



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Transfiguration of Our Lord

February 26, 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

February 26, 2017: Matthew 14:22-34

Marking a moment of silence and prayer---

Most Gracious God, you seek to send and to live beside us in mission.
As you have blessed us with forgiveness, send anew your Holy Spirit,
to open us to new horizons as we witness and serve in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Time of Epiphany draws to an end. We have shared a month of Sundays which have found focus in prayer.

1. We have heard Jesus teach The Lord's Prayer. Words at the exact center of the Sermon on the Mount. We called that prayer, 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.
2. The second week, we noted that a long series of rapid fire miracles followed the Sermon on the Mount. And 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 send to be in mission? The disciples who are just about to pray!
3. Last week, within the setting of Jesus speaking about the Cross, he shares that his apostle-witness will meet resistance and persecution. He prays a prayer of thanks for His own and calls them to know that He given them every things that the Father has given to him. Then, tells his own to come and to rest as they serve, for His burden is light with the power of the Holy Spirit and one another.

Today, on the cusp of Ash Wednesday, a portion from Matthew which is placed after a series of parables and the feeding of the 5000. Crowds are full, Jesus sends the disciples to the other side of Galilee, dismisses the crowds, and, one more time, "he went up the mountain by himself to pray." For Jesus, prayer is not a "check-in", but a "get into" the relationship with God in which his life began and would be soon be led to a Cross in Jerusalem.

The text has intertwining levels: 1) Jesus is alone in prayer. 2) disciples sea-trek faces great obstacles: waves are huge, land far away, headwinds nearly overwhelming and morning seems a loooong way off. Ah, those disciples. Battered down. Jesus walks towards them on the sea...they see him...scared to death, cry out in fear, "It is a ghost!" 3) Immediately, Jesus says, "It is I...I am...fear not." 4) Leave it to Peter, sudden spurt of confidence, "If it is you, command me to come to you." "OK, come!" Took his eyes off Jesus, feels and fears the strong wind, and ROCK, sinks." ☺ "LORD, save me!" 5) Jesus immediately reaches out, held hand, caught him, and says, in effect, "Little faith! LITTLE FAITH, (There are other synonyms possible!) why doubt."

Next level, final outcome desired of those who would follow Jesus in both the good and the difficult, sun to wind, day to night...in the boat, calmed with Jesus..."those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'"

Why this text on Transfiguration of Our Lord?" It is a bridge in the matter of prayer as we enter of time for contemplative/confessional prayer for renewal we know as LENT. And the pray bid for the next season of the Church Year is "Lord, teach us to pray:"

On the Mountain: I take that to mean the places which are exhilarating, fulfilling, the best of all possible moments when things are well and all seems to be in harmony and celebration. We have all been there...those one or two mountain top moments which we want to hold on to forever. Like Peter, James, and John as they see Jesus with Moses, the law giver, and Elijah, the prophet.

Peter, the rock who had nearly sunk to the bottom, determines that he would build three huts and just be there when the bright cloud brings the news that Jesus is the Beloved that they are to listen to. Recall that Peter may have remembered Jesus' words about the Cross and would prefer to avoid that sadness! And they have to move off the mountain and back into their mission of witness and service. Even towards what, for them, would be the "valley of the shadow of death." Jesus' death!

On the Sea: To the rough places where things are often difficult, confusing, without focus, resulting in fear and anxiety. The places we often dread and seem alone. In the wee boat they huddled and were filled with fear, crying out for their lives until they saw Jesus face to face, heart to heart, eye to eye. Stormed stilled with Jesus at the helm of their lives as they learned again to pray, to worship, to be with him.

In the Church: February Sundays have been about prayer for those of us who are the "Church." Called out ones who have confessed the name of Jesus and seek to grow in discipleship. Those who like the saints of Ephesus are knows to have "faith in the Lord Jesus and love toward all the saints."

Did you catch the majestic words of Paul? We are not with one more "dime a dozen teacher." This Jesus draws us closer to God who gives us a "spirit of wisdom," "eyes of our hearts enlightened" (As in "What Do you See?"). He is the One, this Jesus raised from the dead, seated at the right hand of the father, above every name that is named, "head over all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." That's you, that's me, we are the Body of Christ...

In the World: For that is where we are called to be in and with Jesus, for and with one another. And recall that means we are to be "light," "salt," like "a city set on a hill" as others are enfolded in the community of Christ who loves and serves the Lord in the world.

The Time of Lent is before us. Time to prepare, time for prayer...So, today, at this "mountain-top" place of gathering, we remember all that Christ has done for us, is doing through us, and will be in the future for us!

The Cross, our GPS-Gospel Positioning System, our theme is "Pilgrimage of life: Empty Cross, Empty Tomb, Full Life!"

Our prayer, worth singing:

“Lord, take my hand and lead me upon life’s way;
direct, protect, and feed me from day to day.
Without your grace and favor I go astray;
so take my hand, O Savior, and lead the way.”