



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 19, 2017

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

February 5, 2017: Matthew 6:5-15

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

February 19, 2017: Matthew 11:25-30

We are nearing the close of a month-long sermon series on prayer. Two Sundays back, we heard Jesus teach His disciples "The Lord's Prayer." The words at the exact center of the Sermon on the Mount. I invited you to pray it three times a day, slowly with silence for discernment. So, let us pray...please pray after me...

† Our Father in heaven...hallowed be your name...

† Your kingdom come...

† your will be done, on earth as in heaven...

† Give us today our daily bread...

† Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us...

† Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

This is the heart's "wake up" moment to recall/re-member this "container of grace" that holds every prayer we have ever, will ever, speak because it places life in the hands/the power of the God, who in Jesus, we call "Father," provider and friend who guards and guides us to simply pray AS JESUS TAUGHT HIS OWN.

Then, last week, we noted that a long series of rapid fire miracles followed the Sermon on the Mount. Doing the work of the Father as he proclaims the good news of kingdom and more healings---God's action in His words and in ways He serves. And in the face of the "harassed and helpless" crowds, with deep compassion, Jesus calls the disciples to pray...recall He said, "Harvest is huge! Hardly any workers! Pray the Lord of the harvest to thrust out workers into the harvest!" Task is overwhelming, looks hopeless So, Jesus calls for a prayer meeting because guess who are the ones sent to be in mission? The disciples who are just about to pray!

The very next thing Jesus does is give them the power to go as Jesus summoned the twelve disciples and names the TWELVE APOSTLES. From students to sent ones to witness with the gifts of ministry given to them in fellowship with Jesus and one another.

We are the continuation of that mission, the expression of the mission of Jesus to the world we share in 2017.

It is significant that Jesus begins to teach those who would follow along the way that there would be suffering as He says, "Have no fear of those who persecute you."

Jesus begins to speak of the cross and tells his disciples that the one who receives them receives him; He moves out and has John's disciples carry the message of the Baptizer from prison. "Are you the one who is to come?" And Jesus says, "Tell them what you hear and see: blind see, lame walk, lepers made clean, deaf hear, dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them." Sounds a little like the mission of those who gather, to be encouraged, equipped, and sent!

Then, Jesus prays again; a prayer of thanksgiving which leads to the words of comfort and call in our Gospel for today.

There are four points to carry us forward towards the Time of Lent:

1. The Landscape of Belief in Prayer. As Jesus prayed in distant places, taught his own, helps his own move into prayer in mission. Prayed in Gethsemane and from the Cross, we are to be a people of prayer. Not an elective at point of crisis, what I have learned the call "SOS Petition," but a pathway to Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Intercession that guides us closer to the heart of God in Jesus.
2. Prayer is rooted in Confident Confession of Faith. My spiritual director in graduate study used to remind that the most radical, brave things a Christian can do is confess The Apostles' Creed and pray The Lord's Prayer. As he often shared, once you get disciplined into them you never speak them alone; literally millions of saints alive and saints that have gone before us sharing in the words we believe, trust and confess. Remember? "And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth, and the hosts of heaven...." Never alone in mission!
3. The Wisdom of Witnessing in Word and Action. It takes the proclamation of the Gospel and the work of servant mission to tell the whole world of Jesus and His life. Time and again, I pray for wisdom as I/we witness. To know when to speak and to be bold enough to act as led! Each of us finds that pathway in the midst of the world we share. The point is that the wisdom of the Cross means to call us out into the world in humble service and to work/to build the Body of Christ wherever we set our feet on earth. The Church is not one more social work outlet in the world, is a missional team, sent from worship and prayer to be those are known to have been hanging out with Jesus.
4. A Servant Prayer. Recall the First Lesson. Solomon prayed for a path to lead, to serve to be as David the king. Not perfect, but called and set into the DNA of promise and mercy. And "It pleased the LORD that Solomon had asked." I love that. Dare I say, "God is tickled when we seek guidance in life and in mission? And it just may be that The Lord's Prayer, the Go-Out that becomes a servant prayer. A prayer of those who know that Jesus has given us everything He received from the Father. And A Servant Prayer, ala Saint Francis, simply begins "Lord, make me an instrument of your love." And that is just about all the world needs now!

This morning, we are blessed anew to be at the center of our life together. It is here that God feeds us with Word and Sacrament, where we remember whose we are in Christ.

To each of us is the call to mission to witness, that tuned to grace, even amidst dissonance, the Church of Christ is a prayerful community that needs to rest and lean on the everlasting...we are the GRACES NOTES OF GOD TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

"Come me...I will give you rest...take up the yoke, learn from me...you will find rest...my yoke easy...burden light...let the mind of the servant Christ be yours that every minute of every day in Christ might seem like one sweet hour of prayer. Amen.