be executed.

And this applied to every person in his kingdom, including his wife named Esther.

And so there was that fear and traveling moment where she had to go petition the king to save her people, the Jews, because there was conspiracy to wipe them out.

And for such a time as this, Esther dared to enter his throne room.

And he extended the scepter to her and got to make her petition.

But you think about that.

He had such a royal position that no one could enter his presence.

without this protocol.

there's been kings and rulers throughout the ages who had a similar type of a policy.

But isn't it great, and here's where I'm going with this, you know what?

You and I, we worship the King of kings and Lord of lords.

We worship God Almighty.

And you know that ever since the curtain

was torn down.

It split in two when Jesus did this on the cross.

And that curtain that separated the holy place from the holy of holies, the presence of God, right?

Ever since then, we have had access.

And you can come into the presence of your Heavenly Father, your God Almighty, and you can have an audience with Him through something that we call prayer.

So what Jesus

mentioned after he taught about giving and generosity, this matter of prayer is hugely important.

So I want you to open your Bible if you have it to Matthew 6.

Open it up.

And man, I hope that you're marking up your Bible, right?

I hope that you're highlighting if you're doing it on your phone or whatever, you're making some highlights.

This is important stuff as Jesus challenges us in so many areas of our

lives.

And by the way, let me just say as we start, if you've never entered into the presence of God Almighty, who's a fearful God, who's a God of perfection and righteousness, but if you've never entered into that Holy of Holies through faith in like what Isaiah said, just giving your heart to Him through your faith in Jesus Christ,

Do that today.

Enter that sacred place where you know that you can be right with God, Almighty God, through the work of Jesus Christ.

This is a day of salvation for anyone who would call upon their God.

Well, here's the big idea this morning.

Jesus provided us with a model of prayer to show us how to have an intimate, that's the important word, intimate, effective, another important word, prayer relationship, relationship, right, with our Heavenly Father.

So let's look at Matthew chapter 6, beginning in verse 5.

Jesus says, and when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and

pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who's in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And verse 7, and when you pray, do not heap up empty phases, praises as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask.

Pray then like this.

And we're going to put these words up here.

You know it, maybe not in this version, and we're not going to put the little doxology on the end.

But let's pray this together.

Let's read it together.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

There's a beautiful, of course, benediction on the end of that.

for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.

Most scholars believe that was added at the end, and it's beautiful, nothing wrong with it.

And when I do the Lord's Prayer, I always add that benediction on the end.

It's meaningful to me.

But as we look at this model prayer, it's interesting that Jesus' disciples

didn't ask him how to share their faith, didn't ask him how to do miracles.

They said, Lord, teach us to pray, to pray.

Listen, this is the key that's going to unlock the power in your life.

It's going to unlock the influence you have on people around you.

It's going to unlock the door that gives you influence for your generation before the Lord calls you home, calls us all home.

It's prayer.

So let's look at some principles of prayer first.

I've just got three quick ones.

There's many, many more, but I'm mentioning 3 from the text.

And then we'll break down the text with an acrostic, okay?

So that's where we're going this morning.

First principle of praying, look at verse 6.

Pray in secret before praying in public.

When you pray, Jesus says, go into your room, shut the door, pray to your Father who's in secret.

Your Father who's in secret will reward you.

Right?

Here's the question.

Did anybody pray today before you came to church?

Yeah.

I hope I'm asking you before you come to the Lord's house, pray.

Pray for what's going to happen here.

Pray for spiritual battles going to be going on.

Pray for someone who's far from God to be brave enough to come and enter these doors and hear a dangerous but a safe message about how they can come to faith in Christ.

Pray.

Pray for the leaders of this church, those who'll be teaching and preaching and speaking.

Pray for those who do the ministry throughout the week.

Pray.

Pray.

So pray in secret before praying in public.

I can't imagine praying, I should say it this way, I can't imagine forsaking my prayer time any day of the week, period, but especially on Sunday, I would feel like a phony getting up here and preaching to you without having first prayed.

prayed for you, prayed for the worship, prayed for the teaching today, the preaching today, prayed for the spiritual battles going on today in people's lives and the temptations and the fears and anxieties and praying for a lost world to feel like that they're welcome to come to a family of faith where they can hear the message of Christ.

I'd feel like a phony if I hadn't prayed first.

And I would feel like I was naked if every day of the week I didn't start my day with some form of prayer.

I don't want to go out into a big bad world without praying first.

I don't want to possibly miss a divine opportunity with someone because I wasn't prayed up that I couldn't see what God was doing.

