

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

In Jesus' Name

11.20.2022



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

John 16:23-28

SERMON:

Let me ask you a question this morning: **How's your prayer life?**

If I asked you if it was RED, YELLOW, or GREEN, what it is?

Or if I asked you on a scale of 1-10 (1 being you don't even pray and 10 being Jesus asks you for advice), where does it fall?

Everybody has a sense of where our prayer lives are. And most people I know want their prayer lives to be better, further along.

R.C. Sproul -- "*Prayer is to the Christian what breath is to life, yet no duty of the Christian is so neglected.*"

Do you realize that the way you pray is predominantly formed by how you've seen/heard others pray? I'm sure you incorporate things you've read in Scriptures, but likely your words and patterns are shaped by how you've heard others pray.

For example: I imagine most of you end your prayers with "in Jesus' name," not because you have a super theologically informed answer, but because that's how you've always heard others pray. Many think of it as a salutation. It's the closing words as you land the plane. It's your sign off with God. But why?

Why do we pray in Jesus' name? That is the subject of today' message and passage.
Exegesis of John 16:23-28

VS23 - *In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*

"In that day" is the day the Spirit comes and Jesus goes away. His disciples will ask nothing of him. He will not be physically present with them for them to ask things of him. But he says that whatever they the Father, in his name, he (the Father) will give to them. Notice, they are going to be asking the Father. They will have access directly to the Father in prayer. How? Through what Jesus is going to do in atoning for their sins. They are going to ask the Father for what they need, but they are going to ask "in Jesus' name." Believers can come by the authority invested in them through Jesus. He says they can ask whatever and the Father will give it to them.

We have to qualify **whatever** again, as we've done in multiple places. This isn't some blank check or carte blanche to demand what we want from God.

1 John 5:14 - *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

Our asking and promise of answer must be in alignment with God's will. Praying in Jesus' name isn't a name-it-and-claim-it promise. Using Jesus' name isn't a secret-decoder word. God isn't the bouncer in the underground nightclub that you whisper Jesus' name like a password and get access.

So let's avoid the one ditch of thinking prayer is about getting our wishes granted from the genie. But let's also avoid the other ditch. Failing to ask in prayer. We have access. We are invited to ask the Father for our needs. And we have a promise that when we ask in alignment with God's will, he hears us and answers us.

Hebrews 4:14-16 - *14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Ephesians 2:18 - *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Your access to the Father is through Jesus.*

VS24 - *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

To this point, they haven't asked anything in his name (because he's been with them). He again tells them they can ask, and they will receive, and the result is joy.

But what is the meaning of asking in his name? Is this just a tag at the end of our prayers? It is like finishing a letter or email where you say, "sincerely" or "your good friend"?

Matthew 21:1-3 - 1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

We see this as an example of what it means to pray to the Father in Jesus' name. Jesus sends the two disciples into the village to retrieve a donkey that he will ride into Jerusalem. He tells them if anyone says anything to them about it, they are to say, "The Lord needs them" and he will send them at once. This is what it looks like to come in Jesus' name. It is to carry his authority and standing. We have access to the Father in Jesus' name.

How do we have access in his name? Or why do we have access in his name? Because it is Jesus' death and resurrection that justifies everyone who believes. If you put your faith in Christ, then your sins are forgiven and you have access to God. You are made righteous. Saying "in Jesus' name" isn't a salutation or code word, it is an acknowledgement and declaration that only because of what Jesus has accomplished that we can boldly approach the throne of grace.

We read in **Isaiah 59:2 - but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.**

If we are dead in our sins, then we are separated from God. We do not have access to God in prayer. Does God hear you? Yes. But not in a way that inclines Him to you. Your sins have hidden his face from you. He is turned away. This is what Jesus has reconciled us from. He turns the face of the Father back to us, not with wrath, but love. We pray in Jesus' name to declare that Christ is our access.

Many believers pray and close it with "in Jesus' name." That is great and fine to do. But because we are so accustomed to doing that, it often loses its purpose and meaning.

One thing you can do in your prayers to help you appreciate the access you have is begin your prayers with "in Jesus' name."

For example, "Father, I come to you through the finished work of Jesus and the righteousness I have in him. Help me today as I seek to live holy..." In that prayer, we establish the authority and grounds for access first.

Before I move on, let me highlight how important it is that we recognize the access we have in Christ alone. There are passages of Scripture that apart from Christ, we can't pray.

Psalms 32 (confession of sin, forgiveness -- this only comes through Christ)

Matthew 6:9-13 (Lord's prayer is impossible to pray apart from "In Jesus' name")

VS25 - "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.

Before the cross he spoke "in figures of speech." He used metaphors and parables that required spiritual understanding to comprehend. But the hour was coming when he would no longer speak in figures of speech but speak plainly about the Father. The Spirit comes and leads the apostles into all the truth.

This is why people who try to pit Jesus against Paul or the Gospels against the Epistles are fabricating a conflict that's not there. There is further revelation in the letters of Paul that we don't get in the Gospels, but Paul never contradicts Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that what they didn't understand in full before will be communicated plainly through the Spirit.

VS26&27 - 26 In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Notice he says that they're not going to ask him, but ask the Father in his name. The point is to make clear, they have access through directly to the Father.

Why? Because the Father Himself loves them. This is huge. Jesus says, you're not going to ask me. You can ask the Father directly, just as I do. You have access through me, to

Him, and He loves you. Their trust and love for Jesus IS their access. Remember, nobody comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6).

The Father loves them. And the same could be said to us. The Father loves us. Here's a question for you to consider today. Which of these statements are true:

The Father loves us because Jesus died for us.

