

Coming to the Throne of God's Grace

TEXT: Matthew 7:7-11

1. The passage we read a moment ago is a wonderful lead in to our lesson this morning.
 - 1.1. What a precious promise it is, and it's directly from the Savior, too.
 - 1.2. "Ask," He said, "and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He made other similar promises.
 - 1.3. In **Matthew 21:22** for example, He said, "**And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.**"
 - 1.4. And in **John 14:13**: "**Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**"
 - 1.5. And in **John 14:14**: "**If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.**"
 - 1.6. And again in **John 15:16**: "**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**"
2. The Holy Spirit also made similar promises in other Scriptures.
 - 2.1. For example He said in **James 5:16** - **Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**
 - 2.2. In **1 John 3:22**: "**And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.**"
3. In spite of all these and other precious promises of God to hear and answer our prayers, there are people who find praying a disappointment.
 - 3.1. I'd probably be safe in saying that most of us do at times.
 - 3.2. They say their prayers seem not to avail. God seems very far away and doesn't hear them.

TRANSITION...

1. God Listens
 - 1.1. The Bible doesn't teach us to pray to an angel or to a saint, not to the Holy Spirit, not even to Jesus Christ himself, but to God in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.
 - 1.2. God the father listens as the one to whom we pray.
 - 1.2.1. **Matthew 6:6, 9 – But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly... In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name**
 - 1.3. The Son listens as the one through whom we pray. In fact three words sum up his involvement in our prayer lives
 - 1.3.1. Intercession – Christ speaks to God on our behalf
 - 1.3.1.1. **Rom. 8:34 - Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us**
 - 1.3.1.2. **Heb. 7:25 - Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them**
 - 1.3.2. Mediation – Jesus understands us, intervenes for us and takes our side
 - 1.3.2.1. **1 Timothy 2:5 – For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus**
 - 1.3.2.2. **Hebrews 2:17-18 - Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted**
 - 1.3.3. Litigation – Jesus serves as our own personal advocate
 - 1.3.3.1. **1 John 2:1-2 - My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world**
 - 1.3.4. We speak to God when we pray, but we do so through our Lord
 - 1.3.4.1. **Ephesians 5:20 - giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**
 - 1.3.4.2. Important to always pray through the Son or in his name.
 - 1.4. The Holy Spirit listens as the one with whom we pray.
 - 1.4.1. **Romans 8:26 – Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which**

cannot be uttered

- 1.4.1.1. Some will state that the Holy Spirit directly operates on the individual, separate and apart from the Word based on this passage.
- 1.4.1.2. **Rom. 8:26** in no way teaches a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of an individual which enables one to pray. The Holy Spirit, in this passage, is not empowering, energizing, or enabling the individual to do anything
- 1.4.1.3. The infirmity here mentioned is that we know not how to pray as we ought to pray. What we already know about how to pray, we learned through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.
- 1.4.1.4. There are urgings and longings in the heart of a sincere child of God that he cannot express. He has a feeling of helplessness, or of a deep need, without knowing what that need really is, or what would meet the need.
- 1.4.1.5. It is what Paul calls "unutterable groanings." It is the groaning within ourselves mentioned in **Rom. 8:23**. These groanings are silent groanings -- unutterable feelings of need. The Spirit helps us in these groanings, for he understands our needs and longings and can make them known to God through Jesus the Son.

2. "The Best" will result

- 2.1. **James 1:17 – Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning**
- 2.2. At times God says "yes" when we pray
 - 2.2.1. **1 Samuel 1:1-20** - Hannah when she prayed for a child
 - 2.2.2. **Psalms 32** – David when he prayed for forgiveness
 - 2.2.3. Answered the churches prayer for Peter's release
 - 2.2.3.1. **Acts 12:1-12 - Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people. So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying**
 - 2.2.4. Do we collectively offer constant prayer on behalf of this congregation?
- 2.3. At times God says "no" when we pray
 - 2.3.1. **Exodus 32:31-33** - Moses when he prayed for the forgiveness of his impenitent brethren
 - 2.3.2. **2 Samuel 12:15-18** – David when he prayed for the life of his son
 - 2.3.3. Christ when he prays for release from Calvary
 - 2.3.3.1. **Matthew 26:36-44 - Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me. He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words**

