

In Everything, Prayer

by Michael Flowers

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in every aspect of life, highlighting its role in fostering a relationship with God and community.

Duration: 34:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:42, Acts 3:1, Acts 13:2-3, Romans 8:6, Galatians 4:6, Hebrews 5:7

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and how it should be done in the name of Jesus Christ and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The speaker highlights the need to take the time for prayer, even in our fast-paced culture. They encourage listeners to approach prayer with a sense of adventure and to surrender to the season they are in. The sermon also emphasizes the value of community and the role it plays in the mission of the church, as seen in the early church in the book of Acts.

Transcript

We're going to continue our series today called Why? This is number eight. In everything, prayer. In everything, prayer.

We're going to survey some of the various ways and forms that we pray in this church and some of those contexts. While liturgical prayer, what we're doing right now for Sunday Eucharist, while that tends to be primary for Sunday mornings, we pray in many free-form ways, non-liturgical, non-scripted ways, ranging from personal and corporate intercessions, spontaneous praise, prayers of healing, etc., etc. And so what is prayer? Let's ask that question.

And that could be answered so many different ways. And that passage in First Thessalonians 5.18 just came to mind. In everything, give thanks.

Right? In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God. Giving thanks is a form of prayer. In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God.

You know what? I think all of our lives need to be immersed in prayer. And so in everything, pray. In everything, prayer.

That would be the title this morning. In everything, prayer, because all of life is lived in communion with God, in relationship with God, or as C.S. Lewis calls it, a dialogue between man and God. Prayer is a dialogue, not a monologue, right? It's a dialogue between man and God.

Thus, the ears of one's heart must be attuned to this inaudible, yet perceptible dialogue. It's an inaudible, yet a perceptible dialogue. My sheep, says Jesus, know my voice.

And there's a difference between knowing and hearing, right? Knowing is a much deeper experience of that word. It can be inaudible, but you can know his voice. Amen.

All of life begins, then, in relationship. All of life begins in relationship. Our children, Ian and Julia, they're the product of my relationship with Liz.

All life, all living things are birthed out of relationship. Therefore, the Christian faith is not propositional. It's more prepositional.

What do I mean by that? Prepositional phrases are describing relationships. And so, the Christian faith is not necessarily propositional as much as it's prepositional. A faith rooted in relationships between God and not just God.

A faith rooted in relationships with God and others. Others, right? We can't say that we love God and hate our brother. It's all tied together, right? It's all tied together.

Our prayers are not merely linked to God, but to all the relationships of our lives. Our prayers are linked to all of those relationships, even though you're not thinking about them. Even though you may not want to think about them.

Again, C.S. Lewis observes, Nothing makes an absent friend so present as a disagreement. Nobody says it like that. In letters to Malcolm, in the introduction, Nothing makes an absent friend more present than a disagreement.

So, this impetus to pray is the movement of the heart back to its eternal origins. This is where I want to communicate today. That this impetus that we have to pray is the very grace of God in us.

And we hear that primal cry drawing us back to our eternal origins. Right? For the unbroken communion in God that was once experienced with man and woman. This prayer prompts us to keep on asking, to keep on seeking, and to keep on knocking.

To keep on keeping on, right? That's what prayer is all about. And so, when you look at that, you know, anyone who asks, seeks, and knocks, It's in the present tense. It's in the continuous tense.

It's not a one-time thing, but it's a perpetual asking and seeking and knocking. Because we're knocking on the door of an eternal God. Who cannot be minimized in any kind of one event or one prayer request.

He draws us to come, and come, and come. John Danilu says this, No person is a stranger to the solicitations of grace. No person is a stranger to the solicitations of grace.

The first mention of prayer in the Bible is commonly thought to be Genesis 4, 26. To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time, people began to call upon the Lord.

At that time, people began to call upon the Lord. But, perhaps this first calling upon the Lord merely illustrates a returning to that, a longing for that, a seeking for that original righteousness. That echo of the way it used to be dwelling inside of us.

When man and woman experience God naked and without shame. Genesis 3, 8 and following. This relationship of purity calls us forth to pray, to ask, to seek, to knock.

Prayer thus is the heart's longing to be with God in the cool of the day, as we live out in the middle of the two advents of Christ. Therefore, prayer is not only a longing for original righteousness, but is likewise a reaching now in Christ, a reaching forward. Not just a reaching into the depths of the subconscious, what would be buried there from long ago, where we're rooted in our human nature.

