

" A Christian Layman
Talks About Prayer"

O.T. - Psalm 121
N.T. - Mathew 6/ 6-13

~~Usually, when Dr. Kline asks me to conduct a worship service in his absence I ask him if he has any subject he would want me to talk about, and he is very helpful in suggesting subjects for the morning's message.~~

~~This time, however,~~ when he asked me to conduct this morning's worship service the subject of PRAYER immediately came to mind. I pondered that for quite a while. ~~I said nothing to Dr. Kline,~~ but I felt like Moses when God asked him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses protested that he was ^{NOT} the right person for such a formidable task. He felt that there were many more people better equipped and capable to be the leader in such an important undertaking. But, God persisted and instructed Moses to do as he was told. I ^{FEEL} ~~felt~~ that there are many more experienced, veteran "prayer warriors" in this congregation better suited to talk about prayer and their prayer experiences.

But, in the silence of God's answer ^Ione word kept echoing in my mind...PRAYER. Be still! Think about prayer...that's all...just think about it. Gather your thoughts about prayer.

Look for the thoughts of others concerning prayer. Write them down. Ponder them. Then, as a Christian layman go before the congregation and talk about them. It doesn't have to be a deep, heavy theological presentation or a doctoral thesis...just words from the heart.

Well, ~~even though I procrastinated~~ ^I and pondered and procrastinated...and finally began to investigate this beautiful act of worshipful communication we call prayer.

When I began working on this morning's message I ~~did not know that~~ ^{THOUGHT OF OTHERS WHO HAD TALKED AND WRITTEN ABOUT PRAYER AND PRAYING.} ~~prepared a most meaningful sermon entitled "Talk About It" a sermon on prayer. As I sat in the choir last that September morning listening to his sermon I again had the thought who are you to come into this pulpit and talk about prayer. Unknowingly, I had even selected the same old and new testament scriptures.~~

~~I went home that Sunday thinking I should change the subject of my message. Again, the one word PRAYER kept repeating in my mind. I talked to Dr. King about it, and in his most persuasive tone he said..." ONE OF MY PASTOR FRIENDS SAID " Paul, just talk about prayer...that's it." And, ~~then to be even more helpful he gave me his sermon notes to help me.~~~~

The dictionary, in my opinion, contains a shallow definition of prayer.

"PRAYER...an entreaty...a supplication, a humble request as to God. A set of words used in praying. To implore. To ask for by prayer to God."

So, I searched other writings and found that in true prayer we take words audibly or silently and individually, or as a congregation ^{AND} turn our attention to the very center of our being where our Father God dwells. We speak the words to Him as we would an earthly father.

Prayer, to me, is not begging God for something. It is ~~it~~ simply asking for an affirmation of that which we know is available to us ~~at~~ ^{FROM} the hands of our Father God. Jesus tells us this from the pages of the Gospels.

The act of prayer...whether with audible words or in the deep silence of our souls is putting ourselves more completely into the power of God's working so that good may be obtained or evil escaped.

Understanding prayer is knowing that prayer is meaningless unless it is answered...yes or no. And, when it is answered...and how it is answered. I'll comment more on that in a few moments.

Prayer is a certain attitude or predisposition of our personalities by which we give ourselves more completely to the creativity of God. We use "prayer language" to aquire this predisposition. Some people prefer to use the

words "thee" and "thou" in their prayers. Others prefer ~~not~~^A less formal conversational tone as they communicate with their Creator.

When prayer is genuine it puts us under the control of God's creativity which, in turn, makes us more sensitive and responsive to the people around us, and all of humanity ~~to~~^{AS WELL.}

Jesus taught that God was His Father...and our Heavenly Father. He showed people then, and He shows us here today, that our Father God cares for each one of us personally...just as a loving earthly father cares for each of his children...and if you will allow me, I might add grandchildren... *AND GREAT GRANDCHILDREN,*

Jesus spoke to His Father God as a child would speak to his or her father. He explained again and again that God the Father loves us, His children who accept Jesus into ~~their~~^{OUR} lives as ~~their~~^{OUR} Savior and Redeemer. He reminded them, and He reminds us here today, that our Father God cares for the smallest details of our everyday needs.

