

Mark 1:35-38 (35), Matt 26:36-46 (36-39)

"The Necessity of Prayer"

When it comes to prayer, I find that we do not pray enough. We often pray only when something is wrong and prayer, too often, is the last option rather than the first. Too many fail to pray at all for fear of getting it wrong. I have heard more times than I care to count the words, "I don't know how to pray". My response to that statement today would be, do you know how to talk? Then, you know how to pray. The reality is anything we fail to practice consistently we will be reluctant to do and even intimidated by. And among the spiritual practices I believe there are no practices more important to our faithfulness, spiritual maturity and health than scripture reading and prayer. To be with Jesus, to become like him and to do what he did we must read scripture and pray, constantly. **Psalms 119:105** "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." **1Thess 5:17** ¹⁷ "pray without ceasing". **Col 4:2** "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." The reading/study of God's word and prayer are essential. With this said, I want to share three things we learn from Jesus about prayer from our texts. Three things that will hopefully reinvigorate or jumpstart our personal and corporate prayer practices.

First thing, prayer brings about resolute focus. **Mark 1:35-38** ³⁵ "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed."³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."³⁸ And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."" Let me state the obvious. If Jesus had to

pray, and he did often, so must we. Jesus teaches us here that nothing justifies our neglecting prayer. Jesus leaves what was surely a crowd gathered to hear and be healed by him to go pray and after his prayer despite the crowd still seeking him he moves on. Many of us are burned out, weary, discouraged because we do not pray often. Prayer is critical to our discernment of what things God/Jesus is calling us to expend our time doing and what things to move on from. And this is extremely important in an age where we are not at a shortage of things to be distracted by. Good things even. It's by prayer that we place ourselves in the presence of God/Jesus, and it is by the reading of scripture and prayer that we hear clearly from God/Jesus. Prayer brings about resolute focus, resulting in maximum kingdom effectiveness.

Luke 3:21-22 “²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened,²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 5:15-16 “¹⁵But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”

Luke 6:12-13 “¹²In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:”

Second, prayer produces strength in the face of trial and temptation.

Matt 26:39-43 “³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from

me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.’” **Why such vigorous and repetitive prayer by Jesus? Strength! He needed strength for what was soon to come.** Jesus’ deity never infringed upon his humanity and vis versa. That is to say his deity was equally at work alongside his humanity. This is what makes him the Messiah. He is human and he is God. If possible, let this cup pass from me- his humanity. Not my will your will be done- his deity. And after the third time of praying this prayer, he is done. He is determined and resolute. **Prayer is the means by which we overcome the weakness of our flesh. Church, if Jesus had to pray for strength in the face of trial so do we.**

Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

Luke 18:1 “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”

Luke 22:40 “⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Phil 4:6-7 “⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Third and final thing. Prayer brings about our submission to the will of God. V44-46 “⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on.

See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” I believe the marks of an immature prayer life is one where prayer is usually the last option, primarily used in emergencies, the prayers are overly focused on ourselves and filled with requests for God to do or give us things that mostly impact our material lives. We know we have matured in our prayer life when our prayers are less about us, more about others, less about things and more about God. Yes, we should make known to God our needs, desires, even our wants but as we mature in our prayer life our prayers turn to God’s will being done in our lives rather than our own wills. Like Christ, we pray, “Not my will, thy will be done”. Why? Because through the practice of prayer we grow to trust the good purposes of God for our lives, even when the outlook is bleak. Jesus knows the horrific nature of what’s coming and prays for relief, but he places the will of the Father above his will. Through prayer we learn how to do as Jesus did in the face of trial and uncertainty, pray for and submit to the will of God, trusting the good purposes of God to be accomplished in our lives.

Romans 8:28 “²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

2 Cor 12:7-12 “⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with

weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul came to understand the good purposes and will of God for him in this situation through prayer. I assure you that if we fully embrace this critical spiritual discipline all that we have heard from scripture today we will experience. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**