But it's also a reaching forward now to the final wedding feast of the Lamb. You see, the Bible begins with a marriage and the Bible ends with a marriage. And we're in between going like, oh, I long to be married.

I long for that day that tell us that end in Jesus Christ. The second advent, which we're going to be talking about pretty soon. Prayer penetrates the whole of our lives.

It saturates the whole of our lives. This dialogue involves unceasing awareness, listening, waiting, repenting, tasting and seeing. That's what that dialogue evokes.

This seeing out of an eternal communion with God. Such immersion is how we take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. This kind of immersion allows us to cast down every thought that pushes back against the knowledge of God.

That pushes back against the way and the truth and the life. And I hope you feel that push back. This unceasing prayer becomes a weapon.

Therefore, it becomes a weapon against the unseen war within this unruly head of mine. This unruly mind using Paul's image. To put on the helmet of salvation is to affirm the very mind of Jesus Christ over my autonomic thoughts.

Over that stream of consciousness that seems to come out of nowhere and run wild and cause me to feel filthy. Really, the stream of consciousness that is autonomic in this shoots through your mind. It's not voluntary thoughts and it's not meditation.

But it's that consciousness that comes and that's where the unseen warfare is. And this is why we must pray without ceasing. We must pray without ceasing.

How do we do that? Herein lies the central battleground right here. The central battleground of dialogue to align with the enemy, because there's a dialogue going on there, too. We can have a dialogue with the enemy in that stream of consciousness and we can come into alignment and believe things about ourselves that are not true.

That are not true at all. But we align ourselves with those thoughts. We align ourselves with those messages from within and from without.

This is the unseen warfare. Or we can align ourselves with the mind of Christ, the word implanted, a mind immersed in the scriptures. It's really all of the scriptures is the prayer book of the Bible, not just the Psalms.

But use all of the scriptures as the prayer book that it's just right there. It's just open it up and begin to go. Oh, wow.

And just pray it into your heart. By word, I have hidden my heart that I might not sin against thee. Because we are sons and daughters, because we're his children.

God has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, praying. Crying. The father.

This eternal cry. And that's what that is. That's an eternal cry.

Never ceases to draw us into the father's eternal embrace. You see, we have this deposit in us that pushes us towards the love of the father. We have this deposit in us.

If we would only hear that primal, oh, that eternal cry of a father, we would affirm our adoption each time we hear we are sons. We are daughters of God. We must know this to be giving time in prayer.

And so the mindset on the spirit, Paul says in Romans eight, is life and peace. You need more life. You need more peace.

The mindset on the spirit. And the beginning of that is other father, the spirit, what the spirit is saying of a father. Before the first Pentecost, the coming of the spirit, the disciples asked Jesus, Lord, teach us to pray.

Teach us to pray. Many years later, Paul would write, we don't know how to pray. You feel like that? Yeah.

And we've perhaps heard a lot of sermons on prayer. We've probably done a lot of prayer. I know you have.

I know many of you. And yet we can relate with that basic word. We don't know how to pray.

It's something that we never fully master, right? Because it's relationship. It's not something that we learn a bunch of propositions and then we memorize that and then we can take the exam and make a hundred. Therefore, we know how to pray.

Jesus didn't give them a seminar on how to pray. He answered that question by pray like this. Pray like I do.

But yeah, it's this is how to do it. It's not reading a book on it, even though that can be helpful. But you have to do it.

You can read a book on swimming, but you have to get wet, right? Let's get wet. Yeah, it's good. That's where the fun is.

Splashing in the water. Yeah, we don't know how to pray, but here it is. The spirit intercedes in here with groanings too deep for words.

So in a sense, we don't need to know how to pray. Because the spirit is groaning too deep for words. Now, we need to know the basics of prayer and how to pray in the name of Jesus Christ and in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

But it comes in doing. It comes in connecting. It comes in relating.

It comes in giving time. That's what it comes in. And many, many, many years later, someone would ask the Trappist monk Thomas Merton how to improve their prayer life.

And Merton replied with three words. Take the time. That's it.

And you can imagine that person just waiting on the pearls to come forth in the presence of the master, and he just says, take the time. That's so powerful because how relevant that is. Take the time.

