

JESUS AND PRAYER

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By Pastor Stan

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INTRO.

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-- As we walk with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, one of the characteristics that stands out to us is how much He prays. No matter how busy His life gets, He's never too busy to pray. He gets up early, while it's still dark and the Disciples are sleeping, so He can go off by Himself to pray. Sometimes He prays all night.

-- In today's passage Jesus not only prays but also teaches us to pray. Turn please to Luke 11.

Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

-- Let's be sure to pay attention to the request that this disciple makes of Jesus: "Teach us to pray." It is not "Teach us how to pray," although I am sure that that is implied. The actual request, however, is larger than that. The request is to teach them to pray. I think that this disciple is a whole lot like us: his devotion to and practice of prayer is seriously inadequate. He looks at Jesus' devotion to prayer - how often Jesus' prays, how much time Jesus spends in praying, how much Jesus values prayer - and then the disciple looks at his own life and sees how easily he neglects prayer and how little time he actually spends in prayer. He looks at what happens when Jesus prays - demons are cast out, the blind see, the lame walk, thousands are fed with 5 loaves and 2 fish - and then the disciple looks at how often his own prayers go unanswered. Now, I suspect that just about all of us here today can easily identify with this disciple. We know that our prayer lives are seriously deficient, that there isn't any aspect of discipleship that we neglect more than prayer.

-- And so when this disciple wants Jesus to teach them to pray - to teach them to make prayer as vital, valued, and effective in their lives as it was in His - that this disciple is speaking for us as well.

-- That's why we need to listen carefully to what Jesus says here, because He's about to do something that most of us desperately need - teach us to pray.

I. THE MODEL PRAY-ER (V. 1)

-- Jesus teaches us about prayer before He says a word: through His personal example. Jesus is the "model pray-er." The disciple in the text comes to Jesus because Jesus is a man of prayer.

A. JESUS' PRAYER LIFE

-- If you want to learn about prayer, look at Jesus. Luke in particular focuses on Jesus' prayer life. As you walk with Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, you will find that Jesus is always praying:

â—• In chapter 3, Jesus prays at His baptism by John.

â—• In chapter 5, Luke tells us that Jesus "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

â—• In chapter 6, Jesus prayed all night before choosing the 12 Disciples.

â—• In chapter 9, Jesus is praying alone just before asking the Disciples "Who do you say I am" and then affirming that He is, indeed, the Messiah. Then a few verses later He takes Peter, James and John up on a mountain top to pray and as He prays there the event of the Transfiguration takes place.

â—• Here in chapter 11, He is praying and teaching about prayer.

â—• In chapter 18, He again teaches about prayer, this time using a parable to show that His followers should always pray and not give up.

â—• In chapter 22, just hours before His arrest, Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and prepare for His upcoming sufferings and death on the Cross.

â—• In chapter 23, as He hangs in anguish on the Cross, when every word requires a pain-filled effort, Jesus manages to speak 3 prayers: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," and "My, my God, why have you forsaken me," and "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit."

From beginning to end Jesus' life and ministry were filled with prayer.

B. 2 PROMINENT ASPECTS OF JESUS' PRAYER LIFE

-- What was it that drove Jesus to such prayer? As you study the Gospels, two aspects appear to dominate and define Jesus' prayer life.

1. Intimacy with the Father

For Jesus prayer was not some religious ritual. Prayer was time spent in intimate communion and conversation with the Father. We see that intimacy in John 17 where Jesus is praying for His disciples.

John 17:25-26 Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

2. Dependence on the Father

Jesus wanted everything He did to be in perfect alignment with the Father's will, and Jesus knew that He had to depend fully on the Father to carry out the Father's will.

John 5:19-20 "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

John 8:28b-29 I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

Jesus teaches by His example the attitude that will drive us to prayer, as it did Him - that prayer is an opportunity for intimacy with the Father and that prayer is essential because we depend completely on the Father's presence and power in order to follow His Son.

II. THE MODEL PRAYER (VV. 2-4)

-- Jesus responds to the disciple's request for instruction on prayer by giving a model prayer.

vv. 2-4

-- We call this the Lord's Prayer, but it could just as accurately be called the Disciple's Prayer, because Jesus gave it to the disciples as a model for how to pray.

The prayer consists of 5 petitions (requests or desires) that break into two sections - the first section, which uses the pronouns "you" and "yours," and the second section, which uses the pronouns "us" and "ours."

A. THE "YOUR" SECTION (V. 2)

-- The first part of the prayer is the "your" segment, which focuses on God. Jesus teaches us that prayer is God-centered.

1. God's Name

-- "Father, hallowed be your name."

-- The first request in the prayer concerns God's name, that God's name would be "hallowed," set apart as holy. In other words, this is a request that God would be honored and worshipped and that His glory would be seen.

2. God's Kingdom

-- "Your kingdom come."

-- The second request concerns God's Kingdom, that God's Kingdom would come, that He would reign over the earth, over the hearts and lives of people - starting with us but not stopping until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that He is truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

-- We need to be sure to get a hold on what Jesus is teaching us about prayer here. He's telling us that prayer is God-centered, that prayer is concerned about God's glory and God's Kingdom more than about our desires.

