

Sermon Notes 1-22-17 “Prayer: The Language of the Heart” Luke 10:38-11:13 & Psalm 63:1-5

We're on the topic of prayer, specifically looking at the Lord's Prayer. We are looking at this through the story of Mary and Martha. Martha and Mary are both trying to serve Jesus. But, we saw last week that the core of Martha's effort to serve Jesus is action, activity and busyness. At the core of Mary's effort to serve Jesus is relation—a personal relationship.

Last week we ended our **first point** by saying, if you want an *extraordinarily personal relationship*, you have to settle in your mind that you have family status, that you are a child and he's your Father.

Now, the disciples noticed their Lord Jesus has intimacy with God. He's at the feet of God every morning. That's why they ask him to teach them to pray. They say, “What is the secret? How can *we* have this relationship?” Jesus gives an answer, and the number one word, the first word, the key word ... He says, “You want a relationship like this? You want a prayer life like I have? When you pray say, ‘Father.’” That is the main thing throughout the rest of this chapter. It starts with the word *Father*. It ends with an illustration of fathers.

I believe those words, those 6 words: “*Our Father, who art in heaven,*” are the most hauntingly beautiful and personal words of this, the Lord's Prayer. And yet, I am aware that they are at the same time to many people very painful and present what really becomes to them a cruel irony.

The Fatherhood of God is one of the most powerful, central, beautiful truths of the Christian faith. It is something we access when we enter into a relationship with God, a relationship with Jesus Christ. And yet, I have some friends with terrible stories to tell. And yet.

The Fatherhood of God is different.

Settle the family basis. Remind yourself of it all the time. Grasp it, study it, think about it.

Secondly, pray for spiritual reality.

The question that's always on people's minds is, "Will God really give me things if I ask him?" "Yes, of course," he says. "Absolutely. God is great. God is loving. Ask. Seek. God will give you things. 'Thou art coming to a king, large petitions with thee bring, for his grace and power are such none can ever ask too much.' I've told you he wants you to come with your petitions, so come and bring them. Ask away. Go all the way. Ask for the Holy Spirit."

You say, "That wasn't exactly what I had in mind when I was asking you about whether God was going to answer my prayers." No, it wasn't, was it? Jesus has caught you. We're like toddlers who don't even know what to ask for. So, what is Jesus talking about? The Holy Spirit's job is to give you a relationship.

You need spiritual reality. When you pray you need to *feel* his love, not just know about it as an idea, an abstraction. This intimacy is not a matter of feelings, but it is grounded in the presence of a solid, established relationship.

A relationship takes more than words claiming his presence; it must be nurtured through time & effort. That is why prayer is so crucial to the Christian walk, for Christian discipleship. If Jesus took the time to teach us how to pray and urged us to do so with boldness, then our calling is to make time for it.

Thirdly, *pay disciplined attention.*

Mary knocked off, sat at his feet, and listened. In John 12, right before Jesus dies, Mary brings in an extremely expensive box of perfume and anoints his head & his feet and wipes his feet with her hair in sorrow. *What does Jesus say?* "She's preparing me for burial." *Who knew Jesus was about to die?* His disciples? No. Nobody seemed to know. Why does *she* know? As far as we can tell, Mary had the deepest perception of the gospel of any human being in the world at that point. She listened. They didn't listen. Oh, they heard, but they didn't really hear. *She* learned the discipline of listening. That means two things.

- First of all, it means **taking time.**

- The second thing is you have to **take off your filters**.

Jesus was teaching, and they had their little filters on, their first-century filters of what they thought the Messiah was supposed to be. Mary took hers off. Mary paid disciplined attention.

Fourthly, you have to learn from life's disappointments.

Martha comes to Jesus with a prayer. And Jesus says, “Martha, Martha, I love you, so I’m not answering your prayer.” Jesus refuses to answer her prayer, and here’s why. He says, “Martha, when you are wrapped up in an activity like this and you let it squeeze a relationship with me out, that means that activity *is* your savior. You’re not really doing this for me; you’re doing this for you.”

I just want you to realize, oh, I want you to realize, sometimes Jesus won’t answer your prayer because he wants you into true prayer. Another way to put it is Jesus will always give you exactly what you *would* have asked for if you knew everything he knows.

How’s your prayer life?