OR

The Father loves us; therefore, Jesus died for us.

The answer is the second one. The Father loves us; therefore, Jesus died for us.

Romans 5:8 - but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:10 - In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Both of these passages highlight that the love of God is first, then the sacrifice of Christ for us. His love doesn't come after the sacrifice of Christ. His love brought about the sacrifice of Christ. To redeem us and make us His own.

VS28 - I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

This discussion ends with Jesus teaching them (and us) something about his identity. He came from the Father, came into the world, and then he is leaving the world. The Second Person of the Trinity, the Word from the beginning, has existed in three different states: Pre-Incarnate (Spirit), Incarnate (God/Man), and Glorified (God and Glorified Man). He will eternally remain in this last state. Jesus is in Heaven right now in bodily form. He is fully God and fully man. He will return in bodily form. He will reign forever in bodily form. And so will we. As he is now, we will one day be. The dead will be raised in Christ to an imperishable body. We will be glorified and live in a new heaven and new earth in bodies of flesh that never deteriorate, age, sin, or die again.

Application:

1. Prayer is made possible because we are "in Christ."

Our access to God in prayer is because we have been born again. Our sins are forgiven. We are reconciled to God from our enmity with Him.

2. Most prayers will address the Father, though we can pray to each person of the Trinity.

We are instructed to pray to the Father, and on most occasions of prayer, that is what we do. But it is appropriate to pray to Jesus or to the Spirit in accordance with their roles.

Example: Praying for Jesus to give you all sufficient grace in your troubles. Asking Jesus to return soon. Thanking Jesus for his death for you.

Example: Asking the Spirit to give you wisdom and insight as you study. Asking the Spirit to give you words to speak before you witness. Asking the Spirit to open someone's eyes to the truth.

But you can also pray to the Father about those things. "Father, open their eyes to the truth by the power of your Holy Spirit."

3. Pray "in Jesus' name" with fresh appreciation of what it really means.

You could begin adding to the front of your prayers. You can say it at the end, but remember what it means. It is His authority and finished work for us that grants us access. We're proclaiming it as our grounds and assurance as we pray.

4. Labor in the discipline of prayer and don't give up when you experience difficulty.

Praying is not easy. It is a discipline. The majority of Christians I know never feel they pray long enough, good enough, or sincerely enough. But this shouldn't lead us to throw our hands up and stop. It should lead us to press on.

- Pray Scriptures if you struggle to pray.
- Recite the Lord's prayer, expounding on each line.
- Set phone alarms/reminders
- Use prayer books/written prayers (valley of vision)
- The Orthodox Church teaches the Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

The key is to remember 1. Who you are talking to, 2. That you have access to the Living God in and through Christ.

5. Recognize there is spiritual warfare involved in your praying.

This does not come directly out of the text, but it is certainly important in understanding the spiritual work of prayer. Prayer is a spiritual work. We have an enemy who would love to hinder our prayers, distract our prayer, and stop our prayers.

We read Jesus talk about some demons who were not able to be cast away without fasting and prayer. We read in Daniel 10 about how Daniel's prayers were hindered by a demon they called the "prince of Persia."

C.S. Lewis wrote an entire chapter on this in the Screwtape Letters. It is written from the perspective of demons toward us. The letters are written by Screwtape (a demon) to a junior demon. He says the best thing demons can do is to aid in us not praying at all. Prayerlessness is the greatest win for the enemy. But if they can't get that, the goal is to focus on our feelings as we pray. Rather than focusing our minds and wills on speaking with the God present with us, we focus more on how we feel as we pray and measure the effectiveness by that.

The point Lewis saw in writing on the subject is to help realize that spiritual warfare is very much involved in our praying because the enemy understands how powerful prayer truly is in the life of the believer.

Again, Sproul says, "Our prayers cannot force God to do anything, but He uses them as His own instruments to bring about His will." And one of those things is changing us, "Prayer does change things, all kinds of things. But the most important thing it changes is us."

May God ignite our hearts to more fervent prayer. Let's repent today of prayerlessness and slowness to approach the throne of grace. We have access. And that access comes through one name, and one name only: the name of Jesus. "In Jesus' name" is our confidence and assurance as we go to God, not as outcasts or rebels, but children of the promise.

REVIEW:

1. Why do we ask of the Father in the name of Jesus (verse 23)?
2. What are the two ditches we can run into when praying (verse 24)?
3. Why does the Father love us (verse 27)?
4. Read Matthew 7:7-8 and discuss the following phrases (Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life - Donald Whitney):
 - a. "Ask, and it will be given to you."
 - b. "Seek, and you will find"
 - c. "Knock, and it will be opened to you."
 - d. "For everyone who asks receives."
 - e. "The one who seeks finds."
 - f. "The one who knocks it will be opened."

REFLECT:

1. What do Matthew 6:5-7, 9; Luke 11:9, and 18:1 teach about Jesus' view of prayer (Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life - Donald Whitney)?
2. Describe a time when God answered your specific prayer.
3. Why is it so difficult for us to pray?

RESPOND:

1. What are some things you can do to make prayer more of a priority?
2. What are some things you need to take to the Father in prayer?

MEDITATE:

- John 16:24 - *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may full.*

MEMORIZE:

- Philippians 4:6 - *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- TJC Lead Ministry Assistant: **Becca Depolitte**
- NAMB Church Planter: **Luis Mendoza** - Kansas City, MO - *Iglesia Christiana Palabra Viva*
- Unreached People Group (UPG): **Zaramo** in Tanzania
 - Population: 1,369,000
 - Christian: 3.0%

- Evangelical: 2.0%
- Primary Religion: Islam
- Primary Language: Zaramo
- Status: **Unreached**