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"The Disciple's Prayer"

Hosea 1:2-10 Luke 11:1-13 Colossians 2:6-15

INTRODUCTION TO HOSEA 1:2-10

The prophets of God were often called to do outrageous things. The call God gave to Hosea is probably one of the most outrageous. But God had a purpose in calling Hosea to do what he did. The prophet's actions illustrate the people's need to repent and return to following God. Should they do so, the prophet's message turns from one of doom to one of hope. Hear the word of the Lord from Hosea 1:2-10.

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 11:1-13

This morning I want us to look at what Jesus has to say about prayer. He gives a model for prayer that teaches us the template for how his disciples are to pray and an illustration that teaches us with what fervency we are to pray. Hear the word of the Lord from Luke 11:1-13.

Let's pray, Let us pray. Lord, teach us to pray. We seem to fill every moment of silence with radio or television or noise of some type, because noise helps us to avoid confronting silence. We are afraid of silence. Your Spirit continually prompts us, seeking to bring our thoughts and actions into focus, and we repeatedly hold back. Lord, release us from our fears of silence and walk with us there. Open our eyes and bring our thoughts and actions into focus. Lord, teach us to pray and prepare us to receive and maybe even be a part of your answers.

Years ago Paul Harvey told about a 3-year-old boy who went to the grocery store with his mother. Before they entered she had certain instructions for the little tike: "Now you're not going to get any chocolate chip cookies, so don't even ask."

She put him in the child's seat and off they went up and down the aisles. He was doing just fine until they came to the cookie section. Seeing the chocolate chip cookies he said, "Mom, can I have some chocolate chip cookies?" She said, "I told you not even to ask. You're not going to get any at all."

They continued down the aisles, but in their search for certain items she had to back track and they ended up in the cookie aisle again. "Mom, can I please have some chocolate chip cookies?" She said, "I told you that you can't have any. Now sit down and be quiet."

Finally, they arrived at the checkout. The little boy sensed that the end was in sight, that this might be his last chance. He stood up on the seat and shouted in his loudest voice, "In the name of Jesus, may I have some chocolate chip cookies?"

Everyone in the checkout lanes laughed and applauded. Do you think the little boy got his cookies? You bet! 1

According to a Gallup Poll, 87% of all Americans pray, 50% use prayer for petitions, and 70% claim their prayers are answered. Actually I think that statistic is a little off by about 30%! I believe that 100% of prayers are answered. They're just not all answered, "yes." Yes, "yes" is an answer. But "No" is also an answer. And of course, another option is, "Not yet." Another is, "maybe" and another is "never." And another is "not if you know what's good for you."

I know last week I asked you if you remembered an old movie when I asked you about City Slickers. This morning I want to ask if any of you have seen or remember the movie Bruce Almighty? In the movie Bruce Nolan met God who gave Bruce the power to answer all the prayers in Buffalo, New York. He got frustrated with the number of requests and so he set up a computer to help him monitor the requests. When he got burdened with the number of requests he simply typed "yes." and replied to all." Everyone won the lottery and each person that played won \$2.95 and the people started a riot! What would happen if EVERY prayer was answered with a YES?

One of my favorite songwriters is Brad Paisley. He has a song about prayer that says, "Make no mistake every prayer we pray gets answered even though, sometimes the answer is "no." Remember, even Jesus got, "No," for an answer when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane for the cup of suffering to pass from him

The apostle Paul tried three times to ask the Lord to remove what he called "a thorn in his side." Three times he received a "no." After the third "no" he heard God say, "My grace is sufficient for you." Paul moved on. Paul moved on still plagued by that thorn in his side. Though he didn't understand why he was denied relief, he persevered. He didn't give up because his thorn wasn't removed.

One day, after listening to Jesus pray, his disciples asked him if he would teach them how to pray. In response, Jesus gave them a template that we've come to call, "The Lord's Prayer." However, it's really not "The Lord's Prayer." It's not a prayer that Jesus would have prayed. Jesus didn't have any debts or sins to forgive! Jesus WAS led into temptation by the Holy Spirit to be tempted right after he was baptized!

No this prayer is the Lord's Prayer Seminar. It is the Lord responding to his disciple's request to teach them how to pray. Really, it's the Disciple's Prayer.

As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in schools. As long as there are tests and trials in our lives there will be prayer in us.