- 2.4. At times God will provide with something other than we ask when we pray
- 2.4.1. Paul
- 2.4.1.1. **2 Cor. 12:7-10 - And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong**
3. The Heart of Prayer
- 3.1. Prayer is an expression of our heart
- 3.1.1. Hannah in **1 Samuel 1:10, 13** prayed to the Lord and "spoke in her heart"
- 3.1.2. Paul, when he interceded for Israel in **Rom. 10:1**, expressed his heart's desire and prayer to God
- 3.1.3. Our Lord alerts us to the kind of heart we should take to the throne of God's grace
- 3.1.3.1. **Matthew 6:9-13 - In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever**
- 3.2. We should pray with the heart of a child
- 3.2.1. **Our Father in heaven...**God is called father 42 times in the book of Matthew, 17 times in the Sermon on Mount alone
- 3.2.2. He is God and Father of all – **Ephesians 4:6**
- 3.2.3. He is our spiritual father – **John 1:12**
- 3.3. We should pray with the heart of a sinner
- 3.3.1. We should pray about the sins we have already committed, confess them and invoke the grace of God's forgiveness
- 3.3.1.1. **1 John 1:7, 9 – But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**
- 3.3.1.2. **James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much**
- 3.3.2. We should pray about the sins we might commit. Satan is the master at using our own desires against so we need to ask God to "fortify" us, by his word, against temptations that might lead us to sin
4. I pray to God but nothing happens - The "person" praying might be the cause of my struggles
- 4.1. **James 5:16** tells us that the right kind of prayer coming from the right kind of person makes for a powerful combination...**The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much**
- 4.2. We might not be living right
- 4.2.1. **Proverbs 1:24-28** basically tells us if we stop listening to God, he will stop listening to us
- 4.2.2. **Proverbs 28:9 - One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination**
- 4.2.3. **Psalms 66:18 - If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear**
- 4.2.4. Am I living right according to the Bible as we see in **2 Tim. 3:16-17?**
- 4.2.5. Am I helping others draw closer to God as instructed in **Matthew 5:16?**
- 4.2.6. Am I glorifying God as instructed in **1 Cor. 10:31?**
- 4.2.7. Am I living for heaven as Paul says he was in **Phil. 3:4?**
- 4.2.8. Am I acting out of an obedient faith as instructed in **Heb. 11:6?**
- 4.2.9. **1 Pet. 3:12 - For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.**
- 4.3. We might be expecting too much from prayer.
- 4.3.1. We pray, we plead but we are not satisfied with the results. Return to Gethsemane
- 4.3.2. **Matthew 26:39, 42 – He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."... Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."**
- 4.3.3. **Hebrews 5:7, 8 – who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered**
- 4.3.4. Remember, God only gives that which is good in responding to our prayers

- 4.3.4.1. **James 1:17 – Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning**
- 4.4. We might be not expecting enough from prayer
 - 4.4.1. For prayer to avail, we must pray in faith with no doubting.
 - 4.4.1.1. **James 1:5-7 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord**
5. For whom and what should we pray?
 - 5.1. Have you ever studied the psalms and paid particular attention to the prayer life of David?
 - 5.1.1. **Psalms 34** – When David was afraid and pretended to be insane, he prayed
 - 5.1.2. **Psalms 51** – When David was ashamed of his past, he prayed
 - 5.1.3. **Psalms 54** – When David was afflicted by the unique pangs of betrayal, he prayed
 - 5.1.4. These and others prove that we can talk to God about anything as long as our heart is right.
 - 5.2. We should pray for the forgiveness of God
 - 5.2.1. He promises to forget our past sins
 - 5.2.1.1. **Heb. 10:17 - then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.**
 - 5.2.2. To pray for forgiveness promotes a selfless posture in prayer that reminds us of our disgrace and our need for God's grace
 - 5.3. Those who are the closest to us; our families
 - 5.3.1. Husbands and wives are "heirs together of the grace of life", they need to pray together
 - 5.3.2. They also need to nurture the spiritual growth and prayer life of their children
 - 5.4. We should pray for the people of God
 - 5.4.1. The kingdom mentioned in **Matthew 6** is the Lord's church, a group of people we should have very strong, loving feelings for individually and as whole. (**1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17**)
 - 5.4.2. If we want to follow the lead of Christ and Paul we should put the church ahead of our own personal desires.
 - 5.4.3. Pray for our brotherhood and this congregation of which you are apart
 - 5.4.4. Pray for our growth, numerically but more important spiritually, and for the good influence we can have.
 - 5.4.5. Pray for the individual Christians of this body, especially those who weigh heavily on your heart
 - 5.4.5.1. The apostle Paul wrote Timothy saying, "**I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men**" (**I Tim. 2:1**). Christians interceding in prayer for other people is one of the most splendid of all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.
 - 5.4.5.2. He also asked other people to pray for him. In both his letters to the Christians in Thessalonica he wrote, "**Brethren, pray for us**" (**I Thess. 5:25**).
 - 5.4.5.3. And in the **II Thes. 3:1** he wrote again, "**Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.**"
 - 5.4.6. We do not pray enough together as a body. We need to change that.
 - 5.5. We should pray for the spiritual leaders of this body, but also across the brotherhood.
 - 5.5.1. Leadership is difficult
 - 5.5.2. Elders feed, admonish, convict, and shepherd as they labor and take care of the church.
 - 5.5.3. They need to be encouraged to stay strong, have courage and continue to grow as they serve God.

Invitation

1. Judgment day is coming.
2. My friend, if you're not a child of God, how can you call upon Him as your Father who is in heaven?
 - 2.1. Why not become a child of God at once --today --while you have the opportunity.
 - 2.2. Confess the lovely name of Jesus in keeping with Romans 10:9-10.
 - 2.3. Repent of your sins.
 - 2.3.1. **Acts 17:30-31** says "**God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world**" --by Jesus Christ.
 - 2.4. Then be baptized just as Christ commanded in **Mark 16:16**.