What? I don't have time. Take the time because we live in a nanosecond culture of boredom. We're so easily bored now and we're never satisfied.

Never, never. I mean, it just keeps we just keep going down and deeper and deeper into boredom because everything's excessive and it doesn't fill that hole that doesn't find that rest in him. We must take the time or the time will take us.

One of today's scriptures acts to the coming of the spirit. You see the difference the Holy Spirit makes when the spirit lands and just rocks Jerusalem for the first time. You had thousands of people in from all over the place.

And after they received the Holy Spirit and were baptized and they heard this amazing apostolic preaching from Peter, it said the result is that they devoted themselves. They devoted themselves to the apostles, teaching to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, plural, the liturgical prayers, the hours of prayer that you will find them still keeping throughout the book of Acts. Peter and John were on their way to the hour of prayer.

Right. It will use phrases like that that will let you know or it'll use specific times like it was nine o'clock in the morning or it was three o'clock in the afternoon. And that's when that hour of prayer where the whole Jewish community would stop and just begin to pray.

They kept it going. And then day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they receive their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day.

Those who were being say see mission is connected to the life of the church. They valued community, they valued being catechized, they valued the Eucharist and they valued the prayers. And it was day by day and hallelujah.

You know, six days a week we gather now day by day. I mean, I never think I'd be in a church where we could say day by day. But we're doing it seven o'clock in the morning.

We're doing morning prayer and then taking the Eucharist and then hanging out and having amazing, crazy conversations, sometimes theological and sometimes crazy. Yeah, it's fun. Unplanned conversations.

And sometimes it's gone for an hour or two for those who can hang out, but you can come and go at your leisure and you can come and go according to your work schedule. But it's day by day. Know this, that good things are coming from those gatherings.

Amen. And that speaks of the corporate nature of our life in Christ, of our life in prayer. This is all corporate stuff that we're looking at in that passage of Acts in morning prayer.

That's that's never to take the place of personal prayer. Right. Just because I went to morning prayer for 30 minutes, you're going to need more than that.

Alone with God. Where that love relationship begins to develop and you don't need liturgy, you need the word, you need the Psalms, you need. Oh, God, pray Psalm 27.

If you don't know how to pray, pray through the Psalms and say, God, let this be my voice today. This is the way I feel. Right.

That's what it's there for. And so we're aware that we pray liturgically. The whole liturgy is corporate prayer, though.

This is corporate prayer. This doesn't take the place of my alone time, Jesus. This is corporate adoration.

And it is so important because some people don't do this and they only have alone time, you know, trying to hold fast to the head, but not holding fast to the body. So it takes both. It takes both soaking in the scriptures, prayers of the people, repentance, thanksgiving in the Eucharist, the sending equals the Sunday celebration of the cross, resurrection and return of Christ.

Let me make mention of Dylan, who is helping his father move today. His father's moving up to Pittsburgh to carry on with an Anglican seminary experience that he's been doing online. He's actually moving to the campus.

He's going to finish up Dylan's father. Isn't that great? It's really beautiful. And so they're moving from Texas up to Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

But just let me mention Dylan's name is one who is overseeing morning prayer and making that all happen. And then Dylan has a group of leaders who take a day each. And it's just a beautiful thing.

It's a beautiful thing. And then there's personal prayer, which I've spoke of, and this is what Jesus is trying to get at in Matthew six, six. When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your father who is in secret.

There it is. And your father who sees in secret will reward you. You see, the closet enriches the corporate gathering.

The more time we spend in the closet, the richer our corporate gatherings will be. Yeah, because we'll come with the glory, the glow, the sense of having been touched by the Lord and going deeper and being rooted and grounded in him. And that has an effect on all of us.

Your spiritual growth has an impact on all the rest. Yeah, we are connected in the spirit. And so your spiritual growth is an encouragement to all the rest.

Amen. Very good. And we need to recognize that because we don't know if we're growing or not.

It's not for us to recognize that we can't really. We need others to say, man, when you said that or when you prayed that or when you did this. That's so blessed to affirm the other in what you see in them, because that's an outgrowth of their relationship with God.

Right. And you see people taking risks to say something that's encouraging. Affirm it, because it's hard sometimes just to be positive in such a negative culture.

And it's not being positive. It's speaking truth. There's a difference.

