

Alderwood Community Church
May 16, 2010

Talking With God

Luke 18:1-8, Matthew 7:9-11

Intro: A simple mention of the word “Prayer” conjures up many different things in our minds: reverence, intimacy, comfort, guilt, formality, boredom or relief.

1. What is prayer?

Prayer is not a religious activity. Prayer is not a spiritual task. Prayer is not strictly a spiritual discipline. When we dive into the Hebrew words of the OT or the Greek words of the NT or our English words such as entreat, supplication and intercession, we come up with the very same essential definition. Here it is. Are you ready? Prayer, simply put is *talking with God!*

2. Two objectives for this sermon series:

A. De - mystify “talking with God”.

- (1) Get rid of your misconceptions.
- (2) Drop off your baggage.
- (3) Help you get a better grasp, a better understanding of:
 - (a) God
 - (b) Yourself
 - (c) Talking to God

B. Make a qualitative difference in your relationship with God.

- (1) Greater trust.
- (2) Greater intimacy.
- (3) Greater joy.

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are those who take refuge in Him.” Psalm 34:8

3. What keeps us from talking with God?

A. We are too busy.

Vance Havner wrote, *“Beware of the barrenness of a busy life.”*

“But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” 2 Cor. 11:3

B. We are too self-sufficient.

We haven't come to the end of our own resources. We tend to rely on our self, our organization, education, skill or achievements. In essence, Pride.

Randy Alcorn said, *"Prayer is trusting God that He can accomplish more when I'm on my knees than I can accomplish on my feet."*

C. We don't feel worthy.

Illus: Pastor Ron Dunn, in his book *"Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something"* tells of an occasion when he was a very busy pastor. One particular day unusually hectic. It had been consumed by busywork. I hadn't taken time to pray or read my bible; I hadn't done anything "spiritual." I had written some necessary letters, returned a number of phone calls, planned meetings and worked on the church calendar- but nothing spiritual.

At midnight I came to my prayer time feeling unworthy. The first words out of my mouth were, "Lord, I know I have no right to ask You for anything tonight," and I proceeded to apologize for being too busy to pray, read the Bible, or witness – too busy to do anything spiritual. I was praying like a whimp.

Suddenly it seemed as if the Lord said, "Suppose you had done a lot of 'spiritual things' today – suppose you had prayed for four hours, read the bible (on your knees) for four hours, and led ten people to Christ. Would you feel more confident praying than you do now?"

"Yes, I would!"

Then you are praying in your own name! You think I hear you because of your holiness. You think I am more inclined to listen to you if you had done a lot of good works. You are approaching me in your own unworthy name. If you had prayed for eight hours and read your bible on your knees for eight hours, and had led fifty people to Christ, you would have no more right to pray than you do now!

I looked down at the floor of the throne room and saw that it was sprinkled, not with the sweat of my good works, but with the blood of His sacrifice.

D. We don't really understand God's nature

Some people view God as a stern Father, others think God is too busy running the universe to be interested in listening to their prayers. Some think God isn't interested in the small issues that they are facing, after all God has bigger things to think about.

E. We don't really understand the nature of prayer

Two Extremes:

- (1) God is Sovereign- and is going to do what he wants anyway, so why pray, he has it all planned out anyway.

- (2) God is a genie in a bottle- there is a subtle thinking that God is somehow obligated to answer our prayers like wishes granted from a genie. We reduce God down to a cheap vending machine and our prayers are the coins we put in the slot.

Balance: Ask God and trust Him with the answer.

Vance Havner used to say, *“I don’t understand all about electricity, but I’m not going to sit around in the dark until I do.” We don’t have to understand everything about prayer in order to pray.*

What are your questions regarding prayer? What troubles your about prayer? Let me know and I will address them for you. Use the communication card or email me at bradmc@amcc.org

4. Getting a glimpse into God’s heart:

A. The Story of the desperate widow and the unjust judge. Luke 18:1-8

Why did Jesus tell this story according to vrs. 1? Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they ought to pray and not give up.

Pray so you will not give up. When you feel like giving up, Pray!

Vrs. 8- Jesus ends this story with a question, When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? This ties this parable to the preceding verses in Luke 17. There we learn that when Jesus returns for the second time to establish his kingdom, there will be a swift, and immediate judgment on those who are unbelievers. Here in vrs. 8, He is encouraging the saints who are alive at that time to remain faithful and trust God that he will vindicate them during this time of persecution and suffering at the hands of evil men.

