

# **St Martins C3 – May 19, 2024**

## ***How to Pray – Prayer for Life***

### **Sermon Notes:**

One key way to grow closer to Jesus is by devoting ourselves to prayer. This will improve our relationship with God and even our lives.

In this series, we will discover how we can make space for prayer and what prayer looks like during that time.

### **Read Matthew 6:5-8**

Jesus begins by saying “When you pray.” When not if. He is keen that prayer becomes a regular priority for His people.

### **Wrong Attitudes**

#### **Showoffs**

We don't stand on street corners and pray for others to hear us. However, there can be a tendency in public meetings to pray in a way where our key focus is how we sound to each other, rather than connecting with God. We may even have times when we go through the religious duty of praying to win God's favour.

#### **Babblers**

Jesus told His followers not to heap up empty phrases, trying to convince God to answer their prayers. This way of praying is about getting what we want – our prayers answered or affirmation from others.

The right attitude is about connecting with Jesus. Accessing His presence by His grace. Prayer is not concerned with the results it is concerned with the relationship.

### **The Practice**

Jesus suggests a practice that we should apply even if it may seem inconvenient and impractical (see verse 6).

Go away by yourself – Shut the door behind you – Pray to your Father in private

To do this requires discipline, which is not a bad word. It is about giving up something we want for something we need.

We live in a loud world and what we need the most is silence. Silence to focus our attention on hearing from the one we most need to hear from.

The enemy of discipline is distraction. Things are seeking your focus, your energy and your time. They will rob you of the desire to spend time with God.

So here's the challenge: find some space with no distractions and pray. Start with 5 minutes of uninterrupted focussed time with God and spend it in prayerful silence, seeking to hear from Him. If you do this He will reward you.

### **Read Luke 11:11-13**

If you want to grow, then the pathway to it is time with God. Praying the right way. Then we will receive the greatest gift, the gift of His Holy Spirit.

## **Connect Group Material:**

### Key Point

*If you pray with the right attitude then God will reward you with growth and with His presence.*

### Questions

*What stood out to you from this week's message?*

*What does this message tell you about God?*

*What does this message tell you about humans?*

*Have you ever been impressed by the way someone prayed?*

*What about the prayer did you like?*

*How do you feel about praying out loud? How can we keep ourselves focused on God in those moments?*

*How can we prevent devotional prayer from being a duty?*

*Have you ever had a time in prayer when you felt God's presence especially? What is that like for you?*

*What are the obstacles to spending regular time in God's presence? Honestly share the time you spend on phone apps.*

*How do you respond to silence? Why is it so valuable?*

*When and where will you take 5 minutes a day to be in prayerful silence?*

## **Monday Devotion: Teach Us to Pray**

**Read Luke 11:1-13**

This week, we are going to explore some of the red-letter-prayers. Prayers, or insights about prayer, that come from examining the life of Jesus.

We begin by looking at another telling of the Lord's Prayer. In this version, the disciples come to Jesus and ask Him how to pray. This in itself is quite remarkable. These Jewish boys would have grown up praying, they had done it all of their lives. Yet, there was something about the way that Jesus prayed that they wanted to learn.

Jesus teaches them the Lord's prayer but then he continues to tell stories and shows that praying is not about having requests answered but it is about accessing a relationship.

*Prayer is therefore relational; it is not merely a psychological exercise of self-fulfilment, nor is it a mental review of God's principles, nor is it coercing God; rather, it is a free personality inviting the Personage of heaven to share with us.<sup>1</sup>*

As we pray, may we remember that we are connecting with our Father in Heaven who longs to spend time with us. In your five minutes of silence, draw yourself humbly before Him and ask Him for more of His Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Augsburg, Myron, The Preacher's Commentary, Complete 35-Volume Set: Genesis Revelation (p. 11915). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

## **Tuesday Devotion: Pray All Night**

**Read Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Mark 1:35;**

R. A. Torrey asserts that Jesus prayed early in the morning as well as all night, that he prayed both before and after the great events of his life, and that he prayed "when life was unusually busy".

Jesus' prayer may often have included extended periods of Spirit-filled silent communion with God that was beyond the need for words.

*In the seventh century, Isaac the Syrian wrote about "stillness" which in his writing has been summarized as "a deliberate denial of the gift of words for the sake of achieving inner silence, in the midst of which a person can hear the presence of God. It is standing unceasingly, silently and prayerfully before God."*<sup>2</sup>

We need to cherish the silent moments we have before God. Embrace it in your 5 minutes today.

*In a noise-polluted world, it is even difficult to hear ourselves think let alone try to be still and know God. Yet it seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God. Susan Muto*

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 92

## **Wednesday Devotion: Prayer Before Raising Lazarus**

**Read John 11:38-44**

In John 11, Lazarus dies, and Jesus comes to raise him from the dead. As he stands in front of the tomb, He utters one of the most profoundly simple prayers.

Jesus backs up His teaching about not needing to be elaborate in prayer. In fact, He makes it clear that He didn't even need to pray out loud at all.

"I'm only doing this prayer out loud so they will believe You sent me." In contrast, saying complicated prayers seems to be a genre all to itself.

The style is like that described in a newspaper report of a religious service, which, in referring to the prayer, said, "The finest prayer ever offered to a Boston congregation!" In contrast, Jesus says that the prayer to God is to be addressed to Him in the secrecy of heartfelt communion.<sup>3</sup>

If you are coming to God with your requests remember that He knows what you need before you ask. You don't need to convince God with your eloquence that He should give you what you ask. Simply come to Him seeking heartfelt communion and ask to show that you are dependent upon Him

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<sup>3</sup> *Augsburger, Myron, The Preacher's Commentary, Complete 35-Volume Set: Genesis Revelation (p. 11916). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

## **Thursday Devotion: Glorify Your Name**

***Read John 12:27-29***

Sometimes we might not know what to pray. We don't want to be selfish and pray only for our good and success, nor do we want to step back from asking in faith for the things that God has for us.

When we are in that kind of dilemma a good prayer to pray could be the prayer of Jesus: "Father, bring glory to your name."

Jesus is approached by Philip and Andrew to meet some Greeks and Jesus responds by talking about His death. His soul is deeply troubled, and He doesn't know what to pray. There is part of Him that wants to ask God to save Him from going to the cross.

It is a moment of temptation for Jesus. Will He go through with His plan to die for all people, or will He preserve His life? His response is to pray, "Father, bring glory to your name."

As we will see in the Lord's prayer a key thing we can do when we come to God is to spend time in humble surrender to Him. God's response to Christ's obedience is to audibly respond.

When we don't know what to pray, let us ask for God to be glorified. It is a prayer that God loves to respond to.

## **Friday Devotion: Praying in the Garden**

**Read Matthew 26:36-46**

If yesterday's reading showed a moment of indecision for Jesus, today's shows even more. We get to be a fly on the olive grove as Jesus wrestles with the task that is in front of Him.

Jesus' prayer was not God's will. There was a clash between what He wanted and what God wanted.

If this happened to Jesus, how much more does it happen to us? God by His grace still meets us and takes us forward. As Richard Foster says:

*The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives—altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. But what I have come to see is that God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with faith, or anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.<sup>4</sup>*

Today, draw comfort from the way you can come to God as you are. As you spend time in silence before God, ask for His grace to change every part of you.

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<sup>4</sup> Jethani, Skye. What If Jesus Was Serious About Prayer? (pp. 23-24). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.