

Corporate Prayer – Luke 11:1-13

“O ‘Twas a Joyful Sound” – The Way We Worship #7

Introduction – As we continue to study *the way we worship*, we come to the topic of prayer. Prayer is a gift to the body of Christ and so it is weaved throughout the service. We pray as we approach God, our songs are prayers, we are led by the elders in prayer, we ask God’s blessing over every aspect of the service, the confession of sin, the preaching of the Word, the Table of the Lord. We teach of God’s exhaustive control over everything, and we hear of God’s goodness and kindness towards every man and woman in Christ. Yet still we find prayer to be a heavy obligation rather than a heavenly opportunity. John Calvin said, “...after we have learned by faith to know that whatever is necessary for us or defective in us is supplied in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ...that we may thence draw as from an inexhaustible fountain, it remains for us to seek and in prayer implore of him what we have learned to be in him.” Prayer is an enormous topic and I appreciate the weekly exhortation to prayer from the elders. This morning, we will focus on the required persistence of corporate prayer in this worship service, but you should find many applications for your own devotional life.

They Saw Jesus Pray (v1) – Jesus was in *a certain place* and His disciples were with Him as He prayed. Luke records that Jesus prayed many times before this encounter (3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 28-29). Jesus, the Son of God, the One with the ability to speak to diseases or demons, to storms or to the sick, and have them all obey Him, would appear to be a Man who did not need to pray. But He was known as one who often withdrew and prayed. It was communion and communication with His Father.

They Asked Jesus to Teach Them to Pray (vv2-4) – Indications are that Jesus had already taught them ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ (Matt 6:9-13). Seeing Jesus praying, and knowing how the disciples of John prayed (Luke 5:33), they seek more instruction. But Christ leads them again to His short prayer He taught them. This is, apparently, central to learning how to pray – and to renew one’s prayers. There are several things noteworthy about this prayer:

Jesus intends for us to learn to pray through imitation.

The prayer He teaches us is brief, not wordy. And while it is profound, it is simple.

Jesus teaches us to address His Father by the same name He does (10:21-22).

The prayer is covenantal; we address “*our*” Father, and request that He give “*us*.”

The prayer is kingdom-oriented and directed worldwide.

It seems to presuppose an optimistic view of the salvation of the world.

The prayer is also personal and comprehensive of our needs.

It presupposes an open, honesty before God (“*forgive, as we forgive...*”).

A Parable on Persistence (vv5-8) – But I have prayed this prayer, you say (as did the disciples). And so, Jesus teaches us another important part of prayer. It is to be done persistently, constantly, with an eye to the heart of the One you are petitioning. He is your friend. He is your heavenly Father. But it is not to be done in “*vain repetition*,” as the heathen pray (Matt 6:7). The Lord’s prayer can be prayed over and over faithfully and can be used to instruct us to pray “*in this manner*” over and over again. It instructs us on how and what to pray about, and to persist in that prayer when it is not immediately answered.

A Lesson on Persistence and Assurance (vv9-13) – We learn that we are not to despair when the answer doesn’t come instantly. We learn what it means to persist, to ask and keep asking, to seek and keep seeking, etc. We learn to trust what we have known of God our Father, that He is more generous than any earthly father ever could be (Rom 8:31). Driving us to deeper dependence upon God, we are to learn that prayer requires that we ‘*strive*’ (Rom 15:30), that we ‘*labor fervently*’ (Col 4:12), and that we ‘*wrestle*’ (Eph 6:12, 18). So, when we struggle, when we get off track, and when we find that we have stopped praying, the Lord directs us to begin again – and to do so with the Lord’s Prayer. It is communion and communication with our Father. That communion with the Father is the Holy Spirit, and all the fruit thereof (v13, compare with Matt 7:11).

God's Untimeliness - Suppose you have some trouble (work with me here), and it is a just and right thing for that trouble to be solved. And you obediently take it to the Lord as He has told you, and you do so daily. Each day it seems the perfect day for the Lord to deliver you, to bring the solution, but it does not come. You obeyed *and* you were wrong. Jesus required your persistence in a prayer for deliverance that He never intended to answer that day. He causes you to be obediently mistaken. This world is a fallen place and the Father communes with you in that fallenness while never losing His sovereign control. The quintessential type of this is Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Our Finiteness - God wants us to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Our lives are but a mist, a wispy bit of fog on the road that in a moment is gone (James 4:14). At the same time, every detail of our lives is in the Father's hands and is revealing His glorious story (Luke 12:7), and every trouble is working a greater eternal glory for us (2 Cor 4:16-18).

The Cliffhanger Answers God Loves – God waits until Abraham has the knife raised over his son and “*in the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided*” (Gen 22:14). God waits for Joseph to be sold into slavery, imprisoned, and forgotten, before the promise of his dreams come true, “*...you meant evil for me; but God meant it for good...*” (Gen 50:20). God waits until all the people are trapped at the shore of the Red Sea before telling Moses to hold out his rod, “*Stand still and see the salvation of our God*” (Ex 14:13). God waits until the Ammonites and the Moabites conspired together to come up against Jehoshaphat, “*...stand still and see the salvation of the Lord who is with you*” (2 Chron 20:17). God waits until the full force of Sennacherib's army is about to storm the gates of Jerusalem, Hezekiah prays, and only then God answered (2 Kings 20:35).

“For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” (Matt 6:8) – At first glance, this appears to throw cold water on any motivation to pray. But it makes perfect sense to Christ as he instructs us. Prayer is God's appointed means, not to get information from us, but to bring blessing to us, honor and glory to Himself, and to cause us to constantly acknowledge our complete dependence upon Him for everything. Jesus is our example. He knew and He knew the Father knew, and yet He prayed. How much more should we? God has ordained the ends and the means to His ends. Prayer is one of God's appointed means to administer His generosity to His children. Lives full of prayer, and growing more and more in prayer, reveal that we believe in God's exhaustive sovereignty and inexhaustible goodness. In it, we learn to commune and communicate with our heavenly Father. “*For whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.*” (Rom 10:13).

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