I couldn't hear his voice.

I couldn't get involved in some conversation somewhere.

Prayer is that important.

But what was going on here, of course, is that the religious professionals, they were taking prayer and they turned it into a prayer not so much to God, but for people.

It wasn't for God, it was for people.

And so they were praying out loud, they're praying in public, they're praying with a great show and pomp and ceremony, and Jesus called them out on it.

He called them hypocrites.

And they had stripped the core meaning and purpose of prayer, and they were doing it to act like big shots, like religious professionals.

And so they had their scriptures that they would recite in their prayers.

They were wearing their phylacteries and their mezuzas, and they were

had their tassels on the robe that indicated what they should pray for and all of that, and Jesus called them out.

So pray in secret before you pray in public.

Second principle, verses 7 and 8, is pray with a sincere heart.

Jesus said, when you pray, do not keep heaping up these words, these phrases, these empty phrases, these hollow phrases that you're using.

like the pagans do.

They think they're going to be heard by their many words.

Listen, it's not about your many words when you pray.

It's not about your pet little prayer phrases you say all the time.

It's about your heart.

Do you have a sincere heart when you go to the Lord in prayer?

I wish we had time to talk about all kinds of illustrations of that, but we don't.

But I like what Dr.

Robert Cook says.

He says, all of us have one routine prayer in our system.

Yes, and I'm gonna teach you one today.

I'm gonna remind you of one actually today.

And it's a prayer system, nothing wrong with prayer systems, but is that all you do?

And there's no prayer outside of your system.

He says this, all of us have one routine prayer in our system.

Once we get rid of it, then we can really start to pray.

You know, when was the most genuine prayer of our life, do you think?

Maybe it was a huge event like the birth of a child or the death of a loved one.

or some fear that you had in your life and you're just pouring out your heart to your Abba Father.

That's what he's talking about.

Do you have prayers like that anymore when it's not big bad things happening?

Where you're really sincere with God when you're saying, God, I need you today.

I can't go throughout my day without you.

I need you.

God show up in my life.

I need you.

So pray with sincerity.

Don't just go through the motions.

but also pray with expectation.

Jesus said, you have not because you ask not.

Right?

Wouldn't it be a tragic thing if you missed out on some of the things God wants to do in your life because you really answered with a no?

You didn't let God answer with a no if he chose to do that.

What do I mean by that?

You didn't pray with expectation.

You mouthed some words

God heal that person, God help me with this, God do this, and you really didn't expect anything to happen.

And so you were really answering your own prayer with a no.

Now if God's going to answer with a no, that's his business.

He can answer yes, no, or not now, right?

Let him do that.

Don't sabotage your prayers by not expecting him.

to honor that prayer.

I love the stories that Jesus told, these parables.

One about the person who had an unexpected guest come in.

They didn't have any bread.

So they went to their neighbor's house, right?

Hey, I've got a guest that came in.

I need some bread.

Give me some bread.

No, I'm not gonna do it.

It's late.

I'm not, I'm not.

But they kept persisting.

They expected that they would get an answer.

Jesus said, that's how you're supposed to pray.

He told another parable about the widow who had some injustice happen to her in her life.

And she went to the magistrate, the judge, right?

Petitioned him.

And basically he wanted to blow her off, right?

Don't have time for you.

But she kept, and she said, he's going to grant her request because she perseveres.

She expected something to happen.

I wonder in how many of my prayers do I really expect that God is going to answer them.

So pray with expectation.

Well, what about this model prayer that we call the Lord's Prayer?

It's better called the disciples prayer or model prayer.

Jesus did not give them and us this prayer to be recited over and over, although I recite it a lot.

How about you?

It isn't Jesus saying, pray this prayer.

He's saying, pray like this with these principles.

Pray these

in this pattern.

And so let's look at that and I'm going to break it down.

Pray, P-R-A-Y in acrostic, right?

Pray.

And the first P, I've shared this before, is praise.

Praise.

Verse 9, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, holy be your name, set apart be your name.

Your name is greater than my name.

Your name is greater than any other name.

God, you're the most glorious, holy one.

I believe that prayer should start with an acknowledgment of God, not us, not God help me, forgive me today, but acknowledging who God is.

You see, there's no, notice, there's no eyes in the Lord's Prayer.

It's not about you.

start by honoring God and giving him glory.

It's not about me.

We have to remember that when we pray, we're part of a worldwide family of God adopted into God's family as His children through the blessing and the merit of Jesus Christ.

And that family is more important than mine interest alone.

It's about His kingdom.

So we start with God and daily we praise God for two things.

