

Abide – Anxious for Nothing

3/3/24

Philippians 4:4-6

Sunday AM

One day, during the invitation, a pastor overheard a boy anxiously praying to God – *Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo*. Curious, the pastor knelt beside the boy to see if he could help or at least pray w/ him. He asked – *Son, why are you praying Tokyo?* The boy replied, “Pastor, you can pray w/ me, but I don’t know if it’ll help. I had a test on Friday at school – and unless you can make *Tokyo* the capital of France – I’m not sure it’ll help!”

We’re in week 5 of our series concerning the **abiding life**. I’m hopeful that God is doing a great work in/thru your life in this series as you spend time in His Word and in discussion w/ other believers.

To **abide** is to live plugged into and empowered by H.S. by *remaining connected w/ or aligned under* God.

The WITH-God life. Dallas Willard

Meaning – the abiding life living in a close, continual, non-transactional relationship w/ Jesus that involves choosing to stay connected to Him by responding to the leading of the H.S. so that each day you become more dependent on Him and a little less dependent on yourself in every area of your life. To help us abide – God has given us differing spiritual activities like worship, prayer, stewardship, church, and the Bible to help us live intimately/dependently w/ Him.

Truth – all of us are abiding in something/someone to meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs – and whatever/whoever it is can be identified easily by our *ambitions, appetites, attitudes, and actions*.

So far, we’ve discussed the necessity of **waiting on the Lord**, learning to **worship** God privately/publicly, and allowing God’s Word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path – today I want us to turn our attention to the gift of communing w/ God in prayer.

Can I be honest? Prayer may be one of the simplest, yet brutally difficult aspects of the Christian life. In its simplest form – it’s talking/listening w/ God. It’s climbing into your heavenly Father’s lap to enjoy His presence, to talk w/ Him, and to love on Him as you allow Him to love you and speak into your life.

The challenge of prayer is that too often, our prayers are about our will and what we can get from God – turning what is intended to be a gift of intimacy into a conditional transaction w/ God where we only want something from God instead of relating to Him.

Not to mention the challenge of how God answers our prayers. At times – **YES** b/c it’s His will. At times – **NO** b/c it’s not His will. And then sometimes the answer is **NOT YET** or not now.

Today – I want to take a few minutes to talk about prayer from a familiar passage in Philippians 4:4-6:

Rejoice in the Lord always, I say again, rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all the Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, w/ thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ. Philippians 4:4-6

W/in the context of prayer, Paul offers (4) keys to connecting/communing w/ God.

I Prayer is **REJOICING** in God and His Will

Rejoice in the Lord always, I say again, rejoice!

Prayer begins w/ continually returning to God b/c we believe God **IS** and God **CAN!** We see this in the word – **rejoice**. To get this word we realize the word – JOY.

Too often, joy gets confused/mistakenly linked to the idea of happiness, but they're not related. Happiness is an emotion we feel when we're satisfied w/ the details of our happenings. It's a feeling we experience when we're pleased w/ our life circumstances – meaning happiness is often fleeting and always fluctuating b/c it's purely based on the elation of our circumstances.

JOY on the other hand is **NOT** an emotion but a **state of belief**. It's not tethered to being happy b/c it's a conviction we hold no matter our circumstances.

Meaning – joy is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for our good and His glory even when our circumstances are turned upside down.

SEE – happiness is like a *thermometer* that measures the temperature; while joy is like a *thermostat* that sets and regulates the temperature. Thus, happiness rises and falls based on circumstances while joy is constant – unimpacted by circumstances.

Rejoicing in the Lord is fixing your eyes on who He is and who He's promised to be. It's setting your heart and mind on things above – and not turning to the right/left to focus on the wind/waves in the storms of life. ***Joy is a state of belief that God is always for me – and never against me no matter how life is going.***

So, whether I'm on the mountaintop or scraping the bottom of the lowest valley – when life makes me unhappy, I can still have true JOY – b/c joy is NEVER based on circumstances but based on my belief in God.

II Prayer is **LEANING** into Your Big God

Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer...

When I read this verse, I'm reminded of the church sign – *Don't let worry kill you... let the church help.*

To be **anxious** is to be so worried about the things of this world that these things strangle the life out of you.

