

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

May 28, 2023 "What was important to Jesus. Prayer."

I Intro.

Happy Memorial Day Weekend. It's practically summer now. Even though some of our regular activities are slowing down we still have things you're going to want to participate in. You saw the appeal to address some building and financial needs we're having to fix. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap. (This message was moved from the canceled service on 3.26.23)

This was the fourth Sunday in the series; **"What was important to Jesus"**. We did this series leading up to Easter, and we were taking a deep dive looking at what Jesus spent a lot of time talking about. If Jesus spent a lot of time teaching about certain specific things, then it must be something we need to take seriously. These topics were to help address the struggles we face in life, and give us some tools to use to guide us as we moved towards the death and resurrection of Jesus. The first Sunday we talked about Jesus caring about things that are 'lost'. What we discovered is we all are lost in some way, looking for meaning in life. And this will come from understanding God wants a relationship with us. The second Sunday Kristen Hill led us on a look into who Jesus considered "the least of these", and what our relationship with others should be. The third week we talked about eternal life and how that begins now. And today...we dive into that ever illusive thing called prayer.

III Sunday.

When asked what are the important elements of the Christian life, prayer is always near the top of the list. And also when asked; where do you struggle most in your Christian walk? Prayer is often at the top of that list also. Our desire is for NCC to be a safe place to admit prayer is hard. We know we should pray. We benefit from prayer. But we often struggle in trying to make prayer something that we benefit from. And know it's very okay to struggle with understanding and practicing prayer.

So as always, let's flesh this out.

What is prayer to you?

Where do you feel comforted and assured through prayer?

Where do you struggle and wish you were more confident in your prayer?

The scripture we used was the well known Lord's Prayer. We're all very familiar with it, and often find ourselves reciting the King James version, because that's how we memorized it. Feel free to read any

translation for this study, but I would encourage you to read from several different translations just to force you to actually read it, rather than automatically just reciting it without really taking it in.

First, we started with some instructions from Jesus about the nature of prayer and how we should pray. Read **Matthew 6:1-8** and we'll talk about his warnings when praying.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did it say to you about the 'practice of', or the way we pray?

Where do you think we individually, or corporately as a church, miss this?

We all have to honestly admit that often prayer can become performative or even manipulative. We're not so much trying to have an actual intimate conversation with God, as we are fulfilling some religious expectation. Even in our private prayers. Apparently the manner in which we pray is an essential part and there's some work to be done before we actually pray.

Then we hit the actual Lord's Prayer. The 'model prayer'. As I said, read it in a couple of different translations so you have to deal with understanding and feeling it anew. It's **Matthew 6:9-13**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

How did you experience this prayer if you read it in different translations?

We're going to spend the rest of our time on this. How does each element of this prayer meet you in your everyday life? More than just being able to define each, but to practice them?

This is where we have to move from an intellectual understanding of The Lord's Prayer (what each element means) to the practicing of it. In worship we actually did a meditation, walking through a similar understanding of this prayer. Let's try to walk through each element and ask what it would look like to live this prayer out. We're going to just form this in a list of questions for you to wrestle with.

Feel an awareness of the presence of God.

Who and what is God to you?

What do you need from God?

What do you want to know from God?

What are you struggling with that God can help you?

What's happening in your life right now you need guidance about?

What are you holding onto that God can help you let go of?

How can God be present in your life to help you to become who you want to be?

IV Challenge.

Prayer is such an essential element to growth and maturity. And at the same time, prayer is such a difficult practice to get a handle on. We don't need to be reminded how important prayer is. Or to be guilted or shamed into praying. No one wants a conversation with someone because they were guilted into it. God gave us access to himself as a gift. To help us, not to stroke his ego. So, don't beat yourself up if it's not easy for you right now.

Relax, let awareness of God, and conversation just flow, and step into the presence of a God who just wants you to know him. When you feel finished...then stop. Simple as that.

So, the typical question at the end of a devotion. **What is one thing you could do that could help make prayer more meaningful in your daily life?**