

Go Farther – Pray Farther

8/10/25

Luke 18:1-14

Sunday AM

Urban legend has it that a church learned that the building next door to them was being bought by a secular businessman who planned to turn into a bar and night club. In crisis, the church held an emergency prayer meeting asking God to prevent the club from ever opening. Oddly enough, after their prayer time, a storm rolled in and lightning struck the building – burning it to the ground. As a result, the businessman, sued the church blaming them for the tragedy yet they denied having anything to do w/ it. When the case went to court, the judge began the trial by saying that he was confounded by the complexity of the case b/c on one hand, there is an atheist businessman who believes God answers prayer – and a believing church claiming God doesn't answer prayer.

**LMA** – What do you believe about prayer – and if/how God even answers prayer? Or if your prayers matter?

In case you missed last Sunday, we introduced our missional focus for this next year of ministry – which is to **Go Farther to Further the Gospel**. In particular, we discussed the mission of the G.C. that we're all witnesses of God's grace called to make disciples.

If we're to actually *go farther to further the Gospel* – it'll begin w/ us on our knees praying farther than ever before as we seek the Father's will/heart for our lives.

To *pray farther* means we must move beyond our surface-level, safe, routine praying to actually pressing into a deeper, riskier, faith-ambitious seeking of God – where we say/mean – *here I am Lord send me*.

I'm talking about moving beyond our – *now I lay me down to sleep* praying – to desperately seeking and beating down the doors of heaven asking God to move in, thru, beyond, and even, in spite of us for His will to be accomplished and His glory to be revealed.

**BUT** – for this to occur, we need a correct/healthy understanding of what prayer is and how it works – which begins w/ Jesus' words in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 when He taught His disciples to pray.

*This is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, and Your will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. 6:9-13*

**To begin** – and this is huge... Paramount to praying prayers that work and actually make it into the throne room to the ears of God is the realization that for a prayer to actually be a prayer, and not just a personal wish we desire for God to fulfill, requires that it <sup>1</sup> *seeks His glory*, <sup>2</sup> *is about His kingdom coming*, and <sup>3</sup> *is about His will being done* on earth as in heaven.

These (3) prerequisites aren't just a line in the Lord's Prayer – they're the **foundational orientation** for all prayer. That is, the most effective, heaven-penetrating prayer is never first about our preferences/timing, but always first about God's purposes, plans, and glory.

This is why James wrote – *You ask and do not receive, b/c you ask w/ wrong motives*. James 4:3

**Meaning** – the throne room of heaven is never a place for selfish demands, but for a surrendered, seeking heart in search of God's bigger sovereign story.

This doesn't mean we're not to bring everything thing to God in prayer (we are) – but that our **posture** matters as we're to bring all things to Him w/ the priority of His will/agenda coming before our will/agenda.

**IOW** – our requests are always to be kingdom-oriented. So, when we pray – *give us this day our daily bread* – we’re always asking w/in a kingdom context.

So **YES!** For prayer to make it into the throne room to connect w/ God’s heart and participate in His purposes – it must be anchored in a holy desire for His kingdom to come and His will to be done so that He might receive all the honor/glory.

My guess is that you’ve never heard such a statement about prayer and what I’ve just shared is messing w/ everything you think/know about prayer. GOOD!

**WTM** – to appreciate what it means to **pray farther**, I want to share (2) principles about prayer from Luke 18:1-14 that I believe can help us to **pray farther**.

*Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. Also, there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him w/ the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ “For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet b/c this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” The Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus said, “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Luke 18:1-14*

The **spiritual juxtaposition** b/w the persistent widow in v. 1–8 – the broken tax collector and arrogant Pharisee in v. 9–14 is intentional, rich, and palpable.

By placing these parables side by side, Jesus is forcing us to consider the motivation/methods in our prayers. That is, *why am I praying what I’m praying and what’s the ultimate desire of my heart regarding my prayers?*

**W/ the widow** – we see desperation that caused her to persist in seeking – teaching us about **boldness** in prayer. While w/ the tax collector and Pharisee we see the tension b/w humility and arrogance teaching us about the necessity of genuine **brokenness**.

**Boldness and brokenness.** Boldness to be persistent and brokenness to be totally dependent – versus the Pharisee who felt entitled and deserving of God’s blessings – as if God owed him something.

**May I ask** – have you ever felt like God owed you? If so, it likely came in the form of – **why hasn’t God answered my prayers?** Believe it or not – I see this all the time! And if I’m being honest, I’ve at times asked God why hasn’t He answered some of my prayers.

There’ve been moments when I’ve asked God why He hasn’t healed my son Colin. I’ve thought... I’ve given my life to serve you – why will you not heal him?

I share this to show you how easy it is to move from **persistent dependence** to **insistent entitlement**. Where we treat God as if He is us and we’re Him – or we treat Him like a cosmic slot machine or Santa Claus.

This is why these parables are so vital to appreciate, b/c there's a tension b/w being persistent and having humility, and thinking God owes you something.

These parables teach us that boldness in prayer begins w/ broken desperation and not prideful obligation.

**Additionally** – these parables teach us that in spite of any discouragement we might face, we're to never give up praying and seeking God's will – and equally important, we're to never give up, and in arrogance, try to handle things in our own ability/ingenuity.

**Think** – *Trust in the Lord w/ all of your heart, never leaning on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him – and He will direct your path.*

**All this to say** – from these parables, we learn that prayer that reaches God causing God to respond is persistent w/out pride and humble w/out hopelessness.

Look at it this way – to pray farther, we must...

**Like the widow** – we must – <sup>1</sup> be *bold* in our approach; <sup>2</sup> *persistent* in our pleading; and <sup>3</sup> *just* in our requests.

**Like the tax collector** – we must be – <sup>1</sup> be *broken* in heart; <sup>2</sup> *penitent* in posture; and <sup>3</sup> hopeful for mercy.

Heaven doesn't respond to volume, vocabulary, or visibility – but to *faith that trusts* and *hearts that break* before God. *Unknown*

This brings me to a final thought I believe is essential to *praying farther* – how do I pray God's will?

Praying according to God's will is less about finding some magic formula and more about aligning your heart, mind, and requests w/ God's values/purposes.

1 Recognize God has a **WILL** involving You

- God's **PROVIDENTIAL** (sovereign) Will
- God's **PRESCRIPTIVE** (scriptural) Will
- God's **PERSONAL** Will

When we pray God's prescriptive will revealed in Scripture and align our lives to this truth – God hears our prayers and reveals His personal will to us.

2 Saturate Your Life with **SCRIPTURE**

**Remember** – God's Word is God's Will! That is – God's will is most clearly expressed in His Word.

If you want to know how to treat others – turn to God's Word. If you want to know how to be married and raise children – trust God's Truth. If you want to know how to steward your life – follow God's precepts. Every thing you need to follow God is found in His Word.

3 Pray with God's **KINGDOM** and Will in Mind

When we pray w/ the advancement of God's purposes at the center, it shapes our values/priorities. Instead of only asking for comfort/convenience, we begin asking for courage, faithfulness, and fruitfulness.

4 Let the **HOLY SPIRIT** Lead You

Romans 8:26–27 says the Spirit intercedes for us – according to the will of God.

When we yield to the H.S. in prayer – confessing sin, listening for His prompting, and letting Him guide us – our requests will align more closely w/ His heart.

5 Constantly Check Your **MOTIVES**

**As mentioned earlier** – James 4 warns us that wrong motives can block our prayers. So, we need to be constantly asking is my request self-centered or God-centered. For His kingdom or my kingdom.

**Pray Farther – Commitment Card**