

Prayer

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[0:00] First and foremost, thank you to our pastor for allowing me to be up here. You know, he said it himself that the pulpit's something very serious and you have to be having someone that you trust that's going to preach, you know, what God wants us to preach.

Right. So I'm blessed to have you as my pastor. And I thank you for everything you have done. You and your family, of course, we're very grateful for what you guys do.

So let's turn to Matthew six. We're going to read verses five and six. All right. So chapter five, I mean, verse five says, and when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are for the love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest into thy closet, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret and thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, please bless us today. Anoint my lips to deliver the message you want me to the congregation. Let the message deliver something they having heard before.

[1:21] Bless their mind, their hearts and their souls. In Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated. All right. So today I want to speak about prayer, which has kind of been the whole thing we've been talking about since we started service today. Right.

So one thing that I do love that our church does is at the beginning of every service, we open with prayer. Right. And we invite the presence of God through our prayer. And it's such a beautiful thing to see when the spirit of the Lord starts to move throughout the service.

You get to hear the people speaking in tongues. We haven't had any runners yet or holy rollers yet, but we're getting there. We'll get there one of these days. Right. I always admire how our pastor has always said that there's no given time limit on how long we're going to pray for because he knows that it's not about us.

You know, we're doing this for God. So it's not going to be when we think it's time. Right. We're like, ah, let's do 10 minutes. We'll be good with 10 minutes.

No, it's if God wants to move the whole service, he'll move the whole service and we'll let him take over because at the end of the day, this service is not for us. It's for him. It's to praise and worship him. Right. So.

[2:37] On Matthew, chapter six, verse five and six, I'll read them again. When thou and when thou prayest, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest into thy closet, when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret and thy father will see it in secret, shall reward thee openly.

So this is Jesus speaking. So Jesus is talking about prayer. He lets us know that. When you're praying out in public. Are you doing it for the right reasons? Right.

Are you trying to pray in front of everybody but not pray at home? Are you trying to show everybody I'm a strong prayer, but are you doing it in secret? Right. So he wants to he's letting everybody know that if you pray in secret, you will be rewarded openly.

So a few things to think about. So it's it's not the praying that God has the issue with is it's more about the why.

[3:47] Why are you praying out loud in public? Is it for everyone to hear you? Is it to please man or to please God? There is reward with prayer, but it's a matter of which reward we want and who's our rewarder, men or your father in heaven?

So the reward that comes from man will never come close to the loving reward that God will give you if you are praying for the right reasons. Praying in secret shows that you don't care if someone is watching, hearing you because you're not trying to show everyone you're the best prayer. Instead, you're trying to show God that you're his greatest worshiper and you are devoted to him and his love and grace. Trying to seek the approval of other people has become a normal in today's society.

That's the reason why people use social media. People today are more focused on what is on their Facebook or Instagrams and how many likes, comments and followers they have. They need other people's approval in the comments or else they think they did something bad.

A lot of these people like to show off their wealth and are the people that are probably struggling the most. The only approval we should all be seeking is God's. Because if we do stuff for God, we'll be blessed and rewarded.

[5:01] So in the scripture, it talks about being rewarded openly. You know, it might raise some questions like, why doesn't it just say the Father will answer your prayer openly? Instead, it's talking about being rewarded openly.

That can mean that the ultimate goal of prayer is not always to get results. That means that you won't always get the results you're praying for, but God will still reward you for praying. Prayer brings reward.

Prayer is as much about results as it is about rewards.

God's presence is the reward we get from prayer. We shouldn't just think about results, but we should think about getting the reward. And the greatest reward that we can get is God's presence in our lives.

So in Matthew 6, 6, you know, God is talking about, talking to us about if you pray, you'll be rewarded openly. He also says to Abraham, I know you want a son.

[6:07] I know you're asking for a son, but before I give you a son, I'm going to give you myself. Do not limit your prayer on just getting results because prayer is where God wants to give himself to you.

God is the exceedingly great reward at the end of the day. So in 2 Corinthians 10, verses 3 and 4, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. So we need to understand, though we are in flesh, does not mean our war is with flesh.

But we need to understand the war that each and everyone is going through is not going to be in your flesh. It's going to be spiritual. There's a great spiritual battle that happens every day that we cannot see, but yet we need to understand that even though we can't see it, even though we sometimes can't feel it, just know that it's there.

