

THE PRAYER LIFE OF THE SPIRITUAL LEADER

March 18, 2006

Session One

Time: 8:30-9:45 a.m.

Topic: "Jesus: Our Master and Model"

Texts: Luke 11:1-13; Matthew 6:5-15; John 17; Mark 14:32-42

Introduction:

To clasp our hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world. ~Karl Barth

I. Jesus: Our Master

- A. When we say that Jesus is our master in the life of prayer we mean that he is our **Teacher**.
- B. There are two important Gospel texts where Jesus teaches us the basics of **simple prayer**. Let's compare them and see what Jesus teaches us regarding the life of prayer.
- C. Luke 11:1-13
 - 1. It is in **seeing** and **hearing** Jesus pray that his disciples develop a hunger and thirst to be **taught** to pray.
 - 2. Jesus gives us a simple prayer to begin our prayer **education**.
 - 3. He teaches us that we will never receive what we don't **ask** for, and asking often requires **boldness** on our part. This bold asking can even appear to be **begging** by the casual observer.

Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the Kingdom. ~C.H. Spurgeon

- 4. He teaches us that we as **fallen** and **sinful** beings have the ability to give good gifts to our children when they ask us. Therefore, God's ability to do this far **exceeds** our own.
- 5. He teaches us that God will give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him.
 - a. In Matthew's Gospel it says, "*give good gifts (spiritual gifts) to those who ask him.*" (7:11)

D. Matthew 6:5-15 (The Sermon on the Mount)

1. Jesus teaches us to NOT pray like the **hypocrites**, who love to be **seen** by others when they pray. Instead, pray to be seen by the unseen God who alone can **reward** our prayers of faith.
 - a. This is not a teaching that means that others should never see us pray, or that we should not engage in the practice of corporate prayer, but a caution against praying for reasons of religiosity and spiritual pride. In that case, our only reward is that someone might think or say how spiritual we are.
2. He teaches us that **simple** and **straight-forward** praying is what God desires from us. The saying of many words or trying to take on a special and spiritual tone of voice because we think God might be more apt to hear us is a **false** notion. Jesus teaches that our Father in heaven knows what we need **before** we ask Him.

Heart speaks to heart. ~John Henry Newman

3. Jesus gives us a simple model prayer to begin our prayer journey.
4. He teaches that the key to an effective prayer life is for there to be no **unconfessed** and **unforgiven** sin in our lives with God and others.

E. Richard Foster's Five Counsels and Petition Regarding Simple Prayer

1. "Prayer is nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."
2. "As we begin, we must never be discouraged by our lack of prayer."
3. "An opposite, but equally important counsel is to let go of trying too hard to pray."
4. "We should learn to pray even while we are dwelling on evil."
5. "I would suggest that in the beginning it is wise to strive for uneventful prayer experiences."

Dear Jesus, how desperately I need to learn to pray. And yet when I am honest, I know that I often do not even want to pray.

I am distracted! I am stubborn! I am self-centered!

In your mercy, Jesus, bring my "want-er" more in line with my "need-er" so that I can come to want what I need. In your name and for your sake I pray. —Amen

Note: These five counsels and prayer are taken from Richard Foster's book, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home; pages 13-15.

II. Jesus: Our Model

A. There are two important texts in the Gospels where we get to hear Jesus model prayer for us. Both texts are insightful in that they teach us about Jesus' heart and priorities when it comes to the practice of prayer.

1. John 17

a. This prayer can be divided into three sections; 1. Jesus Prays for Himself; 2. Jesus Prays for His Disciples; and 3. Jesus Prays for All Believers.

b. Note what Jesus is concerned about in regards to himself:

(1) His **glorification** in the presence of God with the **glory** he had prior to his incarnation.

c. Note what Jesus is concerned for in regards to his disciples as he prepares to **send** them into the world on their kingdom mission:

(1) That they be **protected** from the schemes and strategies of the evil one.

(2) That they will be **sanctified** by the Word of truth. This is possible because Jesus **sanctified** himself.

Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness. ~William Carey

d. Note what Jesus is concerned about as he prays for believers in the present and all future generations:

(1) That the **oneness** and **unity** of the Father and Son will be revealed in their life together as the Church

(2) That their preaching of the Gospel will be **believable** in the world to which he sends them

(3) That they will be with him in the life to come so that they can see the **glory** the Father has given him

2. Mark 14:32-42

a. This is the Gethsemane text and we learn four important things from Jesus as he models prayer before us:

(1) Prayer can be a **heavy** burden and **hard** work.

It is the prayer of agony which saves the world. ~St. Mary of Jesus

(2) Prayer is an **intimate** address to our “*Abba*, Father” (Papa God).

(3) At the heart of all true prayer is a desire to **know** and **do** the will of God.

What we need is a desire to know the whole will of God, with a fixed resolution to do it. ~John Wesley

Prayer is surrender—surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boat hook from a boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God. ~E. Stanley Jones

(4) The life of prayer often involves a **struggle** between the **flesh** and the **Spirit**.

The Spirit teaches me to yield my will entirely to the will of the Father. He opens my ear to wait in great gentleness and teachableness of soul for what the Father has day by day to speak and to teach. He discovers to me how union with God’s will is union with God Himself; how entire surrender to God’s will is the Father’s claim, the Son’s example, and the true blessedness of the soul. ~Andrew Murray

Additional Notes and Discussion Questions