

July 7, 2019

Sermon: PRAYER – it's what's for Dinner

The title for today's sermon comes from my thoughts about what place does prayer take in our daily lives. Is it a side dish? Is prayer a petite dessert? Is it something off the ala carte menu – an after thought or is it the meat and substance of our Christian lives. Is it that which sustains us till the next meal? These are the questions I would like us each to consider for the next 17 & ½ minutes.

Text – I Thessalonians 5: 12 – 24

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the LORD and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; **pray continually**, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it

Pray continually – the King James says **Pray without ceasing**.

Read the Devotional

There has been a handful of times that I have been published over the years. Each time, I make it a point to provide a copy to my boss or to Human Resources. I sent a copy of this devotional to Atlanta to forewarn my immediate supervisor. She called me on Tuesday to discuss work-related topics. At the end of the phone call, she mentioned how much the writing had impacted her. She asked where she could get future copies and said that this had challenged her to re-investigate her faith. She was fired the following day. It is doubtful I will ever see or hear

from her again. None of us know the impact or power of a simple interaction, a deed borne out of pure compassion, a kind word spoken at the exact right time.

Philippians 4: 6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

II Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

John chapter 17 is often referred to as Christ's high priestly intercessory prayer – This prayer of Jesus is as intimate a look into the heart of Christ as we find in all of Scripture. Keep in mind, this prayer took place only hours before Judas betrayed Him. His passion is for his disciples and interestingly – he mentions us (you & me) as well. See if you can hear Jesus speaking to His Heavenly Father about us – here today. Read John 17.

The prayer team has a clock for new members of our group. It helps guide the prayer warrior into the method of structured prayer – let's face it, we're Methodists. So this clock is broken up into 12 sections. Think of a grapefruit with all its slices. Structured prayer begins with Praise / then Forgiveness / Confession / Petition / Intercession / Bible Reading / Meditation / Thanksgiving / Pray the Word / Singing / Listening and ends again with Praise. If you spend 5 minutes in each section, you will have reached an hour in prayer. There are various forms of the Prayer Clock. It is used as a starting point for someone just beginning. But the Spirit may lead you to devote your hour to praise – as has happened numerous times with Linda. I would imagine Christine often spends an entire hour singing. It's all good. It all gives Glory and Honor to our Heavenly Father. You could spend 20 minutes in Praise / 20 minutes in Petition & 20 minutes in

Meditation. {Prayer – It’s What for Dinnerplease see Linda after the service – we need prayer Warriors for the new season - July / August / September.}

When John Hendrix told me about his son-in-law, Brian, the Spirit led me to James 5:16 “The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (availeth – benefit, help , profit, gain, advantage). I responded in prayer: “I am not as righteous as I ought to be. And I’m spotty, not as fervent as I should be.” Then the Spirit bounced me over to Philippians 3:9 “. . . not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” I then submitted to the Holy Spirit and prayed with confidence claiming healing in Jesus’ name.

Here it gets tricky. So we can pray whatever we want, and we’ll get it, right? Hey Jesus Himself told us in John 14:13 & 14: “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father, You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” Notice the phrase “in my name?” Jesus repeats it twice in that passage. Not “in your name” Not “whatever you desire,” and leaves it at that. When we walk with Him, have Fellowship with Him, Honor Him in our daily lives, we will not ask outside the will of God. {Well, sometimes we might.} There may be times when we might not be sure about if it is the will of God. And in those times, we pray that “Your will be done, LORD.”

The following comparison is simply dealing with a Father / Son relationship.

If my son went to a car dealership, found the car of his dreams and told the salesman – “Yeah, my Dad’s gonna take care of this.” I would have to sign-off on the purchase. I would have to be aligned with my son’s desires. I would have to approve of the transaction. {Uh, Tim . . . not happening – just so you know.} In this case, my son knows me well enough to not even ask that which I’m not inclined to agree with or sign-off on. And because I’m simply an earthly father, I don’t have the means to buy that Ferrari. Much in the same way, if we are close enough to God, we will stay “in-bounds” with our requests.

I think of Luke 12:27 – 31 “Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and

tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

There’s a challenge here for me – and likely for most of us here. That challenge is to grow closer and closer to Jesus, so that when we pray, we are allowing the Spirit to intercede for us. So that we will only ask of the Father, those things that He wants to see accomplished in our lives and in the lives of those around us. James 4:3 says “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” I John 5:14 says “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” Even Jesus Himself said in Luke 22:42 “Not my will, but Thine be done.”

Our Benediction is found in Jude verses 20 – 25 “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear – hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore !
Amen.”