OK, note the relationship of prayer to mission in today's reading in Colossians four continues steadfastly in prayer. Be watchful. Be watchful in it with Thanksgiving.

Probably. I don't know. He could be referring to it.

Be watchful and take the Eucharist. It's the same word. I don't know, but that's what we did.

And at the same time, pray also for us. Here's a here's an intercessor intercessory prayer request. Pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

So if you want to know how to pray for Father Michael, there it is. Just pull that out and pray that over me. Yeah, that I may make it clear.

See, because you will benefit from walking wisdom towards outsiders. See, see the juxtaposition there of prayer and pray for me and outsiders making the best use of your time. It has to be saturated your time with outsiders.

Your time in the world has to be saturated in prayer. Let your speech always be gracious. Oh, mercy.

You have to spend time in prayer to do that. Right. I mean, you just find it so normal and natural to be gracious with your speech, right? All the time.

No, this drives us back to the source of life where we can spill out on other people because we've spent time with the one who wants to spill out over the whole earth. The glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. Amen.

In the days of his flesh, in Hebrews five, seven, it says of Jesus, he offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. That means I know he wasn't an Anglican. Sorry, Anglicanism came after this and we're getting ready to go back to that.

Right. We need to go back to this. Anglicans need to read this.

Right. No, I need to read this in the days of his flesh. Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.

And he was heard because of his reverence of mission. Amen. And so we have this precious spiritual mother in our church.

Her name is Anne Smart. She had a beautiful blurb this week in our MailChimp mail out. And I just want to draw your attention to that.

But this is kind. This is a part of her heart. This this prayers and supplications for all of you with loud cries and tears.

I've seen her do this. Well, I've seen the tears, but I know you cry loudly when I'm not around. But I've seen the tears, seen the tears.

No, really. And and so and what is intercession anyway? It's standing in the gap on behalf of others. It's standing in the gap.

It's minding the gap. Right. Standing in the gap on behalf of others.

And Anne has a confidential intercessory prayer team. If you don't know about this, where if you are going through anything, really, you can call her and you can let her know or you can fill out a card in the back. There's intercessory prayer request cards.

You can tear off that that contact me in the back of your bulletin and write it down. It will get to us. We we loaded her up.

We loaded up the team this week, man, with so many things. It was beautiful. And then there's ministry team prayer that we do here during the Eucharist, and that's I would say ministry team prayer.

I mean, one way you could say that is listening on behalf of others, whereas intercession is standing in the gap on behalf of others. Ministry team prayer over here is listening prayer, listening to the person's request and then listening to the spirit, how to pray for that request, listening prayer on behalf of others. It's limited in scope because of the setting and time that Sherry Bertram oversees that ministry, Sherry and Ted.

She has a team of people, as you know, that every week are assigned to pray over here. And that's that's a part of our pastoral care to you in this space at this time. It doesn't cover everything and it doesn't try to.

It covers in the moment. This is what I need prayer for. That's ministry team prayer.

And then Sherry Bertram also has a team of people who does private forms of healing prayer, such as soul healing or inner healing or just I just need some counsel in the presence of the Lord. And then lastly, what I would call Antioch missional prayer, Antioch missional prayer. And that's the way this church was planted.

That would be Acts 13. The church at Antioch had prophets and teachers and a list of a bunch of them. They're all from all over the place and they were all together and they were ministering to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

And the Holy Spirit said, oh, this group of people in Antioch actually came together expecting God to speak to them and guide them and lead them. Go figure. Right.

And this is the way this church was planted. It began with four people and then it began with then, you know, we probably had eight and then we we grew to 12 core people in our house and then we moved out of our house and went over to Bell Street for a little over a year and grew to 40 there and then came here. And here we are.

But it began in a prayer meeting. This church began in a prayer meeting intentionally so. And so as long as I'm the rector, here's the deal.

You can start anything virtually that's under the realm of Christianity. Right. But it has to begin in prayer.

It has to be birthed in prayer. Otherwise, you can say, oh, you know, I can start this ministry and I've done this for years and years and years and I can handle it. Right.

And so it has to be birthed in prayer. It has to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. And we have to learn how to get out of the way so that the Lord can have his way.

Right. And so the Holy Spirit said in that setting, separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I've called them to. And so the whole missionary thrust and the birth of the New Testament, as we know it, with all of the Pauline corpus, it was birthed out of that prayer meeting.

