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Prayer

Ephesians 1.15-23

Series: We Value...

March 20, 2022

The Village Church at Shell Point

I. The Core Value of Prayer

- A. In my in-depth study of the scriptures over the years, I made two mistakes
 - 1. Don't want you to get the wrong impression
 - a. I didn't make only two mistakes over the years in my study of scripture
 - b. I'm sure I made many more
 - c. I'm sure many of them were sinful
 - d. Sinful – lack of care; laziness in examining source material
 - e. Sinful – not done out of love (“love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength” – I don't know that I've loved God with *all* of my mind – ever!
 - 2. But there were two notable mistakes in my study of scripture
 - a. Two mistakes in even deciding to study the passages in question
 - 3. First – I decided to study 1 Corinthians 13
 - a. Love chapter
 - b. Why wouldn't anyone want to study 1 Corinthians 13?
 - c. Read at weddings; beautiful; poetic
 - d. I'll study that
 - e. But when I did, I quickly saw what a bad idea that was
 - f. I discovered that there is no more demanding scripture in all of the NT!
 - g. Without love – I'm a noisy gong or clanging cymbal; I'm in danger of standing up here making a living making noise
 - h. Love is patient – I'm not
 - i. Love is kind – cares more about the welfare of other people than myself – I'm not particularly kind
 - j. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things – oh, I bear, believe, hope, endure – but not *all* things
 - k. You get the idea
 - l. Studying that passage took me apart; like going under spiritual surgery without anesthetic
- B. Second mistake in my study of scripture was I decided to do a study of the prayers in the NT
 - 1. There are some wonderful prayers in the NT
 - a. Obviously, there is the Lord's Prayer; really rich study
 - b. There's Jesus prayer in John 17

- c. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane
 - 2. Then there are the prayers of Paul
 - a. Prayers in Ephesians
 - b. Prayer in Colossians
 - c. Prayer in Philippians
 - d. Others
 - 3. Then it struck me – when I knew it was a mistake
 - a. My prayers don't sound like those prayers
- C. Reminds me of a well-known passage from C.S. Lewis' sermon "The Weight of Glory"
 - 1. Lewis: We are half-hearted creatures, ... like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."
 - 2. When I studied the prayers of the NT, I felt like I was an ignorant child making mud pies
 - 3. Oh, I prayed all right
 - a. Had my list
 - b. Prayed for people
 - c. All of that is good
 - d. But there was something missing
 - e. There was an anemia about my prayers
- D. Someone recently asked me what my favorite day of the week was in ministry
 - 1. I had a really hard time answering that question
 - a. I genuinely enjoy most aspects of my ministry
 - b. I certainly enjoy the people with whom I work
 - c. I don't know if I even gave a decent answer
 - 2. In thinking through it more, I think I may have landed on something
 - a. Wednesday
 - 3. Wednesday – prayer meeting day
 - a. Ever since I've been here I've used devotional times to teach through the psalms
 - b. I'd never done that before I came here
 - c. Started 9 years ago; up through Psalm 135
 - d. We've had others speak on Wednesdays; missionaries often share on Wednesdays
 - e. But by and large, my devotionals are the psalms
 - f. Reason – the Psalms is the prayer book of the Bible
 - g. A huge amount of ink is spent on prayer in the Bible
 - h. 150 of them in one place – the Psalms
 - 4. My Wednesday begins with my normal devotions in Scripture Union's Encounter with God
 - a. Then I focus on the psalm that I'm teaching that evening
 - b. I pray through it; then study some of the best devotional commentators on the psalms
 - c. I make some notes

- d. Then try to communicate something about prayer to the folks who come to Wednesday night
 - 5. In the process, my prayer life has been transformed
 - a. I've learned how the character of God informs my prayers
 - b. I've learned how many different types of prayer the people of God are called upon to express
 - c. Praise
 - d. Petition
 - e. Desperate cries for help
 - f. Prayers for encouragement
 - g. Even prayers of imprecation – asking God to judge wickedness in our world
 - h. I've learned what God-centered praying is all about
 - i. Yet I've learned that I can be personal and transparent to God in baring my soul to Him; even challenging Him on occasion
- E. I hope that in some measure, for those who attend Wednesdays, that they have learned those things as well
 - 1. And that our praying is more biblical, more God-centered, and more fruitful on those Wednesday evenings than it would have been
 - 2. And if you haven't been coming on Wednesday evenings, I really think you're missing something
 - a. Something that could take you to another level of prayer
- F. Prayer is one of the Core Values of TVC
 - 1. This morning's focus
 - a. Demonstrated by our unreserved dependence on the practice of prayer
 - 2. Series – Core Values
 - a. Begin by making an observation about prayer and how it is related to the other dimensions of who we are at TVC
- G. **Mission Statement**
 - 1. **We're building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
 - a. And we can only do that if we are a praying church
- H. In fact, the Core Value of prayer undergirds all the other Core Values
 - 1. **It is the spiritual air in the tire of our church's values, of who we are as TVC**
- I. **The glory of God**
 - 1. If we truly want the Glory of God to be evident and prevail, then we must demonstrate our dependence and desperation in prayer
 - a. It is only God who will accomplish anything of eternal value
 - b. And He must get the glory!
- J. **The word of God**
 - 1. Our praying – needs to be rooted in and driven by the Word of God
 - a. Praying the scriptures back to God
 - b. To assure us that we are seeking and asking for His will to be done

