

Prayer II

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[0:00] Praise to you, Lord Christ. Lord, speak to us and through us your mighty word. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

! So that gives me the right to give old people jokes.

Alright, so first for the guys. Two guys are sitting in an outdoor cafe, and the one says, I got a brand new hearing aid. I can hear things two blocks away. It cost me \$5,000.

The other guy said, oh, what kind is it? He goes, \$12.30. Okay, so that's the guy's joke. That'll come to you as the day goes on. But the old lady joke is, a nice elderly lady decided she was going to get in shape, and so she signed up for a jazzercise class at the gym.

And this was her report. You know, I jiggled, and I twisted, and I bounced, and I jumped, and I perspired, but by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

[1:22] Okay. So enough with that. Let's get personal. Personal prayer life.

Is your prayer life okay? Or do you hear a very serious sucking sound when you think about how it's going? Today we're concluding the series on the Acts 2.42, where they devoted themselves to apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

This is our second Sunday on devoting ourselves to the prayers. And so the question is, does your prayer life actually have a life? It's an important question for every one of us to think about in our lives.

And we'll do what we have done. We'll do Jesus at prayer. We'll do at Church of the Holy Trinity at prayer, and usens at prayer personally. So let's begin Jesus at prayer.

I'm going to do a quick Bible study on the Gospel of Luke, and we're just going to look at Jesus at prayer and just see what that teaches us. So if you've got a Bible, you can jump into it.

[2:35] We're starting at Luke chapter 4, verse 1. What does that talk about?

Periods of retreat. Every one of us needs to have some time where we pull away from the world and just spend extended time with the Lord Jesus Christ.

All right, second, same chapter, 4, verse 42. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place, and the people sought him and came to him.

So what does that say? It says in Matthew, he went to a desolate place to pray at the break of day. Now, I don't get up at the break of day, but I do get up in the morning, and that's a good time to dedicate my life to Jesus Christ.

That's what Jesus did with his Father. He got his act straight for the day. If we can get our spiritual things in order, the material things kind of fall into place.

[3:52] All right, now we go to Luke chapter 6, verse 12. In these days, he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them 12, whom he named apostles. Prayer before important decisions.

Jesus did that. My temptation is to just go do it, and then backfill Jesus after it's done. Jesus didn't do it that way.

He prayed before major decisions. All right, chapter 11 of Luke, verses 1 through 4. 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.

And he said to them, When you pray, say, and he taught them what we call the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father. So Jesus taught his disciples fixed prayer, as well as spontaneous prayer.

[5:12] The Lord's Prayer in some communities is said like five times in a day. The reason is it's the perfect prayer. It asks God three things of him, and it asks God three things of us.

It's called the perfect prayer. Jesus used it. He taught it. Okay, then we go to chapter 22, verse 17.

Verse 17. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this and divide it among yourselves.

So what does that mean? He used set prayers in his daily life. He prayed age-old prayers. He gave the traditional blessing over food and drink.

He did not abandon these kind of traditional prayers. Okay, so those are the kind of prayers he spoke, and now we need to find out how it worked.

[6 : 29] So we go back to chapter 9 of Luke, and verse 28. Now, about eight days after these things, he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

Remember what happened? His raiment changed, and suddenly he's talking to Moses and Elijah. They've been gone for some years.

And the cloud came over and said, This is my beloved son. That's sometimes called Shekinah glory. He prayed praise to his father, and glory was everywhere.

He wants us to have a sense of that same glory, to glorify God in prayer. Okay, then we move over to chapter 10 of Luke, verses 21 and 22.

In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

[7 : 47] Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. Once again, rejoicing in thanksgiving. So he rejoiced in giving glory to God.

He also rejoiced in thanksgiving. And not only that, but he rejoiced that we simple folks can understand God. You don't want to go to seminary if you want to understand God, because you'll come out really confused.

He has always wanted to share the simple faith of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, both God and man, Jesus.

