

Praying the Jesus Way

Matthew 6:5-8

Sermon Statement

Praying the Jesus way requires us to be real (authentic) pray-ers, totally committed to the act of praying. This act of praying is in communion with God, and in asking Him for our needs.

Sermon Text (Matthew 6:5-8)

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room (closet), close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Introduction

Prayer is a complex yet simple subject. Prayer is complex because there are so many layers of truth about it. There are numerous books on prayers and there are also conferences and workshop you can sign up to learn about prayer. Yet prayer is simple because it is a relationship with God. So simple that even children can do it. So complex that even theologians cannot understand it.

Some disturbing truths about prayers

- Not all prayers is good and pleasing to God

The teaching of the Pharisees includes a prayer with these words: “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a gentile, ... a slave, ... a woman” which is quite disturbing on many levels.

- Time spent in prayer is not necessary well spent

Prayers that include telling God what to do, teaching God about himself asking for impossible things such as asking God to reverse time.

- God answers the prayers of Christians and non-Christians
- For a Christian, praying should be as natural as breathing

Reformed and Anglican theologian J.I.Packer writes about this in his book, *Growing in Christ*:

“It is not too much to say that God made us to pray; that prayer is (not the easiest, but) the most natural activity in which we ever engage; and that prayer is the measure of us all in God’s sight.”

How to Pray the Jesus Way

- He begins by asking us to be real (authentic) pray-er (v.5)
- He describes the place for us to pray (v.6)
- He describes the wrong way to pray (v.7)
- He tells us the way (v.8-13)

Real (authentic) Pray-er (v.5)

- **Avoid praying like hypocrites**

The word hypocrite is a word taken from the Greek drama. It is an actor who covered his face with a mask as he portrayed a character which is a false character, not like who the character really is. We call it “putting on a false front.” It hides our real character.

Hypocrites in the New Testament often describe a person who makes a pretense of holiness while hiding their true nature.

In true prayer as Jesus is teaching it, we must not be hypocrites because true prayer must be REAL. Hypocrites are not real.

- Hypocrites is always marked by the flesh
- Hypocrites are self-centered
Self-promotion, courting public opinion, condemning others
- Hypocrites glorifies in a reputation of holiness rather than being holy
(Prov.12:22)
The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.
(Prov. 15:8)
The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.

Closet Praying (v.6)

- In closet prayer we get away from people
- In closet prayer we get away from the world
- In closet prayer we get away from other distractions
- In closet prayer we set aside our mental distractions
- In closet prayer we prepare our hearts for communion

There are two keys to closet praying. One is the preparing our hearts. We need to get away from people, the world, different types of distractions so that we can prepare our hearts.

Ezra is so highly regarded by the Jewish rabbis that they suggest that if God have not given the law to Moses, He would have given it to Ezra. These rabbis ranked Ezra second only to Moses. Why such a high ranking? Ezra 7:10 gives us a clue.

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel (NKJ).

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel (NIV).

The second key to closet prayer is also setting time aside to pray. It is so easy not have time to pray because our schedule is so full. We need to make an intentional effort to set aside block of time every day so that we can pray or what is called closet prayer. Martin Luther is well known to have said he was going to have a busy day ahead so he had to set aside three hours to pray!

We must intentionally set aside time for prayer. Abraham, Moses, Daniel and Jesus of Nazareth are all busy people. The biblical record shows that they are also men of prayer.

Genesis 18: 22

The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD

Exodus 3:1-3

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed

What about the Christians?

- Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God.
- John Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He also began at four in the morning.
- Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer."

What about Public Prayers?

The teaching here is not against public prayers. It is against hypocrites who make a show of being holiness by their praying. Public or corporate prayer is an important part of spiritual life of the church as is private prayer an important part of our spiritual life.

- Jesus called the Temple his “Father’s house” and a “house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13)
- Jesus prayed in the sight of others (Lk.3:21; 10:21; 11:1)
- Early church had public meetings (Acts 4:24-31; 12:5-12)
- Paul talked about his prayers (Col. 2:1; Rom. 15:30; Rom. 9:2)

The Wrong Way to Pray (v.7)

- Avoid praying like pagans
 - Use idle, mechanical or “magic” words
 - Use of secret or power word
 - mantra
 - Vain repetitions or long and verbose

True or authentic prayer is often brief. I love this story about John Hyde of India also known as “Praying Hyde.” John Nelson Hyde (November 9, 1865-February 17, 1912) was an American missionary who preached in the Punjab.

“The American evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman told about meeting John Hyde. Knowing Hyde’s power in prayer, Chapman asked the great prayer warrior to pray for him. For five minutes they knelt together and Hyde did not utter a word. Then he lifted his face to heaven and utters just two words, “O God.” He relapsed into silent meditation for some time and then began to pray. Chapman said that Hyde prayed such a prayer for him as he had never heard before, and that God answered the petitions of that prayer in such a way that permanently changed his ministry. Hyde took time to have the glory of God fill his soul so that when he made his request it was effective because it was a prayer of faith.” (Alan Cairns, *The Lord’s Prayer*, Belfast: Ambassador Publications, 2004, 67)

- Alteration of consciousness
 - Do not empty our mind like Buddhist meditations
 - Cause a trance like in 1 Kings 18:25-29 concerning the challenge of Baal priests and Elijah on Mount Carmel.

This is a power encounter. There have been no rain on Samaria (Northern Kingdom) for three and a half year and the challenge is whose God is more powerful. Yahweh or Baal. The more powerful one will of course make rain when called upon by their followers.

25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “O Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Praying the Jesus Way (v.8ff)

- Prayer is fellowship with God
- He will give us what we need
 - Prayer is asking
 - Asking must be specific
- He will restore what is lost
 - He restores our souls
 - He restores the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25)
 - He restores the peace we have lost through sin
- He acknowledges that we are His people
- He gives us a foretaste of the Day of Judgment

David equate God's refusal to answer his prayer with God's rejection on Judgment Day (Psalm 28:1)

To you I call, O LORD my Rock; Do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit.

Isaiah 3:10

Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.

Conclusion

How then shall we pray?

Praying the Jesus way requires us to be real (authentic) pray-ers, totally committed to the act of praying. This act of praying is in communion with God, and in asking Him for our needs.

Soli Deo Gloria