The Desperate Widow

Now it is never easy being a widow. Today, in the United States widowhood is not usually as desperate as it was in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. In our culture, widows are at least allowed to work, attend school and own property. They can hold positions of influence and even be wealthy.

In Jesus’ day it was quite different. A widow generally had no education, no job, no money, no property, no status. If she had a son who would care for her, she could survive. If not, she might become a beggar- the first century equivalent of a street person or a bag lady. She would be a social outcast.

In Jesus’ story, this widow had an adversary. Some unnamed villain was harassing her. Perhaps the person was intimidating her physically; perhaps the person was withholding or stealing funds that should have been used for her support. In any case, the adversary was winning and she was losing. The widow had no good way to protect herself, no relatives to see her plight and offer help, no governmental organization to come to her aid. She only had one shot at warding off this villain: she could go before the local judge and plead her case, throwing herself at his mercy. And that is exactly what she decided to do.

Enter the second character: The Unjust Judge: Jesus described him in two crisp statements: he did not fear God, and he did not care about other human beings. Without fear of God this judge had no sense of accountability that he would have to stand at some future day of reckoning and give account of his decisions. Therefore, he made his own justice, decreeing whatever suited his fancy.

Without care for other human beings, this judge did not care how his decisions affected the people who looked for justice in his courtroom. Since people didn't matter to him, he felt free to use and abuse them.

Justice through pestering

Hurt and shocked by the judge's behavior. Vrs. 4 "For some time he refused" to take care of her need. The widow gathered her wits and examined her situation one more time. With incredible determination she said to herself, "I don't have any other options. This judge is my only hope. Somehow I must get him to protect me." But how could she do this. No higher court would hear her case. Penniless, she couldn't even bribe the judge. "I know what I will do." She said to herself. "I'll pester him. Every time that judge turns around, I'm going to be right in his face. I'll follow him home, I'll follow him to work, I'll follow him to the chariot races. I'll stick to him like glue until he offers me protection."

So that is what she did-and it worked! She pestered the judge until one day, he shouted, "I can't take it any more!, Yes, you will have your day in court. The happy ending to this story is that the crooked, uncaring judge finally gave the widow protection from her adversary. Yet he did not do this from the goodness of his heart, but only because of her extraordinary determination to pester him.

A Completely Wrong Interpretation

Vrs. 1- Jesus told this story to show his disciples "that they should always pray and not give up." Some people have misinterpreted this passage. They tell us that God is like the judge. And we are like the widow. When life gets tough, and we are desperate enough we can always do what the widow did: we can pester him. Bang on the doors of heaven. Spend hours on our knees. Ask our friends to pester God too. Sooner or later, we may wear him down and wrench a blessing from his tightly closed fist. Eventually he may shout, "I can't take it any more- yes I will meet your need!"

Does that interpretation sound right to you? I hope it doesn't

Some believers misunderstand the nature of God. They believe that he is busy running the universe, and doesn't have time for their needs. Or they believe that God is a reluctant giver and they must pester God into giving a blessing.

What do we learn about God in this story?

1. Jesus is urging his disciples to always pray and depend on their heavenly Father for strength to keep the faith and remain faithful to God.

2. Like the widow we too find ourselves in desperate situations. It is precisely at these times, Jesus tells us to lean on our Father in heaven.

3. Unlike the judge- God does care, and as our Father he will act quickly on behalf of his children. God is not reluctant like the judge and God does not need to be pestered in order to come to our aid. God is ready, willing and able to hear and answer our prayers. We don't have to wrench a blessing out of God's hand.

I believe here it is not the persistence of the widow which is in focus, but rather the character of God which inspires and rewards persistence. God loves giving blessings to His children. It is His nature; it is who he is- a giving God, a blessing God, an encouraging God, an empowering God, a loving God.

B. Jesus' Teaching

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!" Matt. 7:9-11

Do you see the picture that Jesus is painting of our heavenly Father?

What do we learn about God in this passage?

It is God's nature: to give
 to give good gifts
 to give good gifts to his children who ask.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are those who take refuge in him." Psalm 34:8

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their cry." Psalm 34:15

5. Talk to God!

- A. This week- Commit to spend 5 minutes a day talking with God. Ask him for something!
- B. This morning- Extended prayer time