

Teach Us to Pray

February 14, 2010

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Luke 11:1-4

I. Introduction

A. Prayer

1. I made an executive decision that I'm certain will elicit a few "amens" from you this morning. The more I worked with our scripture text, the more I realized that we don't have enough time to work our way through three sermon points. So, rather than a three point sermon today there is only one.
 - a) *Do I hear an amen?*
 - b) *Besides, I misspelled the word, "persistence" in the bulletin and this gives me a week to fix it.*
2. This morning we begin a series that I am calling, "Teach Us to Pray." Between now and Easter, I hope that we will be inspired, encouraged and excited about living a transformational life of prayer.
3. You would think that a distinctive of Christians would be that we pray a lot. I wish that were true. Unfortunately, most of us feel completely inept when it comes to prayer. We either:
 - a) *don't pray at all or*
 - b) *don't pray very often or*
 - c) *don't pray very well,*
4. because not very much happens as a result of our prayers.
5. If you are like me and feel like your prayer life doesn't measure up to what it should be, let's stop beating ourselves up and go back to the source of our faith and learn from Jesus.

II. Jesus' teaches us to pray

- A. There are two ways that we learn about prayer from Jesus. First, we learn from his teachings. The gospel writers were generous in their writings about Jesus' teaching on this subject. Over the course of our study on prayer we will explore many of these passages.
- B. The second way we learn about prayer from Jesus is watching how he prays and what he prays about. As we dive into both Jesus teachings and example of prayer I think you will be blessed, surprised, encouraged and energized in your own prayer life.

III. What prayer is and is not

A. Prayer is not

1. The place to start is for us to understand, first, what “prayer is not.”
 - a) **Prayer is not** like a vending machine where something you want is secured behind glass and by inserting the right words, and feelings into the coin slot, then out pops your answer to prayer.
 - (1) It may sound silly, but many of us come to God with a consumer mentality. Our prayers, though they may be sincere and filled with hope, are not much more than a commerce exchange with God. We give God the right words in the right order, and we get a positive answer to prayer.
 - (2) Prayer is not a vending machine.
 - b) **Prayer is not** sitting on Santa’s lap either. Too often we metaphorically plop ourselves down in the lap of God and tell him that we have been nice all year and then tell him the list of gifts we want from him.
 - (1) The problem with our “Santa-like-prayer-requests” to God is that there is no relationship there. Yes, somehow Santa, or God, already knows if you have been naughty or nice. But Santa prayers are really nothing more than a way to get what you want. The power to answer the prayers are not with Santa but with the people who hear of the need and fill it. In this case, the parents.
 - c) **Prayer is not** like sitting on Santa’s lap.
 - d) **Prayer is not** wishing upon a star, saying magic words, communicating a laundry list, or engaging in spiritual therapy.

2. Prayer does not simply change “things”, prayer changes us!

B. This is what prayer is...

1. Prayer is a relationship.
 - a) *Prayer is the cultivation of love between the Holy, Almighty God and the crowning glory of his creation, humanity.*
 - b) *Prayer is intimate. It is not based on feelings or on what God can do for you. It is alining your will with God’s will, setting your heart to seek God’s heart, putting your life in God’s hands.*
2. Consider this little parable of “The Lonely King and the Polisher.”

IV. The Lonely King and the Polisher

V. Prayer is a Relationship

1. Prayer is a relationship. A relationship between a Holy, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-creating God with anyone who would dare to presume to come into his presence and pursue a friendship.
2. I want for us to learn how to pray like Jesus. He prayed very differently than other people. He prayed about things that I'd rather not pray about. Perhaps if we focus ourselves long enough to learn from Jesus, it will excite those of us who don't pray at all, very often or very well to make prayer a necessary, life-giving necessity of their day. Turn in your Bible's with me to Luke 11.

B. Luke 11:1-4

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." He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "*
2. The disciples saw Jesus pray and they made the connection that when Jesus prayed, God acted and powerful things happened. He prayed and the stormy seas were calmed, blind people received sight, deaf people their hearing, possessed people were freed, lame people jumped to their feet, sinners were forgiven and dead people were raised! When Jesus prayed heaven and earth moved....