Worry is...

- ...the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles
- ...is putting question marks where God has put a period
- ...is practical atheism that believes God is absent

Paul says the solution to life's worries is continually turning to and trusting that God is willing and able.

prayer (*proseuche*) is leaning into God in adoration b/c we know He's more than capable of caring for us. It's turning in praise to recount His greatness/goodness b/c the more we praise Him – the bigger He gets!

Do you remember when David went out to face Goliath? While all the soldiers of Israel were saying, "Look how big Goliath is." David was saying, "Look how big my God is!" ***He knew His God was bigger than the problem standing right in front of Him.***

Yet too often we rush into His presence, blurting out our supplications and requests, instead of approaching His throne of grace w/ a sense of wonder/reverence.

Paul was saying that when we encounter our giants in life, our 1st priority shouldn't be to worry about them, but to get alone w/ God in humble worship and dependence by focusing on His majestic attributes – that He's immutable, loving, merciful, sovereign, etc. B/c when we do, we'll quickly remember that those things which seemed so big before, pale in comparison to who He is and what He is capable and able to do.

Point – we're to worry about nothing b/c we can pray about everything to the God who can do anything.

III Prayer is **TRUSTING** God w/ Everything

supplication (*deesis*) refers to asking God to meet and provide for our needs – and even wants.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus told us to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven – then invited us to pray about our daily physical/spiritual needs.

We do this in (2) ways – **petitioning/intercession**. *Petitioning* is praying to ourselves and the issues and needs in our lives so that God's will is done in our lives – while *intercession* is praying for God's will to take place in someone else's life.

Peter spoke to this idea when he wrote – *cast all of our cares upon the Lord b/c He cares for us*. 1 Peter 5:7

Here is the point – God cares about the details of our lives and invites us to talk w/ Him about them. He doesn't expect us to handle them on our own, but He does expect us to trust/depend on Him. So, He invites us to turn everything over to Him as we seek and desire His will to be accomplished in/thru our lives. But this requires that we truly desire His will over our will b/c we truly believe His will/way is better than our way!

IV Prayer is having an **ATTITUDE** of Gratitude

The final word for prayer here is – w/ **thanksgiving**. It simply means to be *thankful*. In good times or bad – we're to thank God. When we're hurting – thank Him! When we're sad, mad, or glad – thank Him! When it makes sense and when it doesn't – thank Him!

LBH – it's tough to thank God when we're going thru difficulty, when we're scared or even brokenhearted – when life doesn't make sense, or when we think such life events shouldn't happen to us. These moments are more likely to cause us to question if God is good or if He even exists at all... But it's in these moments that it is most important that we're thankful.

Listen – as a dad of a child w/ special needs, I've had to wrestle w/ this. I've had to struggle w/ believing and trusting that God is good and in control. I still have to work thru the ache of watching my son struggle – and deal w/ his challenges. I've had to work thru my hurt, guilt, and questions. I still question why God hasn't healed him – and I've walked w/ too many others who've had to walk this lonely road of where is God when I think I need Him most...

Here's what I've learned – He's right there. Present and lovingly working for our good and His glory. Providing us w/ everything we need to make it thru – and equipping us to help others who also are experiencing the challenges of living in a fallen world.

This past week in one of my GROW groups, Curtis Weaver shared w/ us about when His mom passed. His mom had a massive stroke and the doctors told the family they'd make her comfortable for the remaining few hours of her life. Well... those few hours turned into 18 days – and over those 18 days, Curtis said truly he struggled w/ God as he watched the impact it was having on his dad – to the point that one evening, he stood in his driveway yelling at God in frustration. The next day, as he walked into the hospital, his dad pointed out a woman whose husband was dying who was alone. His dad took Curtis w/ him to pray for her. It was at that moment Curtis realized that for the past 18 days, everyone in that unit had witnessed how his family/church had cared for his mom – and how this witness had impacted so many lives. He also realized that if his mom knew that God would want her to languish for 18 days to show someone the love of God, the love of her church, and the selflessness of his Dad's faith, it was a price she would've willingly paid.

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Christians should be **worried** for nothing, **prayerful** for everything, and **thankful** for anything. *Moody*