

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 26TH, 2021 // PRAYER & COMMUNION

PRAYER

INVITATION TO COMMUNICATE

Prayer is a personal communication with God. It is the communication of the human soul with the One who created it. This is the primary way for a believer in Jesus to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with Him.

- **It has always been God's desire to walk with His creation.** (Genesis 3:8)

FOLLOWING HIS EXAMPLE AND WARNINGS

Jesus, in the book of Matthew, gave us an example of **how we should approach God in prayer** (The Lord's Prayer), as well as a few warnings when praying.

- While we should delight in the opportunity to communicate with the Creator God, **we should always approach Him with awe and reverence.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Therefore, you should **pray like this**: Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. 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. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13)

- There is nothing wrong with reciting the Lord's prayer. However, it was given as a model of how we are to pray. Jesus said, "pray like this."
- When we offer this generic "repeat after me" prayer to God, the personal genuine touch is removed. **Prayer should be unique to the individual.**

HOW WE ARE TO PRAY

When we approach God through prayer, we **must go to Him with the right attitude and motives.**

- "You do not have because you do not ask. **You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your own pleasures." (James 4:2b-3)

We are to pray in God's will. We learn what the Father's will is through a relationship with him. **When we spend time in the Word and in prayer, we learn His desire for us and can begin to pray in His will.**

- "Father if you are willing, take this cup away from me, nevertheless, **not my will but yours, be done.**" (Luke 22:42).

We are to pray in humility. "...and my people, who bear my name, **humble themselves**, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, **then** I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

- **We must approach God with the right posture: powerlessness!**

HOW WE ARE NOT TO PRAY

Jesus warns the disciples to not be like the hypocrites when they pray. He says, "they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners **to be seen by people.**" (Matthew 6:5-6)

- Jesus is teaching more about the heart of prayer and not location. **We go to God with a heart towards Him and not man.**

Jesus also warns against praying with "**vain repetitions**" as the heathen do." He says, "they think they will be **heard for their many words.**" (Matt. 6:7-8)

- To speak in vain simply means **to speak without meaning.** Essentially, this is a **prayer of a bunch of words with no meaning, mind, or heart.**

COMMUNION (LUKE 22:14-20)

PASSOVER MEAL

The Jewish festival of Unleavened Bread or the Passover Meal would have been repeated every year in remembrance of Israel's exodus from Egypt.

- The Passover meal would have been symbolic in the retelling of how God's wrath "passed over" the Israelites and they were freed from Egyptian servitude.

A NEW PASSOVER LAMB

While celebrating Passover with the disciples, Jesus taught a new covenant by **replacing the traditional telling of the Passover with Himself as the sacrificial Lamb.**

- Jesus switched the focus from the suffering of Israel in Egypt to **the sin-bearing suffering that He was about to endure on their behalf.**

THE LAST SUPPER

Jesus tells His disciples that He "**ferently desired** to eat this Passover with [them] before [He] suffers."

- He long desired this final meal because **He was arriving at the reason He came: to establish a new covenant.** A covenant that would be made by His own sacrifice.

FUTURE FEAST

Jesus informs the disciples that He "will not eat it again **until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**"

- Jesus is saying that He will not eat or drink a celebratory feast again until the great celebration in Heaven, **known as the marriage feast of the Lamb** (Rev. 19:9), where Christ claims His bride (the Church).

HIS BODY

Jesus said that the bread we eat of at communion represents **His body which was given for us.**

- As we eat the bread, we should remember what Jesus did for us. **We reflect on how Jesus was willingly beaten, pierced, and broken for our redemption.**

HIS BLOOD

Jesus then passed a cup saying, "**this is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.**"

- In biblical times, blood was not just a symbol for life, it was equivalent to life itself. When we take the cup, we should remember how **Jesus willingly gave His life on the Cross for us.**

WHO CAN TAKE IT?

Communion is a time of remembrance and reflection. The word communion is related to union, so **it is important to be a born-again believer, walking in fellowship with God and each other.**

- Biblically there are **only two types of people that should not take it: the unregenerate and the unrepentant.**

HOW SHOULD WE TAKE IT?

Paul **warns against taking communion in a casual and careless manner** in First Corinthians 11.

- There were some in the early church who were displaying bad conduct at their "common meal" before the Lord's supper, causing them to come to the table in an "**unworthy manner.**"

UNWORTHY MANNER

Paul warns the Corinthians to **treat the Lord's supper with reverence, and approach it with self-examination.**

- Taking communion in an unworthy manner means you are **harboring sin in your heart, refusing to be reconciled to another believer, and not addressing your own need for forgiveness.**

PRAYER AND COMMUNION

- **Are we dependent on God to meet our needs?**
- **Are we conformed to God's will, or do we try to conform God to ours?**
- **Do we pray and take communion out of obligation, or do we see it as something we get the opportunity to do?**