

**EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2021**  
**SERMON: PRAYER ESSENTIALS: JESUS (PART 2)**  
**TEXT: Luke 23:33-49**

Do you remember a television show that ran from 1976 to 1983, starring Jack Klugman? It was called "**Quincy, M.E.**" The M.E. stood for "medical examiner" and the show was a medical mystery drama where Quincy would perform an autopsy on a person who died suspiciously and then engage in his own investigation aiding the police department to right any wrongs and bring the guilty parties to justice. It was all about examining the body and finding the proof, often overlooked, to see why an individual died. Quincy was the forerunner of many of the popular police/crime procedurals that are so popular.

The idea of finding out the cause of death is not just for human beings, but the concept of "examining" has crossed over into other facets of our lives. Many companies, after launching major events or business plans, will have a "post-mortem" meeting to dissect the results and examine what worked, what didn't work, and what could be done better.

Thom Rainer, the former president of LifeWay Research, a Christian research and educational resource publishing company, has written a small but influential book for the church entitled "Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways To Keep Yours Alive." His book is based on research into churches that were thriving and then, usually slowly, start to decline to the point of closing their doors. His researched looked at the "Why's" of this not so uncommon occurrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

An underlying reason in the 12 points that Dr. Rainer makes, is slippery slope a church goes down, when we cease having an outward focus and focus on ourselves. The church becomes a "country club" rather than the

“gathered body of believers” intent on doing her part to increase the kingdom of God until Jesus returns.

You know that you are a “country club” church when the focus of ministry shifts from “others” to “us.” When a church moves in that direction it is playing with fire and decline should be expected followed by death. The decline may take a number of years, but death is inevitable.

What does a “country club” church look like? One of the major characteristics is that ministry become “preference” driven. What do I mean by that? Dr. Rainer says that choices are made based on our own preferences:

- My music style.
- My desired length and order of worship services.
- My desired colour and design of buildings and rooms.
- My activities and programs.
- My need of ministers and staff.
- MY, MY, MY!!!

This can also be seen in our individual and corporate times of prayer. Last week I asked you if you pray more for your own needs as opposed to praying for the needs of others. When our prayer life solely revolves around our wants, needs, and desires, our prayer life will become ineffective and powerless. So how should we pray?

As we keep on looking at the essentials of prayer, we continue on with our study of Jesus and how He modeled what prayer should be like. Our scripture lesson today is another time when Jesus prayed. Let’s look at Luke 23:33-49:

***<sup>33</sup> When they came to a place called The Skull<sup>1</sup> they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.***

***<sup>34</sup> Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.***

***<sup>35</sup> The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. "He saved others," they said, "let him save himself if he is really God's Messiah, the Chosen One." <sup>36</sup> The soldiers mocked him, too, by offering him a drink of sour wine. <sup>37</sup> They called out to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" <sup>38</sup> A sign was fastened above him with these words: "This is the King of the Jews."***

***<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!"***

***<sup>40</sup> But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? <sup>41</sup> We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." <sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."***

***<sup>43</sup> And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."***

### ***The Death of Jesus***

***<sup>44</sup> By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. <sup>45</sup> The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last.***

***<sup>47</sup> When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, "Surely this man was***

***innocent.”<sup>48</sup> And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow.<sup>49</sup> But Jesus’ friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.***

Last week we saw how Jesus was a man of prayer. His whole ministry sat on a foundation based on his relationship with “Abba” or “Dad” – his Father. He deliberately made time to foster the relationship through prayer. Because of the relationship he had with the Father, he could boldly pray and do ministry because He knew that his ministry was fully supported by his Father and the Father heard his prayers.

Relationship, intentionality, boldness! Did you know that all of these can be ours as we pray?

Today we continue to look at Jesus and how he prayed. The hallmark of Jesus’ prayer life is the fact that Jesus didn’t limit his prayer life to himself. We absolutely have examples of Jesus praying for things related to his life and ministry but the ultimate purpose of even those prayers were to benefit other people! Prayer linked Jesus, and his ministry with his disciples, the fledgling church that was about to be founded, and with our on-going ministry today. Remember our scripture lesson last week, John 17? When Jesus prayed in verses 20 and 21:

***<sup>20</sup> “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. <sup>21</sup> I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.***

Today we will see how Jesus’ ministry of prayer connects and covers us today.

