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Summer Bible Conference Message at Peoria 2010

Passage: Luke 11:1-4

Key Verse: Luke 11:4a

1: One day Jesus was praying at a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” 2: He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3: Give us each day our daily bread. 4. **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.** And lead us not into temptation.”

The Lord’s Prayer

Today we’re going to talk about the Lord’s Prayer and it deals with a lot of stuff that I personally had issues with. Before I became Christian, I saw prayer as like a ritual – You bow your head down, wait for the priest to finish talking, and then lift your head up. It was like a rule – do this or do that and you fit in with the crowd, or go to heaven. So when I went to youth group for the first time in high school, and people prayed I panicked. What do I do? So I looked around and followed suit, to be a “good boy.” It’s always one of the more difficult things to explain about Christianity.

What Disciples Thought of Prayer

There's the story of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the ark, the gospels of how Christ came to die for our sins, theology and teachings on how to live from Paul. These things are all very fairly easy to teach and learn from books and others. But prayer? Surely you can't learn from only observation. We all knew that they were men that Jesus picked up at random places, they weren't special holy men, or rich nobles, but ordinary people like you or me interested about God, so I thought, they must have been thinking what I thought too. You just see people bow their heads down for a long time. And when you're not Christian and you hear other people pray, you start thinking of the "correct" way to pray. From listening, its easy to get the completely wrong idea about prayer. I had prayer all organized in my had like an essay written to God. We had a hook, introduction paragraph with a thesis, body, and conclusion. Others think of prayer as God's convenience store, where the currency is prayer, and the correct amount or type of prayer gets you what you want. This is what the disciples thought. Verse 1 says, "One day Jesus was praying at a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."" They saw Jesus praying, and probably saw him praying ALL the time. They knew that Jesus was a man of wonder, who performed many miracles. Perhaps they thought that he was able to do so because he prayed and God gave him power. Perhaps they aspired to be like Jesus at that time. As any good disciple, they wanted to be like their master, and they asked Jesus how to pray, thinking that Jesus would tell him all the logistics and rules of acceptable and worthy prayer, but Jesus gave them something much better – the secret to a relationship with God. Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray in three different parts.

God is our Father and His Name is Sacred

Jesus starts his prayer by addressing God as Father. Right away we see that Jesus encourages a personal, familial relationship with God. Treat God as he were your good Father. Jesus shows us his relationship with God is not like that of a customer and a salesman, or of someone jumping through hoops to get a prize, but a relationship like family. He wanted the disciples to recognize God as family, with God being the leader of the family. He is our Father that never fails us, and our Father that is loving, gracious, and ever-providing.

Jesus goes on, to say “Hallowed be your name.” Hallowed means sacred. Like any Father-son relationship, we also realize that the son must respect the father. A good son respects his father, while the good father always has the son’s best interest in mind. Therefore it is important to recognize where you came from – your father. Would you ever use your own father’s name in vain? No, right? It would sound ridiculous. My dad’s name is “Chawnshang Chang. Say I’m playing a game, and I lose. “Oh Chawnshang Chang!” Doesn’t that sound ridiculous? It’s also very insulting toward my dad. Why use God’s name in vain? God’s name is sacred, and was so sacred that even the Jewish people dared not speak it, but represented it with just 4 letters. It makes no sense to use God’s name in vain – it only weakens your Father-Son relationship relationship with God.

God’s Mission

Jesus continues his prayer with, “your kingdom come, your will be done.” A good son is obedient to his father’s wishes, while a good father takes care of his son, never asking the son for something detrimental to his growth. A family works as a unit, with the father as the leader and the rest of the family supporting the father’s direction. We can see this with Abraham

when God and two angels visited him in Genesis 18 before going to destroy Sodom and Gomorah. Abraham was quick to serve the strangers, and the whole family was quick and hardworking under Abraham's direction. God our father has our best interest in mind, and we should support God's direction by doing whatever mission God has for each of us individually. Overall, we want God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. How does that happen? Luke 17:21 tells us "The Kingdom of God is within you." That means that we are living vessels, living temples to hold God's holy spirit to bring the kingdom of God into us. When God's word has reached all people on earth, then the God's kingdom has come down on earth, just as it has been in heaven. Each of us can play our role in helping that happen. When we say let "your kingdom come, your will be done," we are saying, oh God, let me be your servant, and I recognize you as my king. Sincerely praying for this topic makes us citizens of God's kingdom.