VI. Pray Simply

1. If you want to learn to pray like Jesus, pray simply.
2. To teach the disciples, Jesus gave them a sample prayer. You will recognize it as a form of the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6.
 - a) *Notice the simplicity of the language. Each phrase can be repeated and understood by a child. Each phrase is also a window into Jesus' relationship with God the Father.*
3. Jesus said, "When you pray say,

B. ***"Father, hallowed be your name,"***

1. This address of God is both intimate and awesome.
2. I remember the first time my children called me Daddy. It melted my heart. I would have eaten glass for them. I would have stormed the gates of hell for them. I would have done anything for them. Yes, God the Father is Holy and Almighty, but think about it, Jesus told us to call the Holy, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-creating God, Daddy!

C. “Your kingdom come.”

1. This is not a call for a political coup, it is full submission to the will and purposes of God. Our prayer is to join in God’s agenda rather than trying to persuade him to enter ours.

D. “Give us each day our daily bread.”

1. God knows all of our physical and emotional needs before we ask.
2. Jesus instructs us here to pray for the daily necessities of life. But notice that the prayer is not filled with worry about stockpiling for the future.

E. “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us...”

1. We cannot begin to fathom the power of forgiveness. And here Jesus connects our need for forgiveness from God with our willingness to forgive others.

F. “And lead us not into temptation.”

1. Our struggle against sin is very familiar to God. This is a prayer for protection, guidance and direction away from the temptations that we are yet to face and sure to fight against.
2. But we have to realize that being led away from temptation means that he will lead toward spiritual testing. Testing is what prepares us for the lies and deceit of the Devil. It readies us to trust God no matter where our journey through life takes us.

VII. Conclusion

A. Observations

1. I would like to leave you with a few observations.
2. **Simple is good.**
 - a) *Contrast this prayer to the voluminous, egotistical, flowery prayers of the religious leaders that Jesus. The people watching may have been impressed with them but God was not.*
3. **Do your struggling about life in prayer.**
 - a) *When we look at Jesus’ prayers, we see that his struggles and his battles were fought in prayer. This was where he relinquished his will to God’s will. This is where his internal conflicts were settled.*
4. **Speak your mind then submit**
 - a) *Prayer to Jesus was more important than eating, sleeping or anything else.*

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b) *When Jesus prayed, he ultimately submitted himself to the will and purpose of God. When he did, the result were the powerful things that God did through him.*

5. Prayer does not simply changing things, prayer changes us.

B. Confederate Soldier's Prayer

1. In closing I'd like for us to read together a poem of sorts that was written by an unnamed Confederate Soldier back in the Civil War. I provide you a copy on the back of your bulletin for you so that you can read it again throughout the week. Read with me.

C.

I asked God for strength,
that I might achieve;
*I was made weak,
that I might humbly learn to obey.*

I asked for health,
that I might do greater things;
*I was given infirmity,
that I might do better things.*

I asked for riches,
that I might be happy;
*I was given poverty,
that I might be wise.*

I asked for power,
that I might have the praise of men;
*I was given weakness,
that I might feel the need of God.*

I asked for all things,
that I might enjoy life;
*I was given life,
that I might enjoy all things.*

I received nothing that I asked for –
but everything that I had hoped for;
Almost despite myself,
my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among all [people], most richly blessed.

VIII. Let's Pray.

1. " **Father, hallowed be your name**, we come into your presence not as a throne polishing servant, nor just as an acquaintance or friend but as your children. And even with our infantile view of the world, runny noses, and mixed up words you delight in being with us.
2. **Your kingdom come**. We may have lot of opinions about how the world should work and what you should do but as we ponder your holiness, wisdom, knowledge and everything, we know things will go much better if we submit to your will and your agenda for our lives.
3. **Give us each day our daily bread**. It is in our nature to want security. We want to know where our next meal is coming from and the meal after that and after that. We struggle with trusting the fact that you will take care of our needs. It's scary to not have a job, to be sick, to be lonely, to not know what is going to happen next. Help us to truly trust you for what we need today and not to worry about tomorrow.
4. **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us**. We wish that forgiveness was not a two way street because then we could keep on resenting and even retaliate against people who have done us wrong. Even when we throw tantrum about not wanting to forgive you remind us again how much we need to be forgiven. Again, help us to trust you.
5. **And lead us not into temptation**. This is a big one Father. We want to think and do what you say is good and best. But we also have free will and sometimes it's really hard to remember that your way is best. We need your protection and it's hard to say, we welcome your testing so that we can learn and grow healthy and strong; to mature into men and women who love with all of our hearts and will follow you anywhere.
6. We pray this is the name of our teacher and Lord, Jesus. AMEN.

IX. Hymn: The Lord's Prayer

X. Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy Name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done on earth
As it is in Heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom
And the power and the glory forever
Amen