Jesus taught that our Father God is Holy and that He, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit share the same devine Holiness. He ^(- JESUS) intervenes to save us from our sins.

I HAVE A SERMON ENTITLED
~~The last time I spoke from this pulpit I talked about~~ "The Art of Talking To Yourself":... putting positive thought into your subconscious mind. Allow me to carry that one step further.

~~Dr. Kline told us in his September sermon~~
~~"Talk About It" that~~ It is estimated that there are two billion nerve and brain cells in the human body. They are miniature electric batteries which produce a magnetic field that projects our thoughts. They also serve as "receiving sets" through which we are able to receive the thoughts of others. Does it not seem reasonable then that if this "communicating system" works for humans that it would certainly work in communicating with our Creator. This is one of the basic principals of prayer. It is the method by which we communicate with the Supreme Being who created us. We call him God.

~~Dr. Kline~~ ^{WE ARE} also reminded ~~that~~ that this ~~tremendous~~ tremendous power we call ~~prayer~~ prayer is far greater than the power of nuclear fission. Prayer is transforming...Prayer is healing... Prayer is motivating...Prayer can inspire a Spirit-Filled congregation to make it capable of creatively spreading the Gospel in ~~downtown~~ ~~Youngstown~~ and all over this ~~metropolitan~~ area.

Prayer can transform a negative, depressed, despondant, downhearted person into a dynamic radiant, positive, persuasive person. It can make the sin-sick whole.

But, it is sometimes hard for us to comprehend the words of the Seventh Chapter of Mathew where Jesus says in the 8th and 9th verses.

" Ask, and it shall be given unto you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asks receives. You that seek shall find, and you who knock it shall be opened."...Jesus said that. There are no strings attached...no limitations. The plain words of promise are there for each one of us here this morning to claim as ^{HIS ORDER} ~~our~~ own.

It is interesting to note here that the disciples were with Jesus for three years. They saw him turn water into wine...heal lepers...make the blind to see...the lame to walk...the insane sane...the dead raised to living. But, not once did they ever ask Him how he did those things...or how he was able to hold sway over thousands with His message of hope and redemption, and a new free, vibrant lifestyle.

But, they had seen Him pray...talk to His Heavenly Father, and they asked Him how to pray. "Teach us to pray.", they said. And, He gave them a prayer that was simplicity itself. We ~~sing or~~ "speak" it every Sunday in our worship service, but how many of us think about what we are saying, ~~or singing~~. Listen to His Prayer - PRAY IT WITH ME.

7

THE LORD'S PRAYER

~~7~~

Our Father which art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in Heaven.

no police force
Pentagon out of business

Give us this day our daily bread.) - just for today

And, forgive our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.

do we forgive

Lead us not into temptation
But, deliver us from evil.

Don't let us stray

For thine is the Kingdom,
the Power and the Glory for ever.
Amen...

⑤
⑧

~~The Privilege of Prayer~~

Prayer is simply conversation with God, and we are always welcome to approach the great God of the universe for a personal audience. ~~But every time I ask a group~~ "How many of you feel good about your prayer life?" no more than one or two hands go up. Such negative feelings spring from our good motives. We want to draw close to God, but we also want to do things correctly - and often we're not sure about how to pray. We are in good company! Even the disciples who spent lots of time with Jesus had to ask, "Lord, teach us to pray." And Jesus responded to their yearning by giving the model prayer that we call the Lord's Prayer.