Our Needs

The theme of the conference is "The Kingdom of God is Near!" And we just learned that the Kingdom of God is IN YOU! It tells us that each one of us can make a difference and can be powerful in spirit and experience God. It can help you make difficult decisions in your life, and many other things. You probably want to tell everyone about it. You can go around saying that to everyone, but here is some responses you'll get –"How do I know that? So What? Nice words - It does nothing for me. I'd love to help, but there is too many opportunity costs. I got a lot of other things to worry about. You're not Captain Planet!" And this is why Jesus adds in the third part of his prayer. Our needs. He says, "Give us each day our daily bread." By praying for this, we trust that God, our loving father will take care of us, provide for us. When we follow his

mission, he will provide our daily bread, physical and spiritual. Ask, and it will be given to you; Seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Mt 7:7). What kind of father abandons his child, especially if his child has been good to him?

Jesus says, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." This prayer gives us rest from the heavy burdens we carry from our sins – who can work when he has some horrible thing he's thinking about and worrying about all day long? This prayer gives us peace with those who have wronged us. Have you ever tried to do work when you're really mad at someone? Or pissed off? Not very productive right? But when you work things out and forgive that person, your work becomes much easier. When I was in college, there was this game that was really popular among the guys – Halo 2 and 3, (probably modern warfare or something now) but this can apply to just about everything competitive with guys – poker, sports, drinking, even grades. When you first start its exhilarating – everyone's friends and everyone learns something new. As you get better, things get more and more competitive, and suddenly, trash-talking starts. People have no tolerance for those less skilled. And eventually, fights break out, bad blood get started and things spin out of control. I witnessed a chair broken over a game, and even had people not talk to each other for a week. I know one of them did really bad on his midterms the next week. And this isn't just video games. In high school, I played doubles against someone who served the ball and hit his partner. His partner just screamed at him, threw his racquet, broke it and raged so hard we won by forfeit. We should pray to forgive others, and let things go, just as God our Father has forgiven our sins. In this way, we find rest, comfort, and strength to do God's work and mission while living a life of purpose.

But what if I did not have a good relationship with my father on earth? How do I know that God, my heavenly father is the same? Personally, I had issues with my father when I was growing up. My dad was a strict guy who was quick to anger, and hard to please. Coming from a poor family, he overvalued hard work and was quick to punish those who went against him, including sending my older brother to the ER when he was a senior in high school. Thus, he was an intimidating guy, and he had me work every vacation I had since middle school. So I was in 7th grade, and would be working 70 hour weeks during my summer vacations, as well as during spring vacation and winter break. My friends were all playing and had other stuff to do, like going to the Caribbean, Disney world, or just hanging out. They would call me up, and ask to hang out, but I would have to say no. I was afraid of my dad, but at the same time I hated him for putting me through such misery. I wouldn't talk to him for long periods of time, and even thought about killing myself just to make him feel bad about pushing me and being so authoritarian. However, throughout this year, my first year in medical school at Northwestern University, I saw that the 70 hours a week that my dad had me work on research and labs made me ahead of the curve, and would really benefit my career. I started to see all the amazing things and discoveries that my dad had contributed to society, including a possible cure to Kennedy's disease and liver cancer. A resident just talked to me this week when I was writing this message, telling me that research was crucial to applying to residencies, and that you would be in good shape if you had 1 or 2 papers. From my long hours of work, I have 6 right now. I truly saw that my father had the best interest for me in mind, but I was a rebellious kid, and had no vision of the future. I did not know the long term effects and never believed in the things that came out of my dad's mouth. From writing this message, I learned to repent for

being such a bad son, causing my father a lot of pain, and also to forgive my father for his authoritarian ways.