

Sermon: Teach us to Pray

Have you ever seen some of those cute Christian acronyms that are out there? Think of the Christian version of the short hand text “lol” meaning laugh out loud. Here are a couple you might know:

WWJD – What would Jesus do?

GLYASDI – God loves you and so do I

PUSH – Pray until something happens

BIBLE – Basic instructions before leaving earth

And:

ASAP - Always say a prayer

If you want to get a copy of sayings like these, they are on the table heading into Fellowship Hall after the service. Debby collected 36 of these acronyms and has graciously allowed me to share them with anyone who would like them.

The use of acronyms like this, help us to boil down complex ideas of the faithful life into simple, digestible activities.

This is, in a way the idea behind our scripture today.

A simple question is asked: Will you teach us to pray? And a simple digestible answer is given in a version of what we call “The Lord’s Prayer” with a lot of explanation of the how’s and whys of prayer to God.

This simple idea of prayer is key to understanding how God wants us to live our lives, as our opening sentences say: “being ardent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

Yesterday, we held a graveside service and a memorial service for Burt Sullivan who died earlier this month. These were both wonderful events of family, friends, and church; opportunities to remember and celebrate a good Godly man.

It became clear in learning more about Burt Sullivan the man that you really could not describe him without recognizing and describing his relationship to the Lord.

Seeing this in him was easy because it was such a critical part of his life.

But it’s not like being that kind of person just happened to Bert, or will just happen to any of us.

Living life with God in us and us in God is a learned experience. Like learning to lace up our shoes, like learning our ABC's and our times tables. It is spiritual active learning, that sticks. Building Muscle Memory in your faith.

As Pastor Jim Glenn pointed out, Bert lived each day with the Lord. He recited Psalm 23 each morning, he ended every day with Lord's prayer each evening. He memorized many parts of the bible and taught his family to do the same, and he prayed in all he did. He was infused with what the bible says, he was empowered with the Holy Spirit in his life.

Our Bible is littered with words that ask us to view God not just as something out there or someone only accessible by reservation or petition but as God with us. Here are 3 examples:

John 1:12 tells us to be in relationship by Faith: "...to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

Romans 8:10 speaks of a relationship of Spirit: "10 But if Christ is in you, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

1 Cor 6:19 tells us to see our living and breathing relationship with God: Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

We are talking about living our lives daily with God in us.

In our passage from Luke today a disciple asks Jesus to teach them to pray. He was probably a disciple who had previously been with John the Baptist because he asks Jesus to teach them as John had taught his disciples.

Andrew and John were the disciples who had come to Jesus after working with John so it was likely one of these two who asked the Lord to teach them as well. But what the disciples were asking for was really so much more than just prayer. Because, what Jesus was teaching was so radically different than anything any of them have ever known. They were learning how they were going to live out the rest of their lives in the service of God so they were essentially asking Jesus to teach them how to live.

In response he teaches them the prayer that Christians have learned and shared for nearly 2000 years, that we have all passed down to our loved ones, to our children, to other church members throughout our lives; the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus teaches them to first honor God and then to seek what they need. Then the rest of this section of Luke is used by Jesus to amplify his basic prayer. He gives them the prayer, a parable of the prayer of how it should be used and a series of sayings to reinforce the prayer in word pictures they would never forget. He was teaching them how to be infused with God through prayer.

Jesus' use of the parable here is striking to us because it puts us at odds with social norms and as such has a really surprising ending. We would probably stay in bed and keep the door shut but the man is going to get up and give his friend bread because he is persistent in asking.

Jesus in effect is saying, keep asking; be audacious; be demanding, and God will provide. But it is more than that, it's not just to keep asking to get a result but to keep asking because we keep needing.

This idea, that we Keep Needing, is also explained in John 13 where Jesus kneels down and washes his disciple's feet. Peter initially refuses to allow the Lord to do so, seeing it as too demeaning for the Lord but Jesus tells him if Peter is to be part of the His kingdom, he must allow God to cleanse him.

Jesus explains that it is not Peter's entire body that needs cleansing but just his dirty feet. The implication for us is that as people who are saved we are saved for eternity. The world will not change that but we still need to come back over and over again to be cleansed from the world that clings to us as we live our lives day in and day out. We need God every day.

But it's even more than that. This is a prayer of the disciples, a prayer where God provides specifically for the Lord's people. To seek favor from God is to first know God, to be one of God's children, to be in the club as it were.

And Jesus teaches this pattern: to ask, seek and knock within the depth of every parent's heart and home; do you offer your child a fish or a snake, an egg or a scorpion, evil or good?

¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

In Luke 17 Jesus tells us that His kingdom is right here, in in our midst. And Luke also says that where the Holy Spirit is that is where the kingdom is so when the Holy Spirit comes the kingdom of God comes.¹

For us, in our time, this same realization of the kingdom of God in our lives is ushered in with the Holy Spirit. And the equation of Lord's prayer is simple: When we pray for the kingdom to come we invite the Holy Spirit to put us in the presence of heaven in our lives.

And, in all of this, it is implied that there should be discipline in our lives in the conduct of prayer, just like in the lives of the disciples. Burt Sullivan taught his family and others that prayer is learned experience.² Practiced daily.

So, when we say Lord, teach us to pray...

Well then WWJD? What would Jesus do?

He would PUSH – Pray until something happens.

And remember GLYASDI – God loves you and so do I

Amen

¹ Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke; A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, 131.

² Fred Craddock, *Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Luke, 133.