Okay, then we get to 22, verse 39. Verse 39.

Oh, that's chapter 23. There's nothing there. All right, let's go to 22, 29. And that's another thing about old people.

[8 : 58] It's hard to read. Okay. 29. Found it, finally. Okay. And I assign to you a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

He's working the whole package so that we are going to eventually be sitting with him. And that comes, that comes through his cross.

It comes through our prayer of expectation. So he prayed expectation. Okay, then the last one, verse 23, chapter 23, verse 46.

And he's, chapter 23, verse 46. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And having said this, he breathed his last. Commitment. Committing your life to Christ every day. Back when I was a young man, we flew bombing missions.

[10 : 24] The last item on my pre-takeoff checklist was to say, Lord, I commend my soul to your keeping. Not sure if I'd come back. Well, that's the daily thing for us.

It's a dangerous world out there. We need in our prayers to just be committing our lives to Christ every day. So we have a summary at Jesus at prayer.

He did praise. He did thanksgiving. He did intercession. He did petition. He didn't need to do forgiveness. So he didn't say, he didn't ask forgiveness.

He didn't need to. Why? He's perfect. Yeah. I've only met a few people who thought they were perfect. Okay.

So that brings us to point two. Church of the Holy Trinity at prayer. As I said last week, I love how we pray in this church.

[11 : 23] But the prayers of the people are a very important part of the Eucharist. Now, for a lot of folks, prayers of the people is just kind of an intermission between the sermon and communion.

And hope it would kind of go by fast. But it's crucial that we be a family in prayer. Both fixed and spontaneous.

And that's what we do. And if you'll notice in our prayers of the people, we do the same thing Jesus did in his earthly life. Praise, thanksgiving, confession.

We do that. He didn't need to. Intercession and petition. In this, we're following Jesus. We are the church of Jesus Christ at prayer. Not the church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints.

We're the church of Jesus Christ at prayer. Which brings us to point three, usens at prayer. We, in our personal prayer life.

[12:23] Well, I've noticed something over the years. For our prayer life to actually have a life, we need to be truly committed to both an organized and spontaneous prayer life.

I've got this great book that I've been reading every day. It's called First Thing Every Day, Devotions for Men. And a really neat, I'm not putting guilt on you, but I'm reading this book to help put guilt on you.

It says, every day has 1,440 minutes. Do you value your relationship with God enough to spend a few of those minutes with Him?

He deserves that much of your time and more. Is He receiving it from you? Hopefully so. But if you find that you're simply too busy for a daily chat with your Father in Heaven, it's time to take a long, hard look at your priorities and your values.

He is not too busy for you. As you consider your plans for the day ahead, here's a tip. Organize your life around this simple principle, God first.

[13:40] Amen to that. In fact, you know Bishop Julian Dobbs. You know he's going to run the Marine Corps Marathon on October 25th while we're having our retreat.

I'm his coach, but I'm not going to be able to be there to coach him. Now, wouldn't it be interesting if he never ran until October 25th? How far do you think he'd get?

He'd be dead after three miles. So he is practicing. The other day he called and said he had run 14 miles, so he's working up toward the 26th.

And I said, Julian, that's not too bad. Today you ran nine miles farther than I ran. He's committed, isn't he? This is what God calls us to do in our prayer life, to make a commitment that a day is not going to go by when we don't just throw ourselves in God's arms and say, I love you.

Let me read your word. Come into my heart. It's only through you that I find real peace, inner peace.

And in fact, there was an archbishop named Thomas Cranmer.

[14:53] Anybody hear of Thomas Cranmer? Yeah, he hung around back in the 1500s. He was Archbishop of Canterbury, and he decided through prayer that the whole island of England and Wales, he didn't say anything about Scotland.

They were not real friendly back then, but the whole island of England and Wales was going to become a worshipping community. And that's how we got the prayer book.

He put together this book, which would guide us in how we pray. His thought was every morning, every citizen of England would open up their prayer book and read morning prayer together, separately across the nation.