First thing is who He is.

It's called adoration, right?

That's part of another prayer acrostic, adoration.

For example, the early church fathers had certain characteristics, and I quoted to them to you many times, 11 basic attributes of God, his eternity, his immenseness, his immutability, his self-existence, things like that.

He's all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, things like that.

And they would acknowledge him in their prayers because that's where you start.

You start with God.

You don't start with you when you pray.

And maybe that's one thing that you guys could turn on its head this week.

And when you pray to your Heavenly Father daily, don't start with yourself.

Don't start with help me.

Right?

There's times in our day, yeah, help me.

But I'm talking about when you have your set aside time with God.

Don't start with yourself.

Start with Him.

Praise Him.

Think of ways that He's meaningful to your life.

Anybody here have an attribute, one of your favorite attributes of God?

Call it out.

I want to hear it.

Faithful.

Faithful.

Oh my goodness.

Where I'm not, He is.

Forgiving.

Forgiving.

Sovereign.

Sovereign.

I love it.

The devil doesn't rule.

Kings don't rule.

He rules.

Jehovah Jireh, which means...

He's the God who will provide.

I love that.

We could go on and on.

He loves it when you know about Him and you praise Him for those things.

So the P is praise, is praising for who He is and then also thanking Him for what He's done.

What has He done in your life, by the way?

Given us everything we have, our life.

our opportunities, our possessions, our people.

Have you ever thought about breaking down what God has done for you in your day?

Like, okay, God, today I'm going to thank you for spiritual blessings, like, oh, salvation, regeneration of my nasty old dead heart I was born with, sanctification being made more like Jesus, glorification one day in heaven.

I do heavenly body.

Spiritual blessings.

How about thanking him one day for your physical blessings?

I was with John Estes in the hospital yesterday.

Can I tell you this?

You have some physical blessings.

Let me just say it, that other people don't have.

How about family blessings, financial blessings, educational blessings, intellectual blessings, church blessings?

So we praise him for who he is, his attributes.

We thank him for what he's done.

That's the P in praise.

And then it goes on.

The next is R, which is repent.

Look at verse 12.

Jesus says, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And the work, you might have grown up saying, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

That's quite all right.

That's really not the literal meaning of the Greek word.

And that because that means debt.

It means something owed.

It relates to a moral fault.

Trespasses is a different Greek word.

And what it means to repent is to change your mind, right?

To realize, wait a minute, I've got a debt that I owe this sin in my life.

I've got a moral fault more than one, by the way.

I'm going to change my mind about those things.

I'm gonna change my mind about my favorite sins.

I'm gonna change my mind about my signature sin that brings me down.

I'm a creation of Christ.

I'm a new person.

I have a new mind, right?

I am born again.

I have power.

I don't have to cower to those sins that enticed me before.

I'm a new person in Christ.

and I can repent.

I can turn around and change my mind and go the other way.

So what do we need to repent from, right?

Sins of omission, sins of commission.

What's a sin of omission?

Something that we know that God wants us to do and we don't do.

Give me an example of a sin of omission.

Yeah.

Speaking a word of life to someone, right?

Sharon, why you believe what you believe?

coming out for Christ, coming out of the closet for Christ and letting others know you're a Christ follower.

That's a great example.

But there's many examples of just, we miss opportunities.

Sins of omission, we failed to send that text you wanted to send to encourage someone.

You failed to make that phone call.

You failed to, oh, I was going to help them out.

I got this thing I don't need and I know they need it.

I meant to give that to, you know, it's those little things in life, sins of omission.

Sins of commission, right?

Thoughts, words, deeds.

We focus on all those bad things.

Sins of commission, but there's sins of omission.

And then notice in verse 12, it says, as we forgive our debtors.

So Jesus, it's like he's not just tacking this on, there's a purpose here.

For if 14,

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

So in this model prayer, Jesus is not just tacking this on.

He's saying, how can you expect to have this prayer relationship with your Heavenly Father?

I mean, you're asking Him to forgive you, right?

If you're not willing to forgive someone else when they've sinned against you.

if I'm not in fellowship with God, I cannot pray effectively.

I just can't.

If I'm not in fellowship with another person, it's hard to pray effectively.

So my fellowship with my brothers and sisters affect my fellowship with God.

Relationships with others affects your relationship with God.

And so we understand where he's coming from, that yes, we repent, we ask forgiveness every day and trust that has been accomplished on the cross by Jesus.

And really what we're doing is we're taking a spiritual bath every day.

We've already been forgiven past, present, future by the blood of Jesus.