B. THE "US" SECTION (VV. 3-4)

-- Only after focusing our thoughts and desires on God's glory does Jesus turn to petitions concerning ourselves. The second section of the Model Prayer is in verses 3-4, where the pronouns are "us" and "ours."

1. Our Provision (v. 3)

-- "Give us each day our daily bread."

-- Notice three important aspects of this simple petition:

(1) The prayer is not for "me" and "my" but for "us" and "our," indicating that we are not to be concerned only about our own needs but also about the needs of our brothers and sisters.

(2) The request is not for self-indulgent luxuries but for "bread," a basic need in life.

(3) And the request is not for a year's supply of bread but for one day. God wants us to live our lives a day at a time, trusting Him for the grace and provisions necessary for that day, just as Israel had to trust Him for daily manna during its 40 years in the wilderness.

2. Our Forgiveness (v. 4a)

-- "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

-- Even as those who know and follow Jesus, we are still have fallen natures that are prone to disobey our God, and so we continue to depend on His grace for forgiveness of the sins that would separate us from Him and disrupt our fellowship with Him. The same humility that brings us to confess our sins and be forgiven also leads us to forgive others who wrong us.

3. Our Deliverance (v. 4b)

-- "And lead us not into temptation."

-- This petition should not be taken to imply that God is the one who tempts us; He is not. But God can stop us from being enticed by temptation and being drawn into its web. The best place to stop sin is before it happens - at the point of temptation, but that's a battle that none of us can fight on our own. We don't have to sin, but we are delivered from it only through the presence and power of God.

(Note: Many of you may notice that this Lord's Prayer is different from the one you might typically pray. The Lord's Prayer is given here in Luke and in Matthew 6, and there are minor variations because they were given on two separate occasions. Obviously, it's intended as a model, and Jesus probably used it often as a teaching example. The version that most people pray is actually a modified form of the prayer found in the King James translation of Matthew.)

III. THE MANNER OF PRAYING (VV. 5-10)

-- Jesus follows this Model Prayer with instruction regarding the manner of our praying and the motivation for our praying.

-- He uses a parable to instruct us on the manner in which we are to pray.

A. THE PARABLE (VV. 5-8)

-- The point of this parable is persistence. The man in the story gets the bread from his friend because he's not going to quit asking - he's going to stand there at that door pleading for the bread as long as it takes until the friend gets up and gives it to him.

B. THE TEACHING (VV. 9-10)

-- Jesus goes on to make the point of the parable explicit in verses 9-10. The point is that we must be persistent in our praying. We must persevere.

-- The verbs that Jesus uses in these verses - ask, seek, and knock - are all in the Greek present tense that stresses continuous action: the idea is to keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. God's promise concerning prayer is that He will answer those who persevere, those keep on praying and won't quit.

IV. THE MOTIVATION FOR PRAYING (VV. 11-13)

-- Finally, Jesus concludes this session on prayer with a teaching intended to motivate us to pray in this persevering manner.

vv. 11-13

-- What Jesus is telling us here is that God is not like the man in the parable who was reluctant to grant the friend's request. God is not a reluctant acquaintance; He's our heavenly Father. That's how Jesus instructs us to come to God in our prayers, as our Father. That was not the way that Jews in Jesus' day addressed God. They used terms that emphasized His exalted transcendence, but Jesus wants us to come to God as a Father who loves us and cares about our needs and wants to do good for us and give what is best for us.

CONCLUSION

In his book *An Unstoppable Force*, Erwin McManus shares a story of prayer. McManus was pastor of a small but growing congregation in downtown Dallas, Texas. As they looked for a place to build a larger church building, they spotted an acre of land for sale. It seemed strange that the property was available in the middle of the city. Although the congregation was small and the people were poor, they began to pray that God would help them to get the site; and eventually, God provided the needed financial help from an association

of churches, and McManus' congregation purchased the land. But when they began the process of obtaining building permits, they discovered the property had been declared "unbuildable." The acre of land in the prime location was a worthless landfill. McManus grieved over how they had wasted their precious money. He writes:

We had bought an acre of garbage. Several core samples were taken. From what I understood, they went at least twenty-five feet deep and found nothing but trash…All I could do was ask our congregation to pray with me and believe that God was with us and that he would even use the worst of human mistakes to perform the greatest of miracles.

After months of prayer, a woman from the congregation told McManus that since they had asked God to turn the land into something useful, surely it had been taken care of. McManus decided to ask for more core samples to be taken. This time the researchers found soil. McManus writes:

How did this happen? Was it because the core sample was in a different part of the land? Or could it be that God had actually performed a miracle and changed the landfill to good land? What I do know is that the same realtor who sold the property to me came back and offered me three times the amount he had sold it for once he heard the clearance to build had actually come through. What I do know is that the previous owners could not build on the property, but we could. What I do know is that we were told the property was worthless and unusable. What I cannot tell you is what happened beneath the ground at 2815 South Ervay Street. All I can tell you is what I know - and that is that God took my failure and performed a miracle. Today Cornerstone worships on that acre of land in a sanctuary built by our own hands