~~Why?~~

~~The Lord's Prayer~~

The disciples' request reminds us that praying is something we can learn to do. Many of us are helped by having models for our praying. One simple and widely known model is built on the acronym ACTS:

- A -- Adoration (worship, praise)
- C -- Confession
- T -- Thanksgiving
- S -- Supplication (requests)

- A** We begin by adoring God, acknowledging who God is.
- C** Then we confess our failures and our need for God and
- T** ask for forgiveness. Next we express thanks, acknowledging God as the source of all we have, all our blessings.
- S** Finally, we ask God for what we need and want. This model can help us to pray more freely by giving us a way to search our hearts for what we want to say to God.

Another pattern for our praying can help us as we pray for others. We often say, "God bless you," which is a sort of prayer. This phrase draws on biblical blessings such as Numbers 6:24-26. Dr. Alvin VanderGriend has created a helpful model that can guide us in praying for others by building on the word B-L-E-S-S:¹

¹ The B.L.E.S.S. acronym is adapted from Dr. VanderGriend's book, *Love to Pray: A 40-Day Devotional for Deepening Your Prayer Life*, and is used by permission.

9

- B - Body. Pray for health/healing, for "daily bread"/physical needs to be met.
- L -- Labors. Pray for God's help in the person's work, school, daily tasks.
- E - Emotional needs. Pray for comfort, reassurance, hope, joy, peace, etc.
- S - Social needs. Pray for healthy relationships with family, friends, associates.
- S - Spiritual needs. Pray for continually deepening relationship with God.

Patterns like these...

Jesus also made His disciples, and us here today a bold promise... "Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do."...and that is a promise from one who has never, and never will break a promise. And, as they say... " You can take that one to the bank."

And, here are some more examples of Jesus' teachings on prayer.

From Mathew 12/22 - "All things whatsoever you ask in prayer believing, you shall receive."

~~1-615-327-4673 (M-F, 8am - 4pm) or
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From Mark 11/24 - " Therefore I say unto you what things you desire, when you pray believe that you receive them, and you shall have them."

From Luke 11/13 - " If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

From John 14/ 13 and 14 - " Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may ~~be~~ glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it."

I firmly believe that God answers prayers through individuals...particularly through His coworkers...the doctors, nurses and technicians who earnestly work to relieve suffering and help God in His healing the sick.

Listen to what medical doctor Larry Dossey says in his book "Heavenly Words - The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine."... "The most practical reason to examine prayer in healing is simply that it works. The evidence is overwhelming. The fact that prayer may not work as powerfully and as predictably as it might may reflect deficiencies in the pray-er, not the prayer itself."

A few moments ago I commented on God's answering our prayers. We must realize that God recons time differently than we mortals do. In this age of instant oatmeal, ~~and~~ instant mashed potatoes, E-Mail and fax machines we want whatever is to happen to happen immediately. We recon time in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years. But, God recons time in eons. His time frame is forever.

So, when we pray and our prayers seem to go unanswered or unheeded we must remember the differing time frames between us and God. We must remember what Jeses taught us in the Gospels about our prayers.

There is also some good advice from the prophet Isaiah where he writes in Chapter 40 verse 3... "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint. Teach me Lord to wait."

Now, if you will permit me, I would like to give you examples of how God has answered my prayers...even when I did not realize I was praying...

1983 - Heart attack - Ashtabula, 5 years before

1993 - Kay - praying for her healing. She died.

1997 - Praying for sight. Legally blind in left eye. Can drive at night without glasses.

Doctor's prayer... Christ Jesus, our Lord without whose aid we can do nothing, look down upon us as we perform this surgery. Direct our minds and our hands that our work may be praiseworthy unto thee and successful unto those who suffer. In all things thy will be done...Amen.

1997 - Golf course prayer- Hole-in-one.

Let us pray...Our Father God we, your children, yearn for your presense in our lives. Your Son, Jesus, taugt us that you care for us because we are your children. We pray that you will instill in us the child-like believing and acceptance that you do hear our prayers and that you do answer them. We thank you for this and all the wonderful blessings you shower on us daily. In Jesus Holy Name we pray,,, Amen.