"Margaret, I'm home!" How many of you remember that line? It was what Robert Young said everyday when he came home from work in the 50's situation

comedy called "Father Knows Best." Today's situation comedies, seem to be built around the concept that the Kids Knows Best and the fathers are buffoons.

The fact is, though, our Heavenly Father does know best. When it comes to answering prayers, our heavenly Father is able to say, "Yes or No, or Maybe later, or We'll see" or, No way Jose!" God hears our every request. God answers every prayer. But God knows more than any of us do. God knows when to say no, yes and not yet and maybe later or not if I know what's good for you.

Clearly, Jesus does not present prayer as a relationship that presents God as a cosmic bellhop who hops when we ring the prayer bell and runs our errands or grants our every wish. But neither does he portray God as a puppeteer pulling our strings to make us dance, offering only the appearance of free choice.

If someone says, "I felt the need of God. I prayed for something to happen, and it didn't. Prayer failed." No, Sir. I suggest that you did not want God - you wanted God to do something, and that's different. You have missed the purpose of prayer. The purpose of prayer is to be in harmony with God, to have a sense of God's presence; to feel the assurance that God is in, around and greater than any circumstance; that, come what may, we belong to him and underneath are the everlasting arms. Prayer is not a trading post, but a line of communication. 2)

I read about Brian Stroffegren who once had an impromptu discussion among some high school kids. One of the boys had recently lost a sister in a car accident. Some in this group confessed that they had thought about going over a visiting after the accident, but they didn't know what to do or what they should say. However, one of the friends didn't let his fears keep him away. He had spent most of that day with his friend. He admitted that he didn't know what to do or say either. The one who had lost his sister said that what was most important to him at that time was just somebody being there with him. He thanked the one who had visited. Even though he couldn't do anything or say anything that would change the tragedy, his presence was a great help and greatly appreciated.

I think that in many ways prayer is like that. It's a relationship. It's being with someone, not always saying or doing things to change the situation, but our presence can often change us as it brings comfort and love to the situation.

Jesus wants us to view prayer as a family affair. We are to come to God with the same confidence that we would approach a loving parent, certain that we are welcome and our desires are of genuine concern to God. At the same time we make our petitions trusting that God will answer according to our best interests, because after all, OUR Heavenly Father knows best. And his name, his will, his wisdom, his judgment is to be honored.

One of the amazing things in the model of prayer given to us by Jesus is that he teaches us to pray in the imperative mood! When the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray he gives them a series of imperative commands; and says this is the way to pray! 1. Hallowed be Thy name! 2. Your Kingdom, come!

3. Your will be done! 4. Give us what we need for today! 5. Forgive us our sins as we forgive! 6. Lead us AWAY from temptation! And, if you read Matthew's version of this prayer template, 7. Deliver us from evil! Luke leaves that last one out.

These are not, "if it be your will" prayers. These are demands laid before a loving heavenly Father who knows best. Where would we be if God had answered Jesus' prayer in the Garden for the cup to pass from him with a Yes? We are to come before our heavenly Father and state our needs but we must be ready to hear and accept God's answer and maybe even be a part of being that answer.

I heard of another little boy who had such faith in the efficacy of divine intervention that he prayed, "Lord, make me a good boy; and if at first you don't succeed, try, try, again."

That little boy captures the spirit of today's passage. We are to pray that God's kingdom will come and that God's will be done--even if it means a change in me to become a good boy not to just receive goodies or "some chocolate chip cookies in the name of Jesus."

The second part of his prayer, "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again," captures the second aspect of Jesus instruction when it comes to prayer—being persistent, persevering in prayer.

William McGill once wrote, "The value of persistent prayer is not that He will hear us but that we will finally hear Him."

To illustrate, Jesus tells a parable about a man who awakens his friend at midnight with a request for food and is rebuffed. The man continues to bang on the door allowing his friend no sleep until he responds to his request. The friend responds for no other reason than to get rid of the nuisance at his door. Jesus concludes, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." He is not saying that God is one that has to be badgered. He is saying that we need to be persistent and consistent and not give up. Maybe the time isn't right yet. Maybe God is answering someone else's prayer that will play a part in answering yours and that person isn't ready yet.

