

**EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2021**  
**SERMON: PRAYER ESSENTIALS: JESUS (PART 1)**  
**TEXT: John 17**

Have you ever received (or passed on) a chain letter. They used to be physical letters when people still took the time to pen to paper, but in this day and age, they usually take the form of an email or social media post of some type. Facebook has been an easy forum for people to send chain letters. A chain letter is a letter, generally of a manipulative nature, that tell the recipient to copy the content of the letter and send it to friends and family. Why? Usually with the promise of wealth, health, or the threat that something horrible would happen to you, a loved one, or some dying, leg-less, arm-less starving child with no parents who is homeless, should you "break" the chain.

There are just as many Christian versions out there on social media as there are secular one, and they are just as manipulative. I am the annoying Facebook friend who debunks these types of things. As a Christian and as a pastor, I really cringe when I see posts telling me that "If I love Jesus I'll repost this message" and "just keep scrolling if you don't love Jesus." Sometimes they will include a quote from Matthew 10:32-33:

**"<sup>2</sup> "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven."**

To use this verse in this way is at best is the perfect example of a shallow understanding and gross misuse of scripture.

Prayer is often misused by those who don't understand what they are participating in. You will get the "chain letter" Facebook posts that

encourage you to say a prayer and pass it on and soon God will give you lots of money or God will heal you. If you don't, watch out! God is going to get you!

We have allowed superstition to infiltrate our worship of and communication with our Lord and God. Many years ago I had an older gentleman, who was a member of my congregation, corner me after the service one Sunday. He proceeded to critique how I publicly prayed. His issue was that I didn't end many of my prayers with the phrase, "In Jesus' name..." After all, he argued, we are told to pray in Jesus' name and to him that meant needing to use the phrase. I tried to explain to him that praying in "the name of Jesus" didn't mean what he believed, but I wasn't very successful. If you are sitting there on pins and needles wanting to know what it means to pray in the "name of Jesus," stay tuned, that sermon is coming!

Last week we looked at the Old Testament basis of prayer and the difference between the prayers of those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and those from other belief systems. The Old Testament provides the practice of the New Testament Church. Today we examine prayer in the life of the One whom we strive daily to be like...Jesus!

Let's start with our scripture today one of the prayers of Jesus found in John 17:

**17 After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. <sup>2</sup> For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. <sup>4</sup> I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.**

**<sup>6</sup> “I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, <sup>8</sup> for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.**

**<sup>9</sup> “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. <sup>10</sup> All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. <sup>11</sup> Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. <sup>12</sup> During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.**

**<sup>13</sup> “Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup> Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.**

**<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.**

**<sup>22</sup> “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. <sup>23</sup> I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you**

**love them as much as you love me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!**

**<sup>25</sup> “O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”**

Jesus was a man of prayer. I found a source that stated that there are 25 prayers of Jesus listed in the gospels. As you read the account of Jesus’ life, we see over and over how He would take time to go off and pray alone and be with the Father. Jesus, at times would pray for extended periods. Whether he prayed for through the night or for 40 days, it was the foundation of His ministry. In His ministry, Jesus often prayed prior to performing a miracle. Important moments in Jesus’ ministry were started in prayer. Jesus prayed all night before choosing the twelve. When Jesus faces battles with Satan, he prayed.

## ATTITUDE

What is your attitude as you pray? Instead of being a conversation with God, for many, prayer has become a means of obtaining or avoiding something in life. As you pray, take note of the content of your prayers. Are you praying more for yourself or for others? Do you see prayer more as a chore than anything else? If you pray before you go to sleep, have you ever found yourself deciding not to pray because you are too tired? It is all about attitude!

C.S. Lewis had this attitude about prayer:

**“I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.”**

Once again we look to Jesus and his attitude in prayer. Christianity is all about a personal relationship with Jesus and as Jesus prayed, you received a glimpse into the relationship between Father and Son. A key to this relationship is in the fact that Jesus used an Aramaic term when addressing the Father. That term is “Abba.” I have always been taught that “Abba” was a familiar term that carries the English equivalent of “Daddy.” You get this picture of a young child approaching a parent. Dr. Grenz, in his writings, notes that perhaps “Abba” is a bit more solemn. It still brings with it the idea of a child/parent interaction but instead of being a small child, the term “Abba” has the sense of an adult child approaching their father with a more solemn response using the term “Dad.” There are those who have been praying for many years who don't like the idea of approaching God in such a personal manner. Perhaps they have been taught that God demands respect so you should approach Him with a reverence found in a more formal address. At times the formality becomes a change to the very vocabulary we use. You listen to someone pray and they switch into a “King James Version” speech pattern which is suddenly dotted with the use of “Thee” and “Thou.” There is nothing wrong with this if you are use to it. As Christians we should be aware of how we are modeling our relationship with God to those who are searching, new, or just “baby” believers. The new believer is encouraged to pray to the one who loves them first and best. As participants in the God's salvation plan, we have been “adopted” into God's family. Paul tells us in Ephesian 1:5:

**<sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.**

How fitting it is for us to approach a relational God by addressing Him as "Dad."

This relationship that Jesus had with his Father is one that we should be striving for with each day that passes. Have you ever prayed and wondered, **"Did God really hear me, and if He did, did my prayer really do any good?"** When we strengthen our relationship with God through prayer just as Jesus did, we soon become confident that God is listening and will act on our behalf. I have always felt close to my parents. They modeled, and continue to model, what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. I never doubted that if I was ever in trouble or in a time of crisis, my parents would do everything in their power to help me solve it or get me through it. The prayers of Jesus show us that he was fully confident of his Father acknowledged him and His mission. An example of this is the prayer Jesus prayed before raising Lazarus from the dead In John 11:

***Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. <sup>42</sup> You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me."***

## OUR ATTITUDE

Prayer is as essential to our relationship with God as air, water, and food are for our physical existence. The challenge of studying the attitude of prayer that Jesus put forward is the fact that we need to challenge our attitude. If prayer a chore that makes you feel guilty when you don't do it...ask yourself "Why?" What do you need to change in your mindset and understanding of prayer? Are you harboring doubts about the practice of prayer? Turn to Jesus.

Decide today to pray to your Heavenly Father who knows you, loves you, and wants a deep, meaningful relationship. Put aside some of the traditions you may have learned about prayer in order to approach God with the confidence of one approaching a respected, trusted friend. Use the language you use to talk to your friends and family. Get rid of preconceived understandings of "how" you have to pray...just start praying and lay all your joys, victories, concerns, and struggles out before Him. As your relationship grows with God you will have confidence that God is leading and guiding you as you seek to do His will moment by moment and day by day. Give everything a day demands of you over to God knowing that He desires to be part of your "every day."

Let's pray...