

Scripture and Discussion

3.9.14

Scripture:

When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

"When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
 but rescue us from the evil one.

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. (NLT)

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And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—
 as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
 Yes. Yes. Yes.

"In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part. (The MSG)

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And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

'Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

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Our passage this week is a really familiar prayer to the church. I love the Lord's Prayer. Many have called it "the family prayer." It is a wonderful model for prayer consistently stretching us outside of our world and into God's world.

Having a big prayer life is essential to having a big view of God. When we have a low or weak view of God we hurt ourselves.

Discussion questions:

1. What does my current prayer life consist of?
2. Am I satisfied with my own vision of God's world?
3. What steps can I take towards a deeper life of prayer?

Prayer:

Lord as we reach out to you, give us a new taste of your Holy Spirit to guide us along this journey. Help us to understand how we might have neglected or manipulated your presence in our low view of who you are. We are seeking to build a large house of prayer in our hearts for you to dwell in.