It was birthed out like separate. Now is time for Paul and Silas to get out of here and go. Yeah.

And so they went out on mission and they went out on mission, planted churches, came back, reported, went out on mission again and broke open Europe. Right. Going into Philippi.

Where did that start? In a little bitty prayer meeting. Don't despise the day of small beginnings. It's not about size.

It's not about any of this. It's not about jumbotrons behind me. You know, those are icons, by the way, they're just electronic.

And now we have a group in the northeast doing the same thing. There's a prayer meeting starting up there and they've been eating together and getting to know each other. And they're still in that prayer phase.

But now they're beginning to go and they're going to start doing some community service in various places, getting their feet on the ground and getting a sense of Holy Spirit. What you want us to do to be a missional community. Right.

Not just a prayer meeting now, but a missional community where prayer and mission go together. So now bathed in prayer, bathed in relationship and bathed with Tuesday night tacos. That's what it is.

Amen. Amen. Get bathed in Tuesday night tacos.

We will begin to go out and explore. We're just exploring and we'll see. So pray for us that the Lord will just lead us into that new phase of having divine appointments and meeting people that are amazing and want to, you know, it just comes together because we don't know what we're doing.

Right. That's good. Now, I can come up with a plan and tell everybody what we're doing, but I've done that a long time ago.

OK, and so this is an adventure that we're on. Right. I love that word advent.

Sure. All right. And so we need to learn how to just take the time.

That's all it takes. Take the time. You've never asked for prayer during ministry time.

Do so. Say, I don't know how to do that. Well, that's the way to learn how to pray over others is being prayed for.

We wouldn't release people praying for you unless they've already gone through the grind of being prayed for. That's a part of the training. So be prayed for, especially if you see yourself being a pastoral care prayer person.

Go over there and say, pray for me. This is what I'm struggling with or this is what I need. Talk to Sherry.

Talk to Ted about that. It's a beautiful thing. Check out morning prayer.

One of those five days a week, if you're able. I understand not everyone is able to do that. So that's that's totally cool.

But if you are, you know, check out morning prayer. Talk with Ted and Sherry about the nurture of healing prayer. Like if you need extended prayer, soul healing, if you need if you can just give two hours to be loved on and listening to God.

It would be a beautiful thing. And then if you need assistance in your private closet prayer, talk to us. We have spiritual directors in this church.

We have people who can really help you train spiritual directors. But above all, what? Take the time above all of this. Take the time.

Why? Because Jesus said now is the time to worship the father in spirit and in truth. Take the time because now is the time to worship. As long as you have breath, pray and let that breath be prayer.

Because that breath, you can turn that breath into prayer because that breath is a gift from God. Breathe it in and breathe it out. And every time you breathe, thank God for that breath.

That's prayer. Every time you breathe, thank you, God, for another day. Every time you get up, say in the name of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit.

Where is the adventure today? Right. Where do you want to show up in my life? Empower my life because I'm pretty weak. Right.

Yeah. Empower my life because I'm pretty lame. Empower my life because I'm not that smart.

Empower my life, even though I hate my job that I'm going to. All these things that we can like get up and be just so like, oh, God, another day I have to do this again. Oh, man, just put on the mind of Christ.

I know it's a grind. It's hard. Sometimes we find ourselves in seasons that we want to get out of.

And you know what hastens that season is to surrender to the season. I mean, I'm speaking from experience. And so no more grumbling, no more complaining about the season you're in.

Right. Unless you want to stay there. I mean, that's just the way God does it.

Right. Because the season you're in is the part of the training and catechesis that the spirit is taking you through so that in your relationship with him, you can learn to give thanks in everything. I don't thank God for everything.

I thank God in everything. We don't have to thank him for disasters in our lives. We shouldn't.

That would be that would be a misunderstanding. But we can thank him in those things. Right.

Lord, help us surrender to you in this beautiful relationship that you share with us between the father and the son and the Holy Spirit. We pray that we would come into alignment with the unity that's in the Holy Trinity and that we would learn to love. We would learn to love through our prayers.

We would learn to intercede. We would learn to pray for the healing of others and minister to others and prophesy over others and bless others. Having spent time with you.

Pour out upon us, Lord, in the name of the father and the son.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28635.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-flowers/in-everything-prayer/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net