

3-4-18 Pastor Tom

“Authentic Prayer” Matthew 6:7-13, 7:7-11

Matthew 6:7-13 - And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ “This, then, is how you should pray:

**“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,**

**¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,**

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

**¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

**¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’**

Skip ahead to **Matthew 7:7-11 - Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.**

⁹ “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Finally! We’ve been going through the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus is telling us everything we need to do. But this week, we finally get something out of this whole Christianity

thing! He says if we just ask, seek, and knock, we will receive, find, and the door will be opened for us! So here comes the big question: What are you gonna ask for? The guy who turns water into wine, who heals the sick, raises the dead, and does a ton of other miracles says, "ask and it will be given to you." Man, "Well, Jesus, where do I start? Car, vacation, house... I guess I should throw in world peace, too..."

This actually reminds me of a commercial from a few years ago where some people got whatever they asked for. Let's check it out... (**STATE FARM VIDEO**)

So Jesus, with this "ask, seek, knock" thing... Is it really that easy? I mean, you're saying if I ask, it will be given to me? If that's the case, where is my hot tub? Why haven't you healed my friend who is still in a wheelchair because of a stroke? You guys may have done this, too. Or maybe it's just me. Why didn't you heal mom? Why did the financing fall through for the house? Why didn't I get that job? Why didn't I get that promotion? Why am I in pain? I mean, I asked God. I asked, and begged, and sought, and knocked. I knocked till my knuckles bled! So God, Where is my miracle?!? Where is my hot tub?

Most prayers I hear end up in 3 different categories. I hear a lot of prayers about promoting oneself, advancing oneself, or preserving oneself. (EXAMPLES... job promotion, paying this bill, help me not be sick, help me look good in front of the boss, help me not to screw up at work today, Get me home safely, Make my travels easier, may I defeat those coming after me). It's not like those are unreasonable things to ask for. Asking for those things doesn't make you a bad person. But centering your prayers around those things doesn't make you more like Jesus.

One of the easiest ways to understand "Ask, Seek, Knock" is by going to another piece of Scripture found in the Sermon on the Mount. It's actually considered one of the key verses, if not **the** key verse, by most theologians. It could even be considered the

key verse of the Bible!

Matthew 6:33 in the ESV, says **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

We'll dive into that a little more in the coming weeks, but to boil it down simply and in regards to prayer, the promise of "Ask, Seek, Knock" **is for those who seek God's will above all other things.**

Let's look at how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6...

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ **your kingdom come,
your will be done,**
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

Matthew 6:10 says "Your kingdom come, Your will be done. You, You, You!!! It's about Him. It's all about His glory. It's not about me. It's not about us. It's not about you. It's about Him!

You see, it's all about the advancement of God. Of HIS Kingdom! Not the kingdom of Pastor Tom. Not the kingdom of you. Not the kingdom of self. Why is everyone in life all about advancing themselves and their own agenda?!? It's not about, you.

I think about the disciples. About how they heard these words come out of Jesus' mouth themselves. They saw the miracles with their own eyes. They heard Jesus say, "Ask, seek, knock,... and it will be given to you." I'm sure they wholeheartedly threw themselves into everything Jesus taught.

I'm sure because almost every single one of them died a horrible death because of what they believed, practiced, and preach. From being stabbed to speared to skinned alive to crucified, they all died pretty violently. It makes me wonder, just a tad, that if those painful moments before they died, they were like, "Jesus, come on bro! How come you aren't answering my prayer and delivering me from this?" I mean, surely, they would have to be praying that, right? They had to be disappointed.

And yet, they kept on going, even when they saw their fellow disciples die.

They were definitely not about advancing their own agenda. They weren't about promoting themselves, and they definitely weren't about preserving themselves. You see, they weren't living for this life. They were living for eternity. **2nd Corinthians 5:1 says For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.** And so what did they do? They sought God, and his righteousness.

It's gotta be about Him before it's about us.

There is a song by a band called Audio Adrenaline I like called "Believer": I can push back the mountains, I can stand on the waves, I can see through the darkness...

