

Date: 160814

Title: Enjoying Jesus Through Prayer

Theme: Our loving Father has thrown open wide the door to His room and eagerly invites us to commune with Him.

Text: Matthew 6:6 - 13

Response: Communion

Benediction: Philippians 4:6 – 7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

(Philippians 4:6–7 NIV)

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

(Matthew 6:6–13 NIV)

I. Introduction

a. I am a fellow journeyer on this expedition: Jesus is our guide and our teacher

b. Group Participation

- i. Does the thought of prayer have a negative association?
- ii. Think back on the time in your life when you felt the most at peace, the most safe, and the most happy. How many of you have a time from your childhood in mind?
- iii. Reasons we shy away from prayer
 1. I haven't been a good child
 2. I only ever ask for selfish things
 3. God doesn't answer me
 4. What if God does answer me?
 5. Why should He listen to me?
 6. This is not important enough to bother Him

7. I'm still living in sin
8. I don't deserve to have Him listen
9. I don't know what to say
10. I got myself into this, I need to get myself out.

iv. I.E. FEAR

“Many Christians give in to a quiet cynicism that leaves us unknowingly paralyzed. We see the world as monolithic, frozen. To ask God for change confronts us with our doubt about whether prayer makes any difference. Is change even possible? Doesn't God control everything? If so, what's the point? Because it is uncomfortable to feel our unbelief, to come face-to-face with our cynicism, we dull our souls with the narcotic of activity.” “A Praying Life” – Paul Miller

- v. Our Father has made us to enjoy something very special with Him
 “The speaking God not only has spoken, but he also listens—he stops, he stoops, he wants to hear from you. He stands ready to hear your voice. Christian, you have the ear of God. We call it prayer.”

II. What is prayer

a. Poor analogies

- i. God the vending machine
- ii. God the Santa Clause
- iii. God the skin-flint
- iv. God the therapist
- v. God the headmaster

b. Better analogies

- i. A lovers intimate communication
- ii. A battlefield radio
- iii. A conversation between friends

c. A Beautiful mosaic

“Prayer is always borne out of our need. Sometimes we approach prayer based on a felt need, and other times based on a realization of our need for God Himself.”

- i. Yielding to love in conversation
- ii. Accepting the loving invitation in spite of fear
- iii. Following our teacher (the Word)'s example

III. How do we enjoy Jesus through prayer

a. When you pray your father hears in secret

- i. The joy of the invitation
- ii. The joy of pursuit
- iii. The joy of acceptance
- iv. The joy of unfettered access
- v. The joy of His loving heart
- vi. The joy of knowing His mind
- vii. The joy of vulnerability

b. Don't babble, your father knows

- i. The joy of surrender
 - ii. The joy of hope
 - iii. The joy of comfort
 - iv. The joy of peace
 - c. Pray this way
 - i. The joy of being shaped by our teacher
We are all students in the school of prayer where Jesus is our tutor and guide
 - ii. The joy of unity
individual and corporate
 - iii. The joy of triumph
“During a particularly hard time in my life, I remember realizing God is my fortress doesn’t mean that God is giving me a fortress.” “A Praying Life” – Paul Miller
 - iv. The joy of forgiveness
 - v. The joy of remembering
 - 1. Journal to hold the joy
 - 2. Journal to see yourself accurately

IV. Tips for the learner

- “Prayer is simple enough for any child, and the life long study of the most elderly saint. “
- a. Make a small change
“We are in the school of prayer with Jesus as our tutor and guide”
 - b. Make a plan
 - c. Start with His Word
“Prayer is, as George Herbert wrote, “God’s breath in man returning to his birth.” And so it is fitting to begin sessions of corporate prayer with some anchor in God’s own speaking to us by reading a passage or referencing some place in Scripture as a kind of “call to prayer.” We inhale the Scriptures and exhale in prayer.”
 - d. Keep a journal
 - e. Prayer with seasons pray-ers
”Plain and simple, the best way to learn to pray is pray with others who have had their prayers shaped by the Scriptures.”
 - f. Enter boldly
 - g. Special cases
 - i. “I don’t feel a desire to pray”
 - ii. “I have grown discouraged because God has not answered me”
“Prayer is not just the measure of our heart’s true desires, but also the remedy for our heart when we do not desire God. John Piper
 - h. The Lord’s Table
“Prayer mirrors the gospel. In the gospel, the Father takes us as we are because of Jesus and gives us his gift of salvation. In prayer, the Father receives us as we are because of Jesus and gives us his gift of help. We look at the inadequacy of our praying and give up, thinking something is wrong with us. God looks at the adequacy of his Son

and delights in our sloppy, meandering prayers.” “A Praying Life” – Paul Miller

i. Yielding in Love (PCD)

“...During this time God never stopped calling me. On many occasions I clearly heard His call to my spirit to come away to Him. And each time I would tell Him how earnestly I desired to follow, but how I simply did not have the time to invest right then. The more He called the more I noticed His call, and the more I heard Him, the more I saw just how far adrift I had come. Yet, for all of my desire I did nothing. Then something occurred to me. Why hadn't God interjected Himself in a way that would surely drive me to my knees begging forgiveness and rescue of Him? I had walked with the Lord long enough to know that He knew how to get my attention in a hurry. Many times in my previous wanderings I was only restored after tasting the bitterness of my foolishness. I knew that God had both the power and the right to impose Himself in this way, so when He did not I noticed.

I began to ask Him, “Why are you not allowing the pain to come? That would probably work you know.” Then, as clearly as I could understand anything I heard His voice simply answer, “Because I love you, I want you to love me because of how much I love you.”

This was not the response I was expecting. With each day that went by without my returning to follow the Lord I could see His love still fully bent towards me -- and my rejection of it. With each day I continued to despise myself more and more -- yet I did nothing.

Rightly Paul states that the kindness of the Lord leads to repentance (Rom 2:4). One day while preparing to leave my house to head to school I asked my dad for a few dollars for the bus. After giving me the money he asked, “Do you need more money? Because I have money for you”. It was the way he said “because I have money for you.” It was as if God was speaking directly to me through my earthly father saying: you really don't realize how much I love you. I am so rich, and I want to give you so much, all you need to do is ask me. His words cut to my core in that moment.

Later that week I received a DVD from a friend I had met a few weeks earlier. After we shared a conversation about worship he promised to send me a CD about the topic. In the package he sent me was a DVD of Jim Cymbala giving a message entitled “My Father's House Shall be a House of Prayer”. I put the disc in and watched it the night I received it. As I watched the Lord began to speak to my heart again. Not judging or condemning, but inviting, and lovingly calling me to Him. His call was very simple: Worship and love me first. That is when I turned.