

Teach us to Pray
“Unspectacular Prayer”

Introduction:

Andrew Murray: “Faith in a prayer-hearing God will make a prayer-loving Christian.”

- ✓ Prayer (fasting) is what sets the ordinary believer apart from the extraordinary Christ-follower.

Murray again:

“Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible...fasting the other with which we let loose and cast away the visible.”

In this series we will explore the powerful potential of prayer.

- ✓ Clearly a crucial part of the believer’s life
- ✓ Modeled beautifully by Jesus (will listen in on His prayers)
- ✓ So much so that His disciples ask Him to teach them

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1 NKJV

Context of today’s message—John 11

- Lazarus, friend of Jesus was sick (11:1, 2—Bethany, Mary, Martha)
- Message sent to Jesus but He delayed for 2 days (11:3-16)
- When He arrived Lazarus had been dead for 4 days (11:17-19)
- His encounter with Martha

Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." John 11:20-28 NKJV

— His encounter with Mary

As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." 32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." John 11:29-32 NKJV

— His preparation for a miracle

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" 37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" John 11:33-37 NKJV

— Protest of Martha—11:38, 39 (by now he stinks)

— Response of Jesus

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" John 11:40 NKJV

— Prayer of Jesus

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." John 11:41-42 NKJV

— Commands of Jesus

- ✓ Lazarus, come forth! (43)
- ✓ Loose him and let him go! (44)

Before we turn to prayer—Few Observations

1. While great confidence was placed in Jesus by the sisters and the mourners to heal Lazarus, not one considered the possibility of resurrection.
2. Mary's weeping (word means wailing)-in verse 33, moved the heart of Jesus. Jesus "groaned in His spirit"—usually means anger. But not here—at least not angry with Mary.
3. The weeping of Jesus could not be for grief over Lazarus' death. He was about to raise him. He wept as one who entered human suffering.

"Father, I know how they feel."

— All the sorrow caused by sin and death

NOTE: But, He knew their tears would go away. He also knows He will wipe away ours one day, but still weeps with us.

4. Tomb may have been vertical or horizontal. Both were common.
5. Protest came against command to remove the stone.
6. Curious words of Jesus to Martha

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" John 11:40 NKJV

- When did He say that?
- See the glory of God
- Will be a key part of His prayer

Move to the prayer of Jesus

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." John 11:41-44 NKJV

I. Habitual Nature of Jesus' Prayer (41b, 42a)

"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And I know that you always hear me...."

- A. Deep intimacy—"Father"—not even "our Father..."
- B. First words are a thanksgiving for being heard by Father
 1. Aorist points to a prayer already prayed
 - a. A prayer that Lazarus be raised
 - b. A prayer John doesn't mention
 - c. Maybe a prayer (not uttered) but in recesses of His soul
 - d. Aorist more naturally to a particular prayer than to habitual praying
 2. The habitual prayer comes out in next words... "I know that you always hear me."

C. Prayer life of Jesus:

1. Motivated by habit not crisis
2. Depended on relationship not eloquence (maybe a prayer of soul)
3. Energized by confidence not stunted by doubt

II. Selfless Focus of Jesus' Prayer (42)

"And I know that you always hear me BUT, because of the people who are standing by I said this that they may believe you have sent me."

NOTE: But is a strong adversative-suggests contrariety or antithesis. I know you hear me—BUT

Selfless in two ways

A. Downplays his personal autonomy

"I thank you that you have heard me."

1. It's not about bold praying
2. It's about gracious hearing

NOTE: We have almost been taught that we must be bold, audacious, pray-ers. We need God's grace to hear us!

3. Jesus was proving what He had said all along, "I do nothing on my own."

IMPORTANT: When prayer is about what I have accomplished, it is misguided.

B. Points them to the Father—"that they may believe that You sent me!"

GREAT TRUTH! The prayers and signs of Jesus are not like the run of the mill wonder worker. They are to create faith—a particular kind of faith—faith with context—Jesus is the sent one!

Our prayers—must be selfless

- ✓ We decrease
- ✓ He increases

III. Specific Purpose of Jesus' Prayer

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" John 11:40 NKJV

A. Important: What was about to happen

- Spectacular miracle
- Display of Jesus' power
- Inestimable gift to sisters

NOTE: Jesus speaks of none of these! For Him the glory of God was the one important thing!

B. All these would see a miracle

C. Jesus is promising Martha a sight of God's glory

1. Crowd would see the miracle
2. Only believers would see its real significance—they glory of God
3. Leon Morris—many saw Lazarus come from the grave but never saw the glory of God!

Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." John 11:45-48 NKJV

Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. John 11:53 NKJV

Are we praying for a miracle? What we want? Or, are we praying for people to see the glory of God?

NOTE: Glory of God (doxa) that which sets Him apart from all others

THAT IS WHAT OUR WORLD NEEDS TO SEE!

IV. Perfect Balance of Jesus' Prayer

Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." John 11:43-44 NKJV

A. Loud voice—not because it was necessary to make the dead hear!

1. So the crowd would know it was not a work of magic
2. Wizards muttered incantations and spells
3. Not so the Son of God

B. Lazarus came out—still bound

"Loose him and let him go!"

C. Balanced in two ways

1. He did what only He could do and expected them to do what they could do
2. Demonstrated a remarkable thoughtfulness
 - a. Loose and let go
 - b. Similar to Mark 5:43

(ILL) House of Jairus—his daughter

Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. 39 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." 40 And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. 41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. 43 But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat. Mark 5:38-43 NKJV

Leon Morris: *"He was never so carried away by the wonder of His miracles that He forgot the needs of the person!"*

Conclusion: Title—Unspectacular Prayer

Why?

1. So many cower—“Oh, I can’t pray!”
2. Picture “great prayer warriors!”
3. Jesus was unspectacular—simple
 - a. Habitual (even the heart prayers) the Father always hears
 - b. Selfless (just want them to see You!)
 - c. Specific purpose (not miracle—glory!)
 - d. Balanced (down to earth) not caught up on the hype
4. You can pray that way too!

“Faith in a prayer—hearing God will make a prayer-loving Christian.”

Teach us to pray!