When I was younger, I thoroughly believed I could walk on water. And I still hold to that belief. Now I know what some of you might think I'm crazy, but I desperately want to walk on water. (And I'm not crazy about water, either. It terrifies me. I hate swimming). But I seriously believe I can walk on water. There's another song by Audio Adrenaline that goes, "If I keep my eyes on Jesus, I can walk on water." It talks about Peter and faith and how Jesus called him to walk out on the water to meet him.

Yeah, I can walk on water, too. Now I might want it really badly, but the thing is, unless it is part of God's will, it will not happen.

Some people want miracles. They want answers to huge prayers. They say things like, "if only God would answer these prayers, THEN think of all the people who would follow Jesus. A "if God does this, THEN this is how I will respond" situation. We press God and say if He gets us out of a sticky situation, then we will REALLY dedicate our lives to Him. We barter and go back and forth with what we might be willing to give up to get the answer to prayer that we want. We beg God for the miracle that we want.

Some of you say, if I saw someone walking out on the water down by Boathouse Row (when it wasn't frozen) with my own eyes, and said that he came in the name of Jesus and everyone was to sell everything they had and give the money to the poor, I would do it in a heartbeat. The thing is, people would see it, and they would doubt. They would spread lies.

Some of you say, how is that possible? I don't know. I don't know how someone could harden their hearts so much to not see a miracle in front of their face and respond to it. But it happened. It happened back in Jesus day. The Pharisees saw things with their own eyes, and did everything in their power to strike Jesus down and kill Him. Just because God does a miracle, doesn't mean people will believe.

For people who say, "If God does _____, THEN I will follow Him", I have just one thing to say to you. God gave his only son to die on the cross for your sins. For YOUR sins. And it's NOT ABOUT YOU!!!! But He did it anyway!

We need to change the way we are praying! We need to be about His Kingdom and His ways!

You want the secret to Ask, Seek, Knock? To "Ask and it will be given to you?"

Want what He wants. Ask for what His heart desires. Be humble. Don't lift yourself up. Don't increase your world. Don't

promote yourself. Promote Him. Don't advance yourself. Advance Jesus. Don't preserve or protect yourself. Protect those who can't care or fight for themselves. THEN, it shall be given to you.

If we aren't receiving the answer to the prayers that we want, then we need to humbly be asking the question, "Is this what God wants? Am I seeking His Kingdom, am I seeking His righteousness?"

Back to the hot tub... If you need something that is within State Farm's guidelines, they will take care of those needs. The same goes with God. If there is something that you NEED that is within HIS guidelines, HIS will, then He will take care of that need! But too often we go to God with requests that don't fit. You walk in to a State Farm Office, go up to your agent and say, "Can I get a hot tub?!?", They are gonna look at you like you are crazy! We go to God with requests all the time, and I can't help but wonder if He does the same thing. "Why are you asking for more money or stuff, when I have given you more than enough, and you still haven't taken care of those who are less fortunate in your life?"

"Why are you continuing to only pray for the physical healing of this person, when what they really need prayer for is a closer walk (or any walk at all) with me?"

"Why do you care soooo much about your feelings when I said I would take care of you, and you will ultimately be face to face with me in 100 years or less for the rest of eternity?"

Now, we can cast all our cares on Him. And God cares very much about how we feel and all the things going on in our life. But when I look at the Scriptures, I believe that all those things will fall into place when we worry about the big picture! (**"Seek first HIS Kingdom and all these things will be added to you"**) It's all about following Jesus, telling others about Him, and helping just one more person follow Jesus with you!

Remember the disciples? They gave up their life to follow Him, and most died tragic, painful deaths! What about all the others who lost their lives spreading the Gospel? Were their prayers not answered?

What about Jesus?

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

We need to pray His will be done, no matter what happens to us. Even if we think we know best, we need to lay it at His feet, and go “Ok, God, you know what you are doing. Have your way, no matter what that means for me.” And then we can step back and see what happens when we ask, seek, and knock.

Jesus gave us a fantastic model of how to pray. His words were simple, and He did not need to repeat himself. I want to break down what he said into 6 different pieces.