And it doesn't matter what kind of weapons you might have in this world, whether it's a gun, knife, or the whole United States military, it won't be enough to survive that battle. But do you know what will help you survive?

[7:19] What kind of weapons we need to defeat the battle? It's called prayer. We need to pray every day to help defeat whatever spiritual battle is going on. Our greatest weapon is always going to be our prayers and our word.

Praying and reading the word of the Lord helps develop our spiritual maturity, which then leads to having the armor of God. A lot of you know what the armor of God is, but as a refresher, is the belt of truth, which represents standing firm in God's truth and integrity.

Breastplate of righteousness protects the heart and represents living a life of righteousness. Shoes of the gospel of peace, representing being prepared to share the gospel and live in peace.

Shield of faith represents the ability to resist the fiery darts of the enemy through faith in God. The helmet of salvation protects the mind and represents the hope of salvation through Christ.

Sword of spirit represents the word of God, which is used for both defense and offense in the spiritual warfare. We need to be constantly praying that our armor is always on to help us defend ourselves against the evilness of the world and evilness that lies in the spiritual world.

[8:34] It is through our constant devotion to God and to prayer that will help us keep our armor strong and keep us ready for the spiritual warfare. You know, one thing that really gets to me is the ones that aren't here.

The ones that aren't in this church are not filling the seats. The people of Houston that were here to reach out, right? The people that don't understand how beautiful it is to live for God or the beauty of being able to say that I am free of the ugliness of this world.

I am free of the fleshly desires of the world because I do not need anything like that to make me happy because I have found the freedom and love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Yet still we know that all these people, they need help getting closer to God.

And who's going to be the one to help them? It should be us. That's why we're here, right? It should be us. It's going to be us. We should be the ones constantly praying for them, constantly asking for God to help bring them closer to him.

For God to forgive them for all their trespasses and help them be saved because we love them or else we wouldn't be in this city. We need to be praying for them to be protected from the spiritual darkness that is clouding their mind.

[9:55] We need to ask God, even though they aren't asking for you right now, Lord, I am asking for them. I am asking for you for them. And because they need you and because you're a loving God that wants to see them closer to you, I know God that with your glory will be able to make it happen.

So one big reason why it means a lot to me for wanting to help lost souls is kind of a pastor's talked about earlier.

This is a testimony service, and it is because I'm about to talk about my testimony. And I was a lost soul. I was living the other half, you know. I was born and raised Catholic.

Catholic, so Catholic church, sitting in your pew trying not to go to sleep, that type of stuff, right? And when me and Hannah first got together, I explained to her right away, I was like, you're a Christian.

I'm a Catholic. We're just leaving like that. I'm not going to your church. I'm never going to be there. Don't try to persuade me because it's not going to happen. That's kind of funny now, right? So she always told me she liked going to church with her mom on Sundays, and she loved singing at church.

[11:12] And I said, that's nice. Well, you do you, and I'm going to do me. I'm going to be on my side. And I told her, hey, like I said, you do you.

I won't stop you from going to church, but you better not expect me to be there because I'm not going to be there. Those are always my words since we first got together.

And yet, she never stopped believing that one day I'll turn. And I said, I told her, you won't catch me going to that church because that place would burn down.

And I told her, you will never see me going to church. It's not for me. It doesn't matter what you say or what you do. I won't like it, and I don't want it.

A couple months passed by. I really wish your mom was here to hear this, but, you know, she, a couple months passed by, and her mom tells Hannah, you know, one day I see you.

[12:22] I see him preaching. And I was like, your mom's crazy. Yeah. And about a year passed by, and then me and my mother-in-law really got comfortable, and she kept telling Hannah, I see him preaching one day.

And Hannah would tell me, and I still said she was crazy. I wish she was here, but she's not to defend herself, so. And then a couple months passed by, and they have Sister Modessa.

She said the exact same thing, is one day I see him preaching, and, you know, I always thought, like, why do they keep saying that? Like, it's not going to happen.

They should just get that out of their mind. But yet, I guess here I am, right? And so a couple years go by, and our marriage hit a rough patch.

It did. And Hannah asked me to go to church with her to try to make our marriage last because she told me our marriage won't last without God in the front, you know? Without God being the head of the marriage, our marriage is not going to last.