- K. **The Sufficiency of Christ**
 - 1. Our prayer should always be that Jesus Christ would be glorified
 - a. And that we recognize that He is the One who acts on our behalf
 - b. Even as He provided for our salvation
- L. **The Ministry of the Holy Spirit**
 - 1. Our praying must be “in the Spirit”
 - a. Led by the Spirit
 - b. Fueled by the Spirit
 - c. Sanctified by the Spirit
- M. **The Great Commission of Christ**
 - 1. The Great Commission will only be accomplished by the prayers of the Body of Christ
- N. **The Body of Christ**
 - 1. The Church, the Body of Christ, is dependent on our praying
 - a. As we pray for one another
 - b. As we pray for the Church to be the instrument by which the Kingdom of God is manifested and spread
- O. That’s how important prayer is to TVC
 - 1. Every core value stands or falls based on its relationship to deep, dependent, desperate prayer
- II. Text – one of the prayers of the NT
 - A. **Ephesians 1:15–23** (ESV) —
 - 1. 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,
 - 2. 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
 - 3. 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
 - 4. 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
 - 5. 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might
 - 6. 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,
 - 7. 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
 - a. (All that is one sentence!)
 - 8. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
 - 9. 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
- III. **The Launching Pad for Prayer**
 - A. How do we get started in prayer
 - 1. What’s our launching prayer for God-centered, Christ-exalting, effective prayer?
 - 2. Could be many things – some of them quite simple

- a. E-Connections – “The Jesus Bridge”
- b. When we lost control of our car on an icy bridge
- c. And called out of desperation, “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!”
- 3. Our desperate need can be the launching pad for prayer
 - a. Don’t know that that’s always the best and most regular launching pad for God-centered praying
 - b. But it does remind us of our general condition of desperation
- B. Text gives us a clue
 1. **“For this reason...” – Ephesians 1.15**
 - a. Points us back to another run-on sentence
 2. **The blessing of God**
 - a. **Ephesians 1:3** (ESV) — 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...
 3. **God’s choice to adopt us into His family**
 - a. **Ephesians 1:4–5** (ESV) — 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...
 4. **The amazing grace of God**
 - a. **Ephesians 1:6** (ESV) — 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
 5. **The redemption of Christ** through His shed blood, including the forgiveness of our sins
 - a. **Ephesians 1:7** (ESV) — 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace...
 6. **The revelation of the mystery of His will** in Christ to bring all things under His authority
 - a. **Ephesians 1:8–10** (ESV) — 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
 7. **The inheritance that He has given to us** for His glory
 - a. **Ephesians 1:11–12** (ESV) — 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.
 8. **The proclamation of the gospel** leading to our faith in Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit
 - a. **Ephesians 1:13–14** (ESV) — 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee

of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- C. That's the kind of thing that launches us into prayer
 - 1. And every time we read the scriptures we are reminded of one or more of those great truths
 - a. And when we see it or hear it, it ought to launch us into prayer
- D. So when we pray, what kinds of prayers naturally flow from that launching pad?

IV. Prayers of Thanksgiving

- A. **Ephesians 1:15–16** (ESV) — 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers...
- B. We pray for one another
 - 1. How often do we take time to thank God for one another?
 - a. That's the first thing Paul thinks of doing
- C. And what prompts him toward such prayers of thanksgiving?
 - 1. He's heard stuff about them
 - a. Not gossipy kind of stuff
 - b. That's off limits; that's not an appropriate reason for praying for our brothers and sisters
 - 2. No – he's heard first of all of their faith in the Lord Jesus
- D. **Faith in the Lord Jesus**
 - 1. Do you realize how remarkable is faith in the Lord Jesus?
 - a. How unusual it is to believe in Jesus these days?
 - b. How a miraculous work of the Spirit of God is necessary for becoming a genuine Jesus-follower?
 - c. How being born again is an act of God the Holy Spirit
 - 2. When we see people who genuinely believe in the Lord Jesus, we ought to stop right there and thank God for their faith
- E. **Love for all the saints**
 - 1. He's heard that this body of believers cares about one another
 - a. Like we heard about last week – study of the Body of Christ
 - b. Church in Jerusalem – genuine fellowship
 - c. Gave of their own possessions to care for those in need
 - 2. Any time we hear of genuine affection that the people of God have for one another, we should thank God for them!

