

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 12TH-13TH // PRAYER & COMMUNION

"TEACH US TO PRAY..." (LUKE 5:15-16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1-4) JESUS PRAYED...A LOT.

Jesus withdrew from the crowds to deserted places to pray in private.

- Jesus spent all night praying before choosing His disciples.
- When Jesus prayed, His place and time of prayer became a meeting place between Him and the Father (that meeting quite literally changed what could be seen).

Of all the amazing things done in Jesus' ministry, the disciples only ask Him to teach them one.

- Jesus healed, performed miracles, cast out demons, and taught/preached with authority, and yet we get this sense that for the disciples, the one habitual practice Jesus had that was so extraordinary was His prayer life.
- It was Jesus' connection with the Father through prayer that fueled all His life and ministry.

"LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY..."

Let's be honest—building a lifestyle and consistent practice of prayer is really hard!

- It's always been hard (or else the disciples wouldn't have asked for help/teaching on it), but it's especially hard in our day and age.
- Digital distraction and our intolerance for stillness/boredom/silence has altered our attention spans and made us restless.

WHAT IS PRAYER? AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Prayer is...

- 1) Lifting our heart and mind to God.
 - 2) A conversation and connection with God.
- It's not reading our shopping list of wants/needs to the sky with a childish entitlement.
 - It's getting honest with God about what's in our hearts and on our minds, and talking with God (not just at God) to spend time with Him.

Prayer is meant to connect us to God (our life source). So what happens when we don't pray?

- We get drained of spiritual energy, depressed, anxious, overwhelmed, and burnt out.
- We become grandiose, puffed up, and inflated with self-importance and arrogance (thinking we don't need God as much as we do). This heart posture always leads to selfishness and destructiveness.

"WHENEVER YOU PRAY, SAY..."

Jesus isn't necessarily giving us a prayer to recite (although there's nothing wrong with reading prayers or praying Scripture)—He's teaching us about prayer by offering a model.

- Within this model are certain insights about God, how we're to approach God in prayer, and what kinds of things we're to pray about.
- There's an invitation given within this model.

1. JESUS INVITES US TO APPROACH GOD AS A FATHER.

Jesus called God His Father, and He invites us to do so as well!

- For some of us, that's really hard because there's a lot of baggage connected to the word "Father."
- God as a Father means He's accessible, generous, has good plans/intentions for you, and He delights in spending time with you.

2. JESUS INVITES US TO APPROACH GOD WITH HONOR AND AN AWARENESS OF HIS HOLINESS.

"Holy" simply means to be separate from ordinary things and unlike anything else.

- To honor God's name is to show great respect for Him and to treat spending time with Him in prayer as important and valuable (not an afterthought). It's to do our best to push through the distractions and give God our attention.

3. JESUS INVITES US TO SEEK GOD'S WILL FIRST.

Jesus invites us to put away our childish entitlement and surrender first to God's perfect will in loving trust (not listing our demands and how we think He should operate and answer).

- Instead, we acknowledge before we even lift up our requests that God's will and His Kingdom are more important than our own.
- It's the invitation to release, surrender, and trust.

4. JESUS INVITES US TO ASK FOR OUR DAILY NEEDS.

If you could see God in His glory standing in front of you, and you understood three things:

- 1) He's all-powerful, almighty, and nothing is impossible for Him.
 - 2) He's your Dad who loves you.
 - 3) He's saying to you, "Go ahead, ask!"
- What would you ask for? Sometimes we don't pray honestly for our needs.

5. JESUS INVITES US TO REPENT OF OUR SINS AND EXTEND FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE HURT US.

Often in the Bible, when people enter the presence of God, there is an awareness of just how broken and sinful they are compared to God.

- True communion with God is acknowledging this and asking His forgiveness.
- Forgiveness people are forgiving people. We're invited to release others who have wronged us.

6. JESUS INVITES US TO PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL PROTECTION.

Every single day, you and I are bombarded with all sorts of temptations (from the world, our flesh, and the devil).

- We don't know what they are yet, but God does.
- We're invited to pray for protection (which helps us also be on the look out for danger).
- God always provides a way of escape from temptation, but we have the choice to take it.

WHAT KEEPS US FROM PRAYING?

- Distractions, busyness, or lack of prayer habits
- An unbiblical view of God
- Unconfessed sin
- Anger, unforgiveness, and resentment
- Bad theology (nihilism, fatalism, and deism disguised as trust in God's sovereignty)
- Negligence and disordered desires
- We don't know how (and it's hard)

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Find a good time every day to be alone, quiet, and still, and to be with the Lord.
- Put away your phone, be still, and quiet your mind and heart.
- P.R.A.Y.: Praise, Repent, Another, Yourself.
- Pray some Scripture (or pray the Lord's Prayer).
- Don't get discouraged if you don't feel anything—keep showing up!

MOVING FROM PRIVATE TO CORPORATE

Personal prayer is that private place of connection with God where we're strengthened, transformed, and connected to Him.

- What God does in us privately is meant to shape how we live and worship together corporately. The ordinance of Communion is a place where we encounter the presence of God together as the body of Christ.

THE LORD'S SUPPER (1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-33)

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER/COMMUNION?

