

Series Title: A Closer Look: The Purpose and Power of Prayer

Sermon Title: Week 1: The principle of seeking first

Date: 01-05-20

- **Happy New Year, 2020! Over past several years, few big themes...**
 - **Love God, Love People**
 - **God never asks us to pretend, is present, truth is relevant, in midst of life as it really is**
 - **Thinking of what we believe, how we carry out our faith, importance of what SCRIPTURE REALLY SAYS- not just tradition, book, teacher... but REALLY, OURSELVES, engaging with gift of SCRIPTURE, God's word.**
- **WITH THIS... will do teaching on How the bible came to be... WHY we believe, specifically, the 27 books of NT are inspired by God, and others aren't...**
- **ACTS- History of birth of Christianity, why this matters to us today**
- **TWO PRACTICAL THINGS- Importance of Sunday, importance of your own Bible.**

✠ A closer look...

- **STARTING, JANUARY, by taking a CLOSER LOOK at one of most essential practices, callings we have as disciples of Jesus... PRAYER.**

Ephesians 4:22-24 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **Consistent theme of NT – MADE NEW.. Newness about who we are that is TRUE, and also a CHOICE to live as people who have been MADE NEW- As paul says in Romans 6, 'Brought from death to life'.**
- **THIS NEW WAY of thinking will impact our decisions, our priorities, perspective, how we serve, how we relate to people... and it will impact HOW WE PRAY.**
- **IMPORTANT, because the primary emphasis of prayer in church culture, and in our individual lives, is PRAYING FOR CIRCUMSTANTIAL NEEDS. For needs of people we know, love, care about. We are sincere- things we pray for/about are very real/important, and not consciously selfish... but our old default is to pray with OURSELVES as our primary reference point. For our prayer life to revolve around life as we see it.**
- **It is perfectly normal for Christians to pray this way. But is it still NATURAL? If we have a NEW NATURE.. if God is teaching us to daily PUT on our new self, to BE MADE NEW in how we think, and if our NEW SELF- who we truly are- is created BY GOD, to be LIKE GOD, righteous and holy... If this is TRUE, then is there a new way that God will lead us to pray?**
- **Scripture teaches us that THERE IS. In these five messages we will learn from prayer as we actually see it in the NT. STARTING with..**

✠ The principle of seeking first

Matthew 6:31-34 *So do not worry, saying (praying), 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

- **This is bedrock principle NT theology is based upon, and Christian life is built on. SO MANY THINGS that occupy the first places of our minds and hearts. May be good things! Eat/drink/wear.. basic needs! Things God calls us to do, things we need as healthy people.**
- **HUGE POINT... GOD KNOWS THAT WE NEED THESE THINGS. We CAN'T MISS THIS. GOD KNOWS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. HE KNOWS OUR NEEDS, even more than we do!**

- *It's no accident that this passage follows on the heels of what we call "The Lord's Prayer"... in the context of Matthew chapter six, it is completely honest to hear Jesus saying "Why are you worrying TO GOD about the circumstantial needs of your life? Don't you know that he already knows all of this? Rather, SEEK HIM.*
- *The truth is that our hope of having the spiritual strength, the emotional health, the intellectual honesty, the balance, the obedience to LIVE IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, is to FIRST SEEK/KNOW HIM.*
- *KEY! Our hope in life is not what we ask God to do for us. HOPE/SOURCE is GOD HIMSELF. (Crossroads series message!)*
- *As we SEEK HIM FIRST, as increasingly Christ is our hearts desire and our first place passion, the SPIRIT will work to CHANGE the focus of our prayer FROM US AND OUR CIRCUMSTANCE TO GOD AND HIS KINGDOM.*
- *FOR GOD TO BE OUR REFERENCE POINT.*

✠ God is the reference point

- *This is what we see in the Jesus' prayer, just verses before. As we read, TWO things to see. FIRST, heart that places God at the center. SECOND, points to what Jesus would accomplish, and fully answer, THROUGH cross & resurrection*

Matthew 6:9-13 *"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.'

- *What do we see here? WORSHIP. Orientation of our hearts to who God is. HIS KINGDOM. That HIS WILL, HIS WORK would come to pass HERE, Now... confession that this starts with US. IN ME, may your kingdom come.*
- *DAILY BREAD... SIMPLE TRUST for life's basic provisions, which He already knows.*
- *Prayer for forgiveness, the ability to forgive others, and deliverance from temptation and the enemy. ALL OF THESE Christ accomplished through DBR.*
- *SHIFT GEARS... Jesus is teaching to place GOD at the center of our prayer, not our circumstances... BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. VERY REAL NEEDS? Are we to pray for them? YES.*
- *Scripture DOES invite us to bring everything before God in prayer...*

Philippians 4:4-7 *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 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.*

- *"But in everything"... Yes, scripture invites us to bring everything about our lives to God in prayer. But we are taught to do so with the faith perspective that GOD IS SOVERIEGN. That HE KNOWS BEST, that he already knows our needs and cares about them, and he has already promised to provide us with everything we need for Life and Godliness- a life that is spiritually and emotionally healthy and full...,*
- *In fact, the next thing Paul says in Philippians 4 is that CONTENTMENT... PEACE, comes not from nature of circumstance, but from knowing the presence of God himself. Likewise, the promise of peace that guards our heart is not a result of how god answers our prayers, but is a result of the faith to trust God with our lives in the first place. The focus is on HIM.*

- **SO... Principles this morning...**
- **1: SEEK FIRST!**
- **2: GOD IS REFERENCE POINT**
- **3: See how NT teaches us about**

† **Prayer from the heart of God**

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.*

- **Of course, key phrase- ‘according to his will’ Tremendously important idea!**
 - **WE CAN COME BEFORE GOD IN CONFIDENCE**
 - **HE HEARS US. Prayer not just religious therapy!**
 - **If we are taught to ask according to HIS WILL, then this means that God intends to REVEAL HIS WILL. This means the spirit will lead us in how we should pray, for what we should pray.**
- **HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN? CHIEF WAY- through how God led the writers of the NT to pray.**

Principle: When we see Biblical writers- inspired by the Holy Spirit- pray to God for specific things, we can have confidence that these prayers are in God’s heart to answer.

† **Prayer that God wants to answer**

- **Over next four weeks, we will see prayer that is in the heart of God to answer, by looking at prayer of Paul.**
- **RIGHT NOW, from Jesus. A call to pray, and the Jesus praying himself.**

Luke 10:2 *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

- **Prayer for God to raise up workers, servants, to join with him in the work of His Kingdom. Bringing the truth, hope of Gospel to this world.**
- **DO WE SEE- One of the greatest refrains of churches is need more servants. There are libraries of books and strategies on how to recruit, motivate, even guilt people into serving in ministry. JESUS’ ANSWER?...**

- **NEXT... In what may be most significant prayer we have recorded from Jesus.... UNITY.**

John 17:20-23 *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that **they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.** May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

† **God’s prayer, our response**

- **When we pray God’s Words, under leadership of the Holy Spirit, we know that it is in God’s heart to answer these prayers.**
- **And the FIRST PLACE God will begin to answer them is IN US.**
- **Today we’ve asked the question, “LORD, HOW would you have us pray?... the second question is, LORD, HOW WOULD YOU HAVE ME RESPOND.**

- ***Prayer: Lord, raise up workers!***
- ***Response: How are you calling ME to be a worker, a servant?***
- ***Prayer: Lord, bring unity into the church***
- ***Response: How is God calling me to be an agent of unity. Of reconciliation. Where are there relationships that I need to heal, to forgive, to seek forgiveness.***
- ***HOW DOES IT START WITH ME!***