



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

February 12, 2017

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

February 5, 2017: Matthew 6:5-15

February 12, 2017: *"Pray...Go!"* Matthew 9:34--10:4

We are about a month-long sermon series on prayer, so, let us pray...

Shh!

O Lord, our God, along the way, Jesus taught His own to pray. We carry his life in the world, now keep us clear in our mission that all might know and live each day in the power of your love. Help us to walk faithfully in prayer and in serving; in Jesus' name, Amen.

Shh!

We are hearing in this month of Sundays, what it is to be a people of prayer. Last week, it was The Lord's Prayer that shaped us as we heard Jesus teach His disciples to rest in the graceful communication that is the "Our Father." Recall that I asked you to prayer it three times a day, slowly, to recall the depth of it's petitions. Within 48 snowy hours at home, those words carried my communication with God.

The words became a container of grace for the hours of waiting to reenter the day to day life beyond the snow that blocked us in for those days.

By Wednesday afternoon, I expanded the reading horizon with the words of Matthew's Gospel which brought me to the words just shared.

This is what I learned. The verses after the Sermon the Mount are a rapid series of miracles: a leper cleansed, a centurion's servant walks again, many healed at Peter's house, a storm is stilled, a man possessed freed from possession, another one paralyzed as Jesus simply says, "Stand up and walk."

Then, Matthew is called and more healing: a girl restored to life, a woman healed, two blind men see, and a man who could not speak, mute, spoke.

Then, a new section of the story. Take a look at the verse on the cover of your bulletin: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the peoples." Those verses were like a headline before the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, after incredibly powerful words and a series of miracles that clearly show Jesus as One with authority, those words come again with a call to prayer; prayer for those who will be in mission with Jesus and after Jesus, the 12, you, me, each one of us.

Jesus is walking around. Sees the crowds and “has compassion for them.” Literally, co-suffer with them because they were “harassed and helpless” like shepherd-less sheep, stuck! You see for all the wandering ways of humanity and world religions, Jesus is the built-in-corrective and He is about to send his disciples on mission with the authority of power that God has given to Him. What does He call them, call us to: PRAYER!

Listen: “Harvest is huge! Hardly any workers! Pray the Lord of the harvest to thrust out workers into the harvest!” Nearly, takes your breath away! Task is overwhelming, looks hopeless, odds, statistics not in your favor. So, Jesus calls for a prayer meeting because guess who are the ones send to be in mission? The disciples who are just about to pray!

One writer has it: “Christian mission in Acts was born, humanly speaking, in prayer meetings. Christian mission in Matthew too, is now launched for the first time formally; and this launching is seen fundamentally as an enterprise of prayer.” (Frederick Dale Bruner)

The very next thing Jesus does is give them the power to go “walking around with Jesus.” The first mission is to disciple in the name of Jesus with the heart of Christ that others might know and go with Him too.

Note the change in office: “Jesus summoned the twelve disciples...these are the names of the TWELVE APOSTLES.” An upgrade. From students to sent ones to witness with the gifts of ministry given to them in fellowship with Jesus and one another.

We are fresh from our annual meeting. We are a congregation incredibly blessed with all we need to supply us as stewards of grace in mission. 60 years of faithfulness, into 2017 with opportunities to claim the promise. We are, like the 12, a community of very different individuals. Some have been around a long time (like Gil and Don and Lois). This morning Kristen and Steven, Thomas, Andrew, Philip, Samuel, and Becca are brand new. Now they join us a part of the mission of God, with the compassion of Christ in this place. They gather with us, to be encouraged, equipped to be sent.

We are fresh from an advance/worship of the new Congregation Council yesterday morning. 13 disciple/apostles and a Senior Pastor who are building a foundation to advance this congregation’s depth of discipleship as we continue to share the love and peace of Christ here and in the world.

We identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in times of opportunity and change. Not for a moment was there a word of fear, sense of anxiety or deficit as if we are in “limbo-like-lull” or valley of aimlessness.

There was by Noon a clear commitment to lead, to listen, to challenge, to give thanks for each new day that we continue to live towards the call of God in mission.

In the spirit of the past snowy week and the power of the Holy Spirit, here is a summary of the direction we are being led as Pastor and people, our sources for mission:

- WE LIVE WITH THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST, THE HEART OF JESUS FOR HURTING PEOPLE;
- WE PRAY THAT WE ARE PART OF THE PRAYER OF JESUS’ DISCIPLES FOR MORE CHRISTIAN WORKERS; WE ARE THE ANSWER TO THEIR PRAYERS;
- WE ARE GIVEN THE AUTHORITY AND THE GIFTS FOR THE WORLD’S HEALING WITH CONFIDENCE IN OUR CALLING AND WITH HOPE;
- WE ARE A FELLOWSHIP IN CONTACT WITH THE LIVING CHRIST AT WORSHIP, IN PRAYER, IN SERVING.

In short, we need Christ, we need prayer, we need gifts, and we have each other. With all four, we are the missionary Church in the days we live. We are those who are walking around with Jesus.

With Paul, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among (us) will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ...And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with the knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.