**Sermon Text – Matthew 6:5-8**

**06/12/2022**

**It’s Time to Pray**

**Introduction ~**

Our text this morning is Matthew 6:5-8 ~

5“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place;* and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Apparently, there is a right way and wrong way to pray. What determines which is which? Intent. Are you trying to impress God? Are you putting on a show for the people around you? Or… are you simply speaking with God? *That’s* the right way to pray.

There multiple reasons for the format of our time together today. This is a dry run today in case some Sunday I’m unable to be in the pulpit and there’s no time to find a guest speaker. Your Board of Elders also believes that prayer has significance in the life of the church. Therefore we want to encourage prayer as much as possible. This seemed to us to be one good way to promote prayer in our church.

Personally, I believe that God is preparing us for something. I don’t know what that is, but I sense that He is moving. I’m energized by this; God can take our situation and work wonders, if we’re ready to follow where He leads. None of us knows exactly what God will do, or how we’ll respond. Even so, prayer puts us in the right position to be ready. It puts us on our knees.

**Instructions ~**

Therefore, today’s brief message will be very practical, with an opportunity to practice what I’m preaching about right afterword. Many times we hear prayer referred to as a spiritual discipline, and in some ways I agree that it is. It takes self-discipline to intentionally come to God on a consistent basis. There are many distractions.

However, I also think it’s time to challenge this view. How do we think about prayer? We often say that it’s conversation with God. Do we really believe that, or is it just another holy sounding platitude? It seems to me that the *practice* of prayer, like everything else we actually do, reflects what we *really* believe.

Prayer is not about getting things from God, it’s about aligning ourselves with Him. It’s about coming into His presence in utter reliance on Him. It’s about our relationship, our friendship with Him, if you will. Jesus said this to His disciples, and I think it applies equally to us; John 15:14-15 ~

14You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Fundamentally, prayer is not about technique, it’s about relationship. The idea that we need to practice a particular technique for prayer to be effective betrays a mistaken view of prayer and of God. It reveals that we really think of prayer as a way of getting something from God. In reality, prayer is about giving something to God, permission to change us… and in the process He often chooses to move in surprising and powerful ways.

We’re told to come to God in faith, to ask for those things we need, trusting that God knows best and is able to do whatever we ask; Mark 11:24 ~

24Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them,* and you will have *them*.[[3]](#footnote-3)

How are we able to ask in this way? It comes back to relationship. Have you come to know Jesus and His purposes so well that you’re able to ask “in His name,” which is to ask according to His purposes and His will? John 14:13-14 ~

13And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Trust ~**

But we also have to trust that God does know best, and that He will do what is ultimately right. That means we have some hard work to do too. We have to submit, and honestly this is something none of us like to do. However, submission does get easier if you’re actually aware of who it is you’re talking to.

So… who are we praying to? Are we praying to some impersonal force somewhere out there? “May the force be with you!” Do we see God as an impartial automaton who works unemotionally based on pre-prescribed rules, kind of a like a computer program input and output? If that’s your God you’ve made a serious mistake. Our God is personal, and He desires to enter into a personal relationship with you.

So, do we see God for who He really is? Our God is the one true and holy Creator of the universe. He is a personal and loving God who desires to enjoy our company. That’s kind of amazing, if you stop to think about it. If you stop to let it really soak into your mind, it should change the way you approach Him in prayer.

Beyond that He’s demonstrated, beyond any doubt, that He loves us. God understands that we, on our own, are, unable to enter into a relationship with Him… because our natures are twisted. We’ve violated and perverted our relationship with Him. And yet, God has not only forgiven this, He made it possible for us to return to His presence. This was accomplished by giving us a new nature, by actually living in us and making it possible for us to enjoy Him.