“Our Father in heaven,

(**Relationship** – We are in a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. God is not some far-off distant being that has set the cosmos in motion and stepped back to observe. He is hands on. He yearns to be with us. In fact, every single thing that God has ever done, from the Creation of the universe, to Jesus dying on the cross, is all about establishing and restoring relationship with us. When we pray this, we not only recognize the fact that we have a relationship with Almighty God, but we remind ourselves of how important we are to Him. It may be all about His will and His Kingdom, but His will is all about us, and everything He has done has been to allow us into His Kingdom.)

hallowed be your name,

(Respect – God is holy. He deserves our honor and respect. Do you come before him as someone who just throwing a wish list on a desk as they pass by, or do you sit down and make your requests clear and well thought. How do you ask your boss for something? Do you put time and thought into it? Or could your prayers to the Almighty Creator of everything be considered the same as shooting someone a text asking them to pick up the milk or take care of something at work?

¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done,

(Reign – This says that we want things to happen from God's perspective. By saying "Your kingdom come, and your will be done," we are saying that we want Him to rule. That we will surrender to whatever He wants. That His way is best. That He is the King, and whatever He says, goes. We surrender to Him and open our eyes to what He wants. (How can we know these things? By spending time with Him, reading the Bible, and asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Something that none of us can master perfectly, but that we can get a little better at every day.)

It also points out that He is even in control of things beyond our own circumstances. So it is not just a prayer of surrender, but a proclamation that He is God over all.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

(Food – Halfway through the Lord's prayer, and we finally are asking for something about us. Take note: It's not about you. (Some of you may need to just write down one thing in regards to your relationship with God and prayer: "It's not about me.")

We ask God to meet our daily needs. Now this just isn't food, but all our basic needs that we need to survive. When we do this, we are recognizing Him as our provider. Not our job.

Not our family. Not the government. But Him. And when we recognize Him as our provider, this goes back to the "Respect" part).

¹² And forgive us our sins (debts),
as we have forgiven those who sin against us (debtors).

(**Forgiveness** – Why Jesus included this, I don't know. I mean, he didn't have any debts. He was without sin. Perhaps because we need to be constantly reminded that we aren't perfect. That the greatest gift God gave us was when He forgave us. He could have held everything against us, but forgave us and gave us a way out. Notice how it is important that we are to forgive others, too. By the way, we can ask God for help in forgiving others.)

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'

(**Freedom** - God can help us win over every temptation. We can be delivered by anything meant to destroy us. We aren't held back. We aren't pushed down. But we can be victorious over evil. We can rise above it. But we need God's help to do it.)

This is a simple model that Jesus gave us. And it wasn't meant to be repeated word for word. Then we would be just like the pagans, babbling and repeating the same thing over and over.

Worship Team

My wife and I did one of those painting with a twist things one time. Where everyone starts with a blank canvas, and the teacher is up front and starts to paint and telling everyone what to do. And I'm there, with my eyes glued to her canvas, watching every stroke and trying to do exactly what she's doing. I'll turn to my wife, "Wait, was that 3 strokes, or 4?" "Exactly how much yellow paint did she mix with the blue?" Suffice it to say that my painting did not turn out well. I was so focused on

trying to repeat exactly what the teacher was doing, that I lost the idea of what she was teaching. My wife followed the essence of what the teacher was doing, and though her painting looked a bit different than the instructor's, it still held the same essence, and looked way better than mine.

When Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, He didn't give us words to repeat, He gave us a model to make our own. To practice and shape as pursue a deeper relationship with Him. So what I would encourage you all to do, is to rewrite the Lord's Prayer, in your own words. Maybe you'll switch up the order a little bit. Obviously you may be asking for different needs as your go throughout the week. Maybe you'll be asking for help from specific temptations. Maybe acknowledging a different awesome attribute that He has. Whatever you do, make it your own. I'd encourage you to write it down, and share it with someone. Even if it is just a "generic" Lord's Prayer in your own words. In fact, that's your "homework." Re-write the Lord's Prayer in your own words, and share it with someone. Feel free to e-mail me, if you'd like.

Communion

(I started out this message talking about how we finally get something out of this whole Christianity thing (Follow Jesus Thing). But then I turned it around and said that when we are asking, seeking, and knocking, we aren't actually doing it for ourselves. Now I don't want you to think we don't get anything out of following Jesus. Remember, we have been forgiven! "Just as we have been forgiven our sins, may we forgive those who have sinned against us." It's not that we **have to** follow Jesus, but that we **get to** follow Jesus. The greatest thing we get out of following Jesus, is that we actually get to be with Jesus!)