

“Power of Prayer”
Psalm 40, Luke 11:1-4
July 5th, 2015
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My message this morning is going to be about the power of prayer. Needless to say, prayer is essential to Christian faith. It is more like ‘breathing air’ for our spiritual life. Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer. He encourages his churches saying, “pray without ceasing” (1Th 5:17), “in everything by prayer...let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6). Truly, prayer ought to be a part of our daily, constant spiritual exercises to deepen our faith in Christ and build up our relationship with God. Prayer has power to change our life, but this is a different power than the world pursues. The first thing that we ever remember in our prayer practice is that we pray to God not to ourselves. The whole point of prayer is to turn to God for His guidance. Why do we pray? Here is a simple and short fisherman’s prayer that inspires me deeply.

***Big Sea, Little Boat,
Dear God, be good to me;
The sea is so wide,
And my boat is so small.***

Big Sea symbolically describes our world and life journey. Truly, life is not an easy trip. It’s hard! Because the sea is so wide and deep, our little boat is not big enough to handle many life challenges. What we can do with this small boat is not much. Every time we meet challenges like either small or big waves or sometimes, a storm coming up, we feel overwhelmed. We need courage and boldness to move forward. That’s why we should pray for God’s guidance. Just simply pray. “Dear God, be good to me.” Or what about this Celtic Prayer?
What can afeare, With God the Father near?

Today’s Old Testament reading is a prayer from David and I found three important clues. First, “I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry”, Second, “Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear”. Last, “Do not, O LORD, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.” Three simple and powerful points: 1. God listens to our prayer, 2. God wants to hear God’s voice in our prayer, 3. We ask for God’s mercy.

And our second Scripture reading is the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray to God. The Lord's Prayer begins with acknowledging our relationship with God as Father. In Jesus' times, the whole culture was a patriarchal society. Father was the center, power and head of the family. Our prayer begins honoring God as our creator, almighty God in heaven, our center and the source of power and healing. When we pray, our audience is not ourselves but God. When we pray, He will listen, we can ask for His mercy and for him to forgive our broken relationships and to rescue us from evil. Like David's prayer, we pray for God's mercy upon us!

How about your prayer practice? In our modern prayer practice, we ask God to fulfill our prayer requests rather than opening our hearts before God. Mahandas Gandhi is not a Christian, but he shares great wisdom about prayer. He says, "Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart." When we pray to God, we admit our weakness and limitations. We humbly ask for God's mercy. Oswald Chambers, an early twentieth-century Scottish Baptist and Holiness Movement evangelist pointed out, prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of God.

As we know, last Thursday, I was honored to preside over Jack Noss' graveside service. Jack was the beloved father and grandfather of the Doty family. He passed away last week Thursday and his death was very unexpected. In a sense, our life is a mysterious trip. Honestly, we don't have the answers of *where* we came from and *why* we are here. Truly speaking, none of us has chosen to come to this life, but we are invited to join this journey by God. All we can do is to be humbly grateful for life, and pray to God for His Mercy upon us. The greatest gift we can give to others is our prayers.

The purpose of prayer life is not to receive a genie lamp for your worldly success or material prosperity, but to help you stay in touch with God and invite God to dwell within you as your center and guide. As Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. (John 14:1-27) In the same way, God would give prayer to us as the world cannot give. The power of prayer will connect us to God and walk with Him everyday and every moment. It brings us a privilege to be with God. That's what our souls are seeking and desiring. The ultimate goal of our prayer discipline is to have spiritual discernment. We humbly acknowledge "all our petitions", "desires" and "what we want" is not our wills but God's. Jesus said to us, "God's kingdom come" in our lives. We need God as we continue to travel in this big sea. In your prayer, pray to God for mercy and invite Jesus as your captain. Surrender all in trust and count on him as He navigates your life.

I wrap up my message sharing another Celtic traditional prayer:

**God to enfold me,
God to surround me,
God in my speaking,
God in my thinking.**

**God in my sleeping,
God in my waking,
God in my watching,
God in my hoping.**

**God in my life,
God in my lips,
God in my soul,
God in my heart.**

**God in my sufficing,
God in my slumber,
God in mine ever-living soul,
God in mine eternity. (Ancient Celtic oral traditions) Amen.**