**To, Through, and By ~**

When we come to God in prayer we pray *to* the Father *through* the Son *by* the Holy Spirit who indwells us; Ephesians 6:17-18 ~

17And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—[[5]](#footnote-5)

If you don’t agree with me, that’s OK. It’s not that important. However, it is important to realize that we only have access to God through Jesus Christ who died on our behalf, who paid the debt for our sin, and because of this we can safely come into the presences of God; Hebrews 10:19-22 ~

19Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, 22let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.[[6]](#footnote-6)

It’s through the indwelling Holy Spirit that we are then empowered to ask rightly, He even asks on our behalf when we ask wrongly; Romans 8:26-27 ~

26Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is,* because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Right Prayer ~**

When we do prayer right it has more to do with changing us that it has to do with changing our situations. That’s because when we come to God rightly we come in simple trust and submission. That gives God permission to change us. That’s a little risky…

Now I’ve already said that technique isn’t important. So how do we pray rightly? By being honest, humble, and fully present. That takes effort. When we pray in this way we have to be prepared to make changes. We’re not praying into some prayer book or some confessional booth, we aren’t even talking to just a friend. We are speaking directly to God.

In a very real way, when we pray this way we’ve entered into the throne room of heaven and are literally at the feet of the All Powerful One. Because of this, we cannot think to pray for showy effect. God looks past all the polish and flair. Since He sees what’s really in our hearts, it only makes sense to be honest.

Prayer is also not a monologue. It’s not only us talking to God. We can expect to hear from Him when we’re willing to be honest, to shut up, and to listen. That requires humility.

His commands are not always pleasant… at least at first. But as we begin to obey we learn that He always knows best. Ultimately, by obeying, we find that obedience to God’s commands will fulfill our deepest desires, even though that may require the sacrifice of our personal desires in the process.

So as you pray, be prepared to change, to be changed, and to make changes. Also, God may be giving you specific direction, be prepared to take action.

**Conclusion ~**

Here’s what we’re going to do with the rest of the service. We’re going to pray. We’ll break into groups, going to every corner of the building. And we will pray.

So here’s what I want you to do: be fully present, it is entirely too easy to let your mind wander. Be fully honest, it is entirely too easy to put on a face in prayer, you may fool us but you won’t fool God. Be prepared to make changes; is God asking you to step into the gap and serve? Get with it! Is God asking you to step into the gap with your giving? Get with it! Is God asking you to make life style changes? Obey!

In the bulletin are several different inserts regarding prayer needs and a prayer guide, these are not intended to tell you how to pray, it is intended to provide some suggestions. I think you will find the suggested order helpful. As we break into our groups, if you’re uncomfortable, feel free to pray along silently. But pray. You do not have to pray out loud, but you are welcome to if you wish. You do not have to stay for any particular amount of time, but you are welcome to stay as long as you’d like. As a practical detail, I will be interrupting you right around noon.

This is an unusual step for our church, but the elders feel that at this time, in this situation, with this people, we must pray.

1. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Mt6.5&off=19&ctx=Prayer%0aLuke+11%3a2%E2%80%934%0a~%EF%BB%BF5%C2%A0%E2%80%9CAnd+when+you+pray) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mt 6:5–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Jn15.14&off=0&ctx=e+%E2%80%A2for+his+friends.+~14%C2%A0r%EF%BB%BFYou+are+My+frie) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Jn 15:14–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Mk11.24&off=0&ctx=+%E2%80%A2whatever+he+says.+~24%C2%A0Therefore+I+say+t) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Mk 11:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Jn14.13&off=0&ctx=+I+go+to+My+Father.+~13%C2%A0q%EF%BB%BFAnd+whatever+yo) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Jn 14:13–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Eph6.17&off=0&ctx=+of+the+wicked+one.+~17%C2%A0And+u%EF%BB%BFtake+the+he) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Eph 6:17–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Heb10.19&off=26&ctx=ast+Your+Confession%0a~19%C2%A0Therefore%2c+brethr) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Heb 10:19–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [*The New King James Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nkjv?ref=BibleNKJV.Ro8.26&off=0&ctx=+with+perseverance.%0a~26%C2%A0%E2%80%A2Likewise+the+Spi) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ro 8:26–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)