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS FOLLOWERS

While he was on earth, Jesus continually prayed for his followers. He prayed for their ministries, he prayed that they would be kept safe, and he prayed that they would not fall away from their beliefs and connection to God. The section I just read from John 17 was primarily focused on the disciples as they were together in the Upper Room. Jesus spent that evening preparing them for the reality that they would have to go on without him. The prayer also transcends time as Jesus included "all who will ever believe in me..."

Not only did Jesus pray for his followers while he was with them, that intercession or intervention through prayer on their behalf, did not stop when our resurrected Lord ascended to Heaven. The Apostle John reminds us of the ongoing reality of Jesus working on our behalf in I John 2:1:

**My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.**

Paul also reminds us of this reality in Romans 8:34:

**Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.**

Being confident in the fact that Jesus' ministry on our behalf still continues should instill a deep sense of comfort and peace in each of us as we live day by day. Jesus knows each one of us, what we need, and continues to work on our behalf.

## THE COMFORTER

A second way that the prayer life of Jesus encourages us, is the fact that he promised the disciples that when He returned to the Father, he would not leave them alone. John records Jesus' promise in John 14:16-17:

**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. <sup>17</sup> He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.**

The fact that the Spirit dwells in each follower of Jesus is significant due to the fact that it is by the Holy Spirit that we been adopted into the family of God. This adoption, the fact that we are truly God's children gives us the opportunity to approach God as Jesus did, using the term "Abba" as we spoke about last week. Paul affirms this fact in Romans 8:15-16:

**<sup>5</sup> So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.**

I can't stress enough that the foundational reason we pray is to draw closer and closer to our Lord. Relationship, relationship, relationship!!!

Sadly, the reality of our broken world can often find its way into our prayer life. I have often heard people take issue with the fact that we call God "Father" or people will say that they can't see God as "Father" because of a broken relationship with their earthly parent. We need to understand that the extreme privilege we have been given to approach God and call on Him as "Abba, Father" is not based on our earthly hierarchy.

Dr. Grenz reminds us that we don't come to God as Father because God is male or because God is in every way like an earthly father. Jesus invites us

to come to God using these terms. I don't know if you have every thought through the reality that being the "children of God" means that Jesus has become our elder brother who takes us by the hand and introduces us to our newly adopted Father and Jesus encourages us to have the relationship that he enjoys. To address our prayers to "Abba, Father" reminds us that we have become sisters and brothers of Jesus, co-heirs with the Son and that the God we have a relationship with has been revealed by our elder brother as a loving, concerned, personal God who cares for all creation and for us. Instead of supporting a human understanding of relationships that can be abusive, addressing God as Father actually calls to judgement all the ungodly human authoritarians when they are measured against the true nature of Abba, Father. Through this relationship, those who have lacked the influence or have bad experience on earth, now are invited to embrace the Father of the fatherless.

## PRAYING THE NAME

Did you know that in ancient days, to know someone's name meant that you could tap into their power. Names were important, that is why many names in the Bible carry a significant meaning and that God is known by many names. The final way that the prayers of Jesus unite the church is the fact that we are encouraged and invited to pray "in the name of Jesus." To pray in Jesus name is not a superstition or a good luck charm that we add on to the end of a prayer to get what we want. The privilege of praying "in the name" of Jesus means that we have been invited to tap into the power that Jesus possesses. We read the stories of all the amazing things that the prophets did and many times think that they were so different from us. If only we had their power then think of the amazing things we could do for Jesus! Then you go to James 5:17-18 and he lets us in on a little secret:

**<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.**

Through prayer, we have the same access to God and to the power of Jesus Christ that the prophets of old accessed. We have the potential to make an incredible difference in peoples lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why we need to understand prayer and make it a priority!

## CONCLUSION

If you are not cultivating your own relationship with Jesus, you cannot expect your prayer life to feel vibrant, practical, and powerful. I encourage you to take the time to examine your prayer life through the lens of Jesus' example to us. Even when Jesus was seemingly praying for himself, the focus was on others. Jesus prayed for his friends and his enemies, desiring all to come to know the Father. As you allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life, may you draw closer to Abba, understanding that you are now part of the family of God with all the right, privileges and responsibilities that we have representing our Lord here on earth.

Let's pray...