A House of Prayer

# Scriptures: Matt. 21:12-22

# Key Thought: God expects his gathered people to be people of prayer Introduction

This summer we have been studying together the primary purposes of the church. Already we have reviewed five of them; worship, evangelism, remembering, discipleship, and serving others.

Our key words for today are in verse 13, "My house will be called a house of prayer" Matt 21:13 NIV

Andrew Murray (1828-1917), a Dutch Reformed clergyman from South Africa authored a classic book on prayer titled “*With Christ in the School of Prayer*.” From that book, I bring you a short quote that points out a key Scriptural fact. "Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach, only how to pray!” (School of Prayer. p. 16)

The record of this request of the disciples is in the introduction to the Lord’s prayer in Lk 11:1.

“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” ESV

Even from this small starting point, we can see that prayer, both personal and corporate is to be one of the primary occupations and purposes of the people of God.

I would like us to explore 3 reasons why prayer has to be one of the very top priorities in the church.

# Prayer is the natural expression of our parent-child relationship with God.

ill. children asking parents for money - wouldn't think of asking neighbor or teacher, etc. That's nonsensical. But it's natural to ask parents or grandma. There is a love relationship there.

And their asking is rewarded - they frequently receive.

Andrew Murray - School of Prayer p. 37. " The power of the promise ‘Ask and it shall be given you,' lies in the loving relationship between us as children and the Father in heaven; when we live and walk in that relationship, the prayer of faith and its answer will be the natural result."

Ro 8:15-17 “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ESV

I’m told by the scholars that the term “Abba” is the familiar term in for addressing the father in the family. It represents that familiar sense that a child communicates in English by saying “Daddy.”

Andrew Murray p. 35 "Pray is appointed to obtain the answer. It is in prayer and its answer that the interchange of love between the Father and his child takes place."

So our prayer habits and attitudes reflect the quality of our relationship with God. They reflect our consciousness of being a son or daughter of God. If we are walking close to him, prayer is natural and answers seem to come to us too.

And if we claim to be children of God, if we call ourselves part of God’s family, one sure way we can demonstrate that that relationship is to be a people of prayer. If the followers of Islam can pray 5 times a day seeking to earn points with a distant God, how much more should we Christians who do not need to earn points but rather can enjoy a loving relationship pray even more to our loving Father in heaven.

# The Practice of Prayer is a key factor in our spiritual growth.

## Prayer is both an incubator and a proving ground for faith.

When I think of the word incubator I think of keeping eggs warm until they hatch. I don’t remember us doing that on the farm where I grew up, but I do remember us having to have a heat lamp for the little chicks that came to us to live in our small chicken coop soon after they had hatched. Without that warmth those chicks would not have survived well.

Without the practice of prayer, our faith does not survive well either. According to Scripture, faith comes first of all through hearing the Word of God. But we practice our faith and grow it through prayer.

## One kind of prayers that grow us are prayers for daily guidance and moral discernment.

James 1:5 if any lacks wisdom he should ask God - pray for it. God promises to give it. This happens in many ways. Sometimes it is as we understand ourselves better. (LI-PR-TH) Norman Paul Goldman - Prayer is more than petition or praise, it is also a method of self-examination. The Hebrew word for prayer is a reflexive form of the verb meaning “to examine or judge oneself."

## Prayer is foundational spiritual growth because it is a prerequisite to understanding the Word of God.

1 Co 2:12-14 “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” ESV

# Prayer is the essential means of working for God and with God.

Let’s talk about working for God first. -- As Americans and especially as people of the Northeast, our concept of working for God is to get real busy doing something. Well, I suppose it is good that we are willing to work. But how easy it is to forget that prayer is the essential foundation of the work of God.

D. L. Moody great evangelism of the century in which our church was founded – “Every work of God can be traced to some kneeling form.” Prayer Powerpoints p. 56

“When we work, we work. When we pray, God works.” J Hudson Taylor – the great missionary to China Prayer Powerpoints p. 56

## In prayer we discern God's direction for his work

What launched the great missionary journeys of Paul? - a prayer meeting.

How did Paul learn he was to go to Greece instead of up into what is today northern Turkey where he wanted to go? – It was through his life of prayer.

Prayer is a spiritual weapon against the enemy of our souls
In our Lord's prayer we say “deliver us from evil.” In some versions of the Lords’ prayer it is “deliver us from the evil one.”

Jesus' high priestly prayer - Jn 17:15 “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.” ESV

John Bunyan "Prayer is a shield for the soul, a sacrifice to God, a scourge for Satan." (LI-PR)

## Prayer unleashes the power of God

When did things happen in Acts?

Pentecost – 120 gathered in the upper room praying

In Acts chapter 4, it was as all were praying that the place was shaken -

The release of Peter from prison came about as people were praying

Cornelius saw the angel in his home and called Peter while praying (Acts 10:30).

How does this work today? A few years ago, friends that we know were in a Southern Africa nation ministering with team sharing the Jesus Film. I saved this newsletter. - (Marc and Di newsletter LI-PR-AN)

## Prayer is essential to winning the lost

Paul's prayers

Eph 6:19,20 prayer to preach the gospel -- Eph 6:19-20 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. NIV

Col 4:3,4 another similar prayer “ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should” NIV

II Thess 3:1-2 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. NIV

I tis not co-incidental that the harvest of Pentecost followed a prayer meeting. Peter preached and 3000 were saved. After the prayer meeting of chap 4 in Acts God worked mightily too. (summary of happenings chap 5:12-16)

S. D. Gordon "The real victory in all service is won in secret beforehand by prayer. Service is gathering up the results.”

From Wesley Duewel, another great missionary leader and writer – “Since Jesus ever lives to intercede anytime you pray—day or night—Jesus is already interceding. Every time you go to prayer you can be Jesus’ prayer partner.” Prayer Powerpoints p. 189

From a contemporary church leader and teacher – Jack Hayford “When I learn what intercession is, and how to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prodding to do it, I am moving into partnership with the Father in the highest sense.” Prayer Powerpoints p. 189

# Conclusion

ill. A Texas youth evangelist was preaching a youth revival in Hereford Texas. It was a city wide campaign with various churches cooperating. The first two nights there were no results.

Then the evangelist met two nuns who really knew Jesus and knew how to pray.
They told him they had been in prayer for 8 hours and then they shocked him by telling him the text he was using that evening. The three of them prayed together and they parted.

That night 100 people responded and the next night 500 young people were saved.

The evangelist was soon headed home on cloud nine to report the marvelous results of his evangelistic ministry. But the Holy Spirit spoke to him and admonished him bluntly, “You had nothing to do with those results. Somebody prayed the price.”

(from Larry Lea’s book "Could You not Tarry with Me One Hour" p. 43,44)

We have that plaque on our wall – Prayer Changes Things. Do we pray like we believe it?

What could God do in our lives and our church if we would partner with him in prayer as he wants us to do?