That work on the cross, which we're taking a spiritual shower every day when we confess to him

But part of that confession is am I right with people around me?

Am I forgiving others who have sinned against me since I'm asking God to forgive me?

Well, there's the P, praise, the Rs, repent, A is the ask.

Look at verse 11.

Jesus says, do this, ask your heavenly Father, give us this day our daily bread and lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil.

See, prayer is a earthly request

for heavenly intervention.

It's saying to God, God, I need your help with this.

I can't do it.

You have all the spiritual assets of heaven.

You've got gazillions of angels at your disposal.

You have all power on the universe.

You can move around people and engineer situations any way you want, God.

I need that.

I can't do it.

I don't know enough.

I'm not powerful enough.

I'm not good enough, but you can.

So God, I'm asking.

I'm asking.

As a little child, I'm asking you.

What do we ask?

Will we pray for others?

We don't have time today for you to give me your prayer strategy, but I hope that you have a certain prayer strategy where every day you're praying for certain people.

I hope.

I hope every day you're praying for this church.

I pray for three churches every single day.

And this is one of them.

Every single day, I'm praying for, I'm interceding for you all, right?

I hope there are certain things you pray for every day.

Then I hope that there's a system where you have broken down your week and you're praying for different things on different days.

I mentioned this in a sermon a while back, right?

You choose what you want to pray for.

And get a system so that you're not leaving out major, major things in your life.

Like what day of the week are you praying for missionaries?

What day of the week are you praying for our government and our leaders?

What day are you praying maybe for educators or first responders?

What day are you praying for your lost friends?

What day are you praying for your extended family?

What day are you praying for your close Christian friends?

It just goes on and on.

There might be a part of the world you want to pray for, an unreached people group you want to pray for.

Put it on the list and come up with one of the days

the week that you're praying for that in addition to the things you pray for every day.

But get a strategy.

There's apps for your phone to do that.

You can have an old-fashioned prayer notebook and write it down, but be effective in your prayer.

Have a strategy for what you're praying for.

Matthew 7, 7, ask, seek, and knock.

Yes?

Ask, seek, and knock.

Well, the why is yield.

P-R-A-Y, wise yield.

Look at verse 10.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Remember when you pray, it's not about your agenda.

It's about God.

It's not about you.

He's the sovereign God.

And yes, as I said, he might answer with a yes or no or not now, wait.

But that's up to him.

And so train yourself at the end of your prayer time, have I yielded yet?

Have I opened God's word and read it for me?

Like, oh, you're speaking to me.

I better listen up.

Yes, sir.

Have you done that?

When you have done all your praying to God, you need to just sit back and go, oh, wait, I guess I need to listen to you now.

God, would you speak to me?

I'm going to yield because it's about your kingdom, not mine.

And I might have asked for some things that are not in your will.

So God, I'm going to yield to you.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I try to pray that almost every day for what's going on in the world.

In other words, God, will you overrule all the rulers, whether they're in the Middle East or Africa or Europe?

Will you overrule?

We don't like the why of yield, do we?

Because it makes us wait.

It interrupts us.

We're ready to move on with our day.

We've done our prayer duty, but we yield throughout the day.

You know, that's one of the definitions of being filled with the Holy Spirit, is you just yield to Him.

If the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and He's literally entered your life when you were born again, born from above, you were indwelled with Him, you're sealed by Him,

In some ways you don't need any more of Him.

What we need to do is just yield to Him and say, yes, sir.

Holy Spirit, lead me today.

Correct me today.

Yes, sir.

And that's really what it means to be filled with the Spirit, is led, overwhelmed by the Spirit, yielded to the Spirit.

Well, let me give these final quotes.

I hope these fire you up.

Ready?

I've got a couple more besides this.

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33.3.

God wants to tell you stuff you don't know.

James 5, 16, the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China.

When we work, we work.

When we pray, God works.

I want God to work.

He can do more than me.

Charles Spurgeon.

Prayer moves the hand, it moves the world.

And finally, John Wesley.

God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.

That's how he's going to work.

For whatever reason, he's chosen to work through prayer.

So let's not neglect it.

Let's not blow it off.

Let's come up with a prayer strategy.

Let's decide we're going to be

Thermostats, not thermometers.

We're not just going to measure the temperature of the room.

We're going to change the temperature of the room and our world through prayer.

Let's be a people who prays.

Well, it's interesting.

Before Jesus went to the cross, he had an extended time to pray in the garden, and he interceded for you and me.

You can read about it in John 16, John 17, John 15.

And he did it after a time of communion.

So