[13:40] And it makes me, like, think back how God played his cards, is what I like to say, because who I found to be my wife, who was my mother-in-law, who became my coordinator, turns out to be a pastor.

It's just, it all lines up now that I look at it, but back then I never even noticed that, right? And it's just how, that's how God works. And it's not when you want it, it's when he knows you need it, and he'll give it to you.

So I still remember sitting down on that bench, speaking to Shane, right outside our room at the hotel, and told him I need help. And, you know, I'm going to go to church, I want to go to church to help our marriage, because as a married man, anybody will want to do whatever they can to save their marriage.

Or they should, if they're happily married, right? There's a reason why I married you, and the reason was because you were going to save me. And I thank you for that.

So, we're sitting on the bench, tell Shane, hey, you know, I want to start going to church, like we're having these issues, can you help me?

[14:54] And he said, yeah, come to church on Sunday. So, I went in with an open mind, you know, forgetting about religion, what religion I am, or whatever denomination. I went in with an open mind, because at the end of the day, it's all about God, right?

I remember going to church service. It was crazy compared to what I was used to in the Catholic church, but it didn't scare me. I didn't run away.

You know, Hannah was singing the songs and everything, and I was still there, standing a lot more still than I am now, but I was still there. And I remember Sister Leandra came up to you and said, you're a Pentecostal, aren't you?

He's not. I was like, well, she's like, you can tell the difference between a Pentecostal and someone who's not, right? You won't catch me standing still now.

Now I move. Now I play a cajón. So, slowly I started to like church, little by little, because it's life-changing.

[16:15] And, you know, it changed my life for the better, for sure. And I'm very grateful for what kind of change I took. And it was great. And I loved it, little by little.

And then the pastor finally got to baptize me. I remember that day. It was wonderful. I heard you ran the aisles after? I didn't get to see it, unfortunately.

Felt the rumble, though. I say it out of love. And I am very grateful to call you my pastor. And I'm very grateful for what you and your wife and your family have done in our lives.

And I want to thank you for that. And, you know, I want to thank you for allowing this opportunity, because you always say you have to protect the pulpit.

But yet, you trust me enough to deliver God's word, and that's why I'm here. So, on my birthday, the pastor comes up to me and says, I think today's the day you're going to get the Holy Ghost.

[17:24] You're going to get the Holy Ghost on your birthday. And we've been trying for a little while. And I was like, we'll see how it goes. And you said it yourself.

I got the Holy Ghost on my birthday. And it was a wonderful experience, a life-changing experience that I am very grateful to have gone through. And it's wonderful.

That's all I can say. So, now look at me, the guy who said he'll never go to church. The guy who said he'll never preach is up here able to tell you my testimony.

So, the reason why I told you guys this long testimony is because I know it was the people in this room and my in-laws.

They're the reason that I am here today. Because if it wasn't for them, who knows where I would be. And if I was still alive. And it was through their prayer.

[18:28] Their constant loving prayer. Because they loved me. They constantly prayed for me. Every single day. Every time. Any service. Anytime they could. They prayed for me. And God heard their prayers.

And it's through their prayers that I am able to be here today. I am the living proof that prayers from your loved ones can help you start build your own armor. They helped me start building my armor without me even knowing.

And it's through my prayers that I continue that armor. I continue forming that armor. The prayers of the people that I love helped me get my salvation.

And I want to continue thanking each and every one of you for putting my name on your prayers list. For fighting for me spiritually even though I wasn't fighting. I would like everyone to stand.

So I think it's now our responsibility to continue to pray for not only our loved ones.

[19:33] But for every soul that is in the city of Houston. Because there's a lot of people in the city that need our prayers. Today my title is the loving prayer. Because we might not know everyone in the city yet.

But we still love them like they're part of our own family. Or else we wouldn't be here starting this church. So I want to ask everybody to find a place to pray. And I want to ask us to just ask God to help us build the armor of people.

To help us fill these seats. Help us, you know, have to take out more roles. Rows, sorry. Yeah, I'm thinking about food already.

And I want to ask you guys to help us. Help me pray that we will reach every soul in this city. And next time we walk that street, we walk this past Saturday at our fellowship.

Those people that closed the door on us, that didn't want their prayer. The next time they invite us in. So join me in prayer, please. You know, thanks for joining us.

[20:46] You know, thanks for joining us.