V. Prayers of Petition

- A. There are two main petitions included in this prayer
 - 1. And these are the kinds of petitions that lead me to exclaim, "I don't pray that way!"
 - 2. And that's why prayers like this have transformed how I pray for our brothers and sisters
- B. **Ephesians 1:17** (ESV) — 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him...

1. Probably best translated as “a spirit” – they’ve already received the Holy Spirit
 2. Asking that the Spirit which resides in them would give them wisdom
 - a. **Wisdom – the application of spiritual truth**
 - b. That they would make good, godly decisions
 - c. Decisions that would bear fruit
 3. Pp – Colossians prayer
 - a. “That they be filled with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding”
 4. Praying that our brothers and sisters would be filled with the Spirit in such a way as to create wisdom
 5. Then a **“spirit... of revelation”**
 - a. Revealing of that which is hidden from the world
 - b. Revealing spiritual truth; that the Bible would become, not just a book, but a means of revealing the nature and character of God Himself
 6. **Purpose – the knowledge of Him**
 - a. Knowing God is the goal of our praying for one another!
 - b. Whatever the circumstances, whatever our trials, whatever our relationships
 - c. We are praying that through them all, the Spirit of God would enable us to know God
- C. **Ephesians 1:18** (ESV) — 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened...
1. Did you know your heart has eyes?
 - a. This has supreme moral implications
 - b. Because before Christ got a hold of us, our hearts were in darkness
 - c. And even after having come to Christ, we still find the shadowy remnants of our darkened hearts influencing our attitudes and actions
 2. Paul is praying that these people – who are known for their faith in Christ and their love for the saints – would have the searchlights of the Spirit of God illuminating the very core of their personalities
- D. Three purposes to this heart-enlightenment
1. **Ephesians 1:18** (ESV) — 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you...
 - a. Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope
 - b. Our hearts need the enlightening of the Holy Spirit so we can look forward to the glories of our future in the presence of Christ
 2. Ephesians 1:18 (ESV) — 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...
 - a. This is amazing
 - b. What do you think is Jesus’ most glorious inheritance?
 - c. We could think of a lot of things
 - d. But I don’t know that we’d think of this

- e. “What are the riches of his (Jesus’) glorious inheritance in the saints”
- f. The saints – your brothers and sisters in Christ – the body of Christ – the church
- g. Are the riches of Jesus’ glorious inheritance
- h. We look down our noses at the church; we see the church in its brokenness, in its conflicts, even in its corruption
- i. We devalue the church; we see it as a weak institution
- j. But Jesus looks at the church and what does He see?
- k. He sees His glorious inheritance!
- l. The Father’s love gift to the Son!
- m. Jesus cherishes the church!
- n. If we don’t cherish the church, we need to repent
- 3. We need our hearts enlightened so that we would know that we, the body of Christ, are the riches of the glorious inheritance of Jesus
- 4. **Ephesians 1:19** (ESV) — 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe...
 - a. We need to have our hearts enlightened so we would know the power of God
 - b. What kind of power?
 - c. Immeasurably great power!
 - d. For whom?
 - e. For us!
 - f. God has provided His immeasurably great power for the church – for us!
- 5. So when Paul prays from these people – who have faith in Christ and love for the saints
 - a. He’s praying that their hearts would have the lights turned on
 - b. So that in the dark recesses of their hearts they would see the power of God at work

VI. **The Power of Prayer**

- A. Do you see how this can transform the way we pray for one another?
 - 1. No you don’t; not yet
 - 2. For Paul takes it even further
 - a. For when he speaks of power, he wants you to know what kind of power we’re really talking about
 - b. I don’t know that we quite get it
- B. **Ephesians 1:19–20** (ESV) — 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...
 - 1. The power of God that Paul wants our enlightened hearts to understand is the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead!
 - 2. Oh, that we would pray in such a way that our brothers and sisters would see and experience the resurrection power of Jesus Christ

- C. But for what purpose?
 - 1. **Ephesians 1:20–23** (ESV) — 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
 - 2. When we pray, do we get the sense that the One to whom we pray sits in the seat of all authority, power and dominion?
 - a. That He is above every name that can be named?
 - b. For all eternity?
 - 3. When we pray do we understand that this One who sits on the throne, in the control room of the universe, is head over all things?
 - 4. And not only that, that He is head over all things to the church!
 - a. To us!
 - b. Which is His body
 - c. The fullness of Him who fills all in all!
- D. Do you see how prayers like this elevate us beyond the ordinary and mundane?
 - 1. And enable us to transport our brothers and sisters by prayer into the heavenlies?
 - 2. That we as the body of Christ would know this God?
 - a. Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places?
- E. That's why prayer is a Core Value of TVC