

“Talk This Way”- Luke 11:1-13

Most of us can hardly imagine what it would have been like to walk and talk with Jesus as he made his way across Galilee. We would have been amazed at his miracles, inspired by his teaching, thrilled as he raised Lazarus from the dead, and blessed by him answering our individual questions. When the disciples saw, Jesus perform miracles, healings, and teachings, they didn't say, “Lord, teach us how to teach like you or “Lord, teach us to do that miracle.” Instead, what captured their attention was hearing him pray. Prayer was very important to Jesus. Jesus refers to prayer in his teachings, 42 times, and the gospels record him praying 28 times. Jesus prayed up on a mountain. Jesus prayed in the wilderness, in the Temple, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he prayed on the cross. Prayer was so much a part of his life, that early on the disciples came to him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” They wanted to know how to talk to God in prayer effectively. I want all of us to also know how to pray and pray effectively.

Over the next five weeks we are going to look at what it means to pray. This week we are going to definitions and purpose for prayer. Next week we are going to look at praying with praise, passion, and with thanksgiving. The third week we are going to look at praying persistently. The fourth week we are going to look at intercessory prayer: praying for family and friends, and praying for people we do not know. Then the last week we are going to look at why sometimes our prayers are not answered.

So, what exactly is prayer? Prayer must be important to people because the other day I was looking at the internet on prayer and there were 83 million hits on prayer alone. In its simplest definition prayer is conversation with God. It is relationship building with God. Yet as someone grows in their faith, prayer becomes more personal and of much greater importance. It becomes more valuable and more necessary and more real. It is how we navigate life. So, what is involved with prayer? I summarize prayer by four things we do to have relationship with God. I summarize prayers with the acronym: ACTS. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

First, we show adoration towards God. It is calling on the name of Jesus in praise, worship, and dependence. Worship is giving worth to our relationship with Jesus through prayers of praise and declaring our need for him in our lives. The Psalms are full of words of praise to God for who he is and what he does in our lives. We humble ourselves before God recognizing that all that we are and all that we have comes from his generous hand. We fall in love with God all over again each time that we pray. We love to share words of love and affection to family and friends, God desires the same thing from us to him. By showing adoration, we tell God how much we love him and appreciate his deep relationship with us in our lives. So, we spend part of our prayer time just adoring God and who he is to us.

After we spend time in adoration to God we then spend time in confession. Every one of us knows that not a day does not go by when we know we have sinned against God in some form or another. It could be as simple as thinking ugly thoughts about someone, to hurting someone in public, to more serious sin. King David understood the consequences of sin and its effects on others. In Psalm 51 he pours out his heart to God recognizing the sin he had done and its consequences on his life and the lives of others. David recognized that his sin had brought on pain and that he needed renewal- deep inner conviction of his sin and the poverty it brought about. He desired to be restored to the joyful relationship he had had with God.

Although we have not certainly committed the sin that caused David to write this psalm, we too, need renewal. Every area of our lives is so easily corroded and stained. Every part of our lives need renewal. Our marriages need renewal. We must fall in love repeatedly. Our families need renewal. It is tragic that often it takes illness or death to reunite us. Our churches need renewal when things become rote and lack freshness and creativity. But most of all we need personal renewal. We need to know that there are times when we need to look deep into our hearts and souls and realize that things with God, and others, and ourselves is not right. So, we go to God honestly with our convictions of sin and there we receive a fresh cleansing and infilling of God's Spirit. So, we spend part of our prayer life in confession to God.

After we spend time in confession to God, we spend time offering up thanksgiving to God. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi these words, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God." So, what does it mean to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving? A prayer of thanksgiving is offered up to God demonstrating gratitude for the past benefits of God and this then cultivates confidence in future blessings. How often are our prayers answered after we have spent a lot of time praying for things to happen and not to happen. After our prayers are answered how much time do we spend thanking God for the good he has brought to our life. Someone once wrote that we are to spend as much time thanking God for what he has done for us as we spent praying to God for what we need. Sometimes we need to thank God for just for who he is without anything else.

After giving thanks to God, we then spend time asking God for what we need. We call this supplication. Much of the prayer that we do is asking God for things and for help. Much of the prayer that we do is prayer that happens when we get into a tight spot. It may be a financial tight spot or it might be over an illness, or it might be over a family or relationship problem. We get into panic or worry mode and we shoot up prayers to God. There are times when we need strength from God to face a hard situation like surgery, or the death of a loved one, or facing a big decision. Jesus, himself, often prayed prayers of supplication or need.

In John 17 on the night before Jesus died he spent a long time in prayer. In this prayer, we find three parts. In the first part Jesus spends time praying for himself. That he has lived up well to God's calling for him to finish what God had sent him to earth to do. The second part is a prayer for his disciples that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to continue the good ministry that Jesus had started with them. Then in the third part of his prayer Jesus prays for us, his believers. That we will be one in unity to share with the world that God had sent Jesus to us and that he loves us very much.

So, prayer is many things and ways we have conversation with God. Prayer has profound impact and power not only for Jesus but for all of us. Prayer does

change things. Many of us have seen that happen. Therefore, the disciples wanted Jesus to teach them to pray. They wanted to have a close communication with God. They wanted to have as close a life as Jesus did because of his prayer life. So over the next few weeks journey with us as we explore prayer and what it means and how it impacts our lives.