Communion (or the *Eucharist*, "thank you" in Greek) is celebrated by Christians across all traditions as they gather for worship.

- It's seen as a remembrance and celebration of what Jesus has done in giving Himself for us.
- There are many differences in interpretation regarding what exactly happens at the communion table.

THREE COMMON VIEWS OF THE EUCHARIST

- Transubstantiation – the Catholic view that the elements must be blessed and elevated by the priest so they can change into the literal body and blood of Christ.
- Consubstantiation – the view that Christ is present within the elements, but they don't change.
- Memorial/Spiritual Presence – symbolic but very holy because the Holy Spirit is present.

WHY DO WE TAKE COMMUNION?

However we understand it, it is to be regarded as a sacred, intimate time to worship, give thanks, and reflect on what Christ has done for us.

- It's meant to be a tangible, physical reminder of Christ's sacrifice via the cup and the bread.
- It's meant to unite the Church as we eat of the same "meal" (bread and wine) for the same purpose: to proclaim our faith in Christ.

In the early Church, Christians would celebrate the Lord's Supper with great banquets they called "Love Feasts" (First-Century potlucks).

- These "love feasts" were to be times of fellowship, community, and friendship where they would also observe the Lord's Supper.
- But in Corinth, they weren't truly fellowshiping because there were so many divisions in this church (vs. 19-20). As the Corinthians ate, each of them would "[eat] his own supper" (v. 21a) without considering others they were eating with.
- On top of that, in their meals, the Corinthians showed favoritism. Some people had plenty to eat and drank so much wine they got drunk, while others went hungry (v. 21b).
- Paul is understandably frustrated with this church! So he gives helpful instructions.

1. REMEMBER THE SIGNIFICANCE (VS. 24-26)

The bread we take is somehow a picture of the broken body of Jesus, and the wine shows us the blood of Jesus.

- As often as we take the bread and wine, we're to do it in "remembrance" of Jesus' sacrifice.
- If it becomes a ritual that we take without truly practicing "remembrance," we're completely missing the point.

What are we to remember?

- Remember Jesus Himself—His love, protection, provision, and ongoing grace for us.
- Remember Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice for us (vs. 23-25).
- Remember His forgiveness through the new covenant (v. 25b).
- Remember Jesus is coming again (v. 26).

2. TAKE COMMUNION WITH LOVE FOR OTHERS (VS. 17, 22, 33-34)

Paul tells this church that when they come to the table with unreconciled division with other Believers, they're not truly taking the Lord's Supper (v. 20).

- The Church is called the Body of Christ! If we're all sharing the Body of Christ together in communion (but we're divided), we're contradicting the reality of the one Body of Christ.
- If there's any judgmentalism, unforgiveness, resentment, or bitterness, we must repent (Mt. 5:23-24).

3. EXAMINE YOURSELF (VS. 27-34)

Because of the relationally unloving, irreverent, and self-centered manner in which this church was coming to the Lord's table, God's divine discipline was taking place.

- Many of them were suffering sickness and even death because of this lack of respect and reverence towards the Lord (v. 30).
- God still disciplines His children (Hebrews 12:6)!

If we come to the table in an "unworthy manner," we will be "guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27).

- When Jesus was crucified, the guilty parties responsible for nailing Him to the cross stood by indifferent, laughing, and pursuing pleasure as He bled to death (Jn. 19:23-24).
- This is what we do when we disrespect Communion through taking it carelessly.

Before we take Communion, we must "examine" ourselves (v. 28)—we must take a private mental and spiritual inventory of our lives.

- Am I truly trusting in Christ for salvation?
- Is there any unconfessed or unrepentant sin?
- Am I at odds with any Believer, or am I holding onto resentment or unforgiveness towards anyone?
- Is there anything I should be doing that I'm refusing to do (quenching the Holy Spirit)?

FOUR INVITATIONS: #1 SLOW DOWN

- God is not far away or absent. We are distracted, restless, and have disordered desires.
- To experience God's presence, we must create space in our lives to become aware of God rather than simply rushing through a religious routine.
- Put away your phone, be still, get quiet, and know that He is God.

FOUR INVITATIONS: #2 LOOK UPWARD

- God wants you to know Him as a loving Father, not as a distant, angry, impersonal being who couldn't care less about you or your needs.
- Remember who God is, what Christ has done, and that our relationship with Him is rooted in His grace rather than our performance.
- God's presence in your life is what you need more than your next breath.

FOUR INVITATIONS: #3 LOOK INWARD

- We don't look inward to "find God within" ourselves or "discover our own truths," but to let God search what's truly within us (Psalm 139:23-24).
- Part of why we don't know how to pray what's on our minds and hearts is because we don't know (or we're afraid to look).
- Allow God to search your heart and bring you into greater honesty, healing, and intimacy with Him.

FOUR INVITATIONS: #4 LOOK OUTWARD

- God deeply cares about your relationships. He wants you to be a forgiving, loving, kind, and generous child of God who looks like Jesus.
- Our encounters with God through prayer and the table should change how we love, forgive, serve, and live with other people.
- Whom in your life does God want you to serve, love, forgive, reconcile, or encourage this week?