On Friday I got a call from Debbie Battise-Kleinman. Debbie is the Commissioned Ruling Elder who is providing pastoral leadership for the Indian Presbyterian Church in Livingston, Texas. She is a member of the Alabama Coushatta Tribe. She is also a former moderator of our Presbytery.

Debbie had been trying for 2 weeks to find someone with a truck to come down and pick up our Vacation Bible School sets for their VBS that starts on Monday. She finally found someone who had a truck and needed someone to open the church on Saturday morning to help her.

I made some calls and Mike Wilson and Jimmy Martin agreed to meet her. Somehow Betty McGilvray came also. As it turned out it took more than a pickup to deliver the sets that Cynthia Oliphant created. They had to rent a U Haul Trailer! The deadline was approaching and Debbie kept praying. Finally the answer came through a truck a trailer and Jimmy Mike and Betty and....Cynthia.

I called her to see if they made it back to Livingston and Debbie was so excited. She thinks they will have 100 children from their community. She said that when they stopped to get something to eat they were talking excitedly about what they were going to do and a lady overheard them talking. She came over and asked about their VBS. The lady gave them \$20 to help with supplies for their school.

For 2 weeks the Lord answered Debbie's prayer with "Not yet." When the time was right, the truck was available, and at the last minute Jimmy and Mike and Betty were available so that ... the very day when they stopped to get something to eat on the way back they would have someone overhear their excitement and bless them and be blessed by contributing \$20 to the Vacation Bible School of Indian Presbyterian Church for the Alabama Coushatta Tribe. "Give us by Saturday our daily Sets!".

I couldn't help with being a part of answering that prayer yesterday morning because I had decided to attend the "Let's Talk Now" gathering at the J.D. Walker Community Center on Wade Road. I read about it in the Baytown Sun on Wednesday and decided to go. The event was described as a community forum for community members to share their concerns and suggestions for improved relations with police. It was in a part of Baytown I had never been to before.

Representatives from the Sherriff's Department and the Baytown Police Department were part of a panel of 8 officers who were there to answer questions and hear from members of the community. People were talking about being McNarians. Eventually I realized they weren't talking about being fans of the owner of the Texans. Did you know that there's a community called McNair in Baytown?

I listened to story after story from both perspectives. At the end of the meeting guess who came and sat next to me? Elder Boris Caldwell. At the end of the gathering I met and invited several of Pastors to the next meeting of the Bay Area Ministerial Alliance lunch on the first Thursday of August. They had never heard of BAMA or when or where it met. We were even though, because I had never heard of McNair.

E. H. Chapin wrote, "Never does the human soul appear so strong and noble as when it forgoes revenge and dares to forgive an injury." Lord Forgive us our debts, our sins, as we forgive our debtors-as we forgive those who sin against you, and against us.

After the meeting I also invited one of the officers to come speak at our August Men's Breakfast on August 20th to share her perspective and experience with us, because on August 27th there will be a second gathering called Let's Talk Again at the Baytown Community Center from 10am to 1pm. We are coming together to help each other and listen to each other so that we will NOT be led into temptation and help us and others be delivered from evil.

The Disciple's Prayer is model for practicing the presence of God. Begin by honoring God. Pray and act in such a way so that God's rule will expand and that God's will, will be done more than ours. Pray and act so that our will, will be in line with God's will. Pray that God will give us what we need for today and not worry about what we think we're going to need for tomorrow. Pray and act in such a way that we will receive the freedom that comes from being forgiven and the peace that comes from forgiving others. Pray that God will lead us away from temptation....and Pray and act in such a way that ... the part that Luke's version of this prayer doesn't record but was recorded in Matthew 6:9-13...that God will deliver us from evil.

God might not always change the situation, but knowing that God is with you, that God is going through the tragedy or suffering or depression or even death with you, not as a far off God, way out in space, but as your very close and loving Heavenly father who ...knows best.

Lord, teach us to pray. Lord, teach us to be persistent in prayer, even when we don't get chocolate chip cookies. Lord, teach us not only pray, to continue to offer "thoughts and prayers," but also to work together to be a part of the answers to the prayer our Lord taught his disciples- the Disciple's Prayer.

Elder Boris Caldwell will now come and lead us in prayer.

- 1) Christian Globe Illustrations from Paul Harvey Commentary and News
- 2) The Sign in the Subway by Carveth Mitchell
- 3) Exegetical Notes by Brian Stoffregen .