And it was his thought that every evening about five o'clock, they would open their prayer books and pray together. What a neat idea. And even in the little villages where they had the parish churches, he would call people to worship.

The bell would ring on the church bell. That's why we have church bells. Well, we don't have a church bell, but we might have someday. The church bell would ring and people would either come to the church or they would open up their prayer books.

[16:08] It was a praying nation, at least it was conceived that way. And that's what we're called to today as Anglicans. We're called to an organized way of worshipping God.

In that prayer book, if you've gone through it, you'll notice in the back of it, it gives a scripture reading calendar, so that in the course of a year, you almost read through the whole Bible.

It's really a neat thing. It's calling us to be a people at prayer. Then, throughout the day, spontaneous prayer. I'll tell you what I do, because I learned this when I was really young.

I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, and we were taught that when we went by a Catholic Church or a seminary, maybe a seminary, a cemetery, what were we supposed to do?

Anybody? Say a prayer, do the sign of the cross. Okay? Guess what? Syracuse is a target-rich environment for praying when you go by churches.

[17:13] There's practically a church on every corner. Some of them are museums today, some of them are nightclubs, but there are church buildings everywhere, and cemeteries. I mean, I've noticed we have an abundance of cemeteries in Syracuse.

Well, every time you go by one, that's a click in your head to say, thank you, Lord, I love you. Would you preach the gospel in that church this Sunday? It brings us back to the Lord, where he could get totally lost.

How about ambulances? You ever hear an ambulance or a fire truck? Say a prayer. Lord, bless those folks, protect them, heal who's ever in the back of that ambulance. Those are just ways of being prayerful throughout the day.

It's what God calls us to do. And then the last little hint, you've got the cross here. Now, a balanced prayer life is this. At the top of the cross is praise.

We begin all our prayer with praising God. Those of us who are married, I hope we're praising our spouses. We give praise to God because he is holy.

[18:22] And he's called us to be holy. So praise at the top. At the heart of the cross is thanksgiving. You know, if we started every day being thankful for what we've got, not complaining about what we don't got, what a wonderful world it would be.

So at the heart of the gospel, at the heart of the cross is thanksgiving. So we give thanks to God. confession. And then at the foot of the cross is confession. Because when we are at the foot of the cross looking up, we realize that Jesus died for our sins.

And every day we commit at least one sin. It may be an attitude. You may not go out and hold up a 7-Eleven store, but somewhere in your heart you have sinned.

And so we offer confession to God. And then at the right hand of Jesus is intercession. Every day we need to be in prayer for brothers and sisters in the congregation, for situations in the world, for family members, for renovating the church, for finding a rector.

Intercession is really important. And then last but not least, but definitely last, on his left hand, petition. Praying for our own needs. It is okay to pray for your own needs.

[19:39] It is okay to climb up in the lap of Jesus and just say, Lord, I am in trouble. I need your help. I cannot move my right arm.

Can you help me? That is okay. That is part of prayer. That is balanced prayer. Praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, petition. That is called balanced prayer.

And God calls each one of us to remember him in a balanced kind of way. Okay, so we are coming to the conclusion of this sermon.

Do you know the summary of prayer success? A summary of success in prayer is an attitude of gratitude.

An attitude of gratitude. I could spend hours complaining to God about what I don't have, what I did not become, and why people just don't treat me nicely.

[20:40] I could spend a lot of time with that. I'm not one from this church, but there are other churches I've been involved with. An attitude of gratitude dumps all that junk.

It allows God to touch my heart. So, your prayer life has a life. Jesus Christ in your heart. Let us pray.

Lord God, we thank you for your word in our heart. Lord God, thank you for Jesus in our heart.

Equip us in your Holy Spirit, Lord, to be people of prayer, to be serious people of prayer. And guide us as in Psalm 23 to those good pastures where we lie down and rest in thee.

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Stop. I'm going to get this down by the time we get a new rector.