

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 30.06.24

PREACHER: PS NATHAN BEAN

“PRACTICES OF JESUS: PRAYER”

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

BEING, THINKING & DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: A growing and maturing follower of Jesus will be regularly engaging in the practice of Prayer.

OVERVIEW

Prayer is less about seeking immediate results and more about cultivating a deep, relational connection with God. By prioritising regular time with God, we are formed into Christliness and our hearts are aligned to Him, our true Father.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: Consider the times and circumstances under which Jesus prayed. What can we learn from His dedication to prayer, and how does it challenge our own prayer habits?

Step 2: Assess: Make a commitment to set aside a specific time each day for prayer, following Jesus' example. Decide on a time and place where you can be alone with God without distractions.

Step 3: Act: Begin your commitment to regular prayer today. Start with a short, focused time if you're new to this habit, and gradually increase it as you become more comfortable.

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:38-11:4

Prayer, at its core, is an exercise in faith and relationship. Like any exercise, the purpose of a spiritual practice is to enable us to do something we can't currently do.

The practice of prayer strengthens our ability to connect deeply with God and align our hearts with His kingdom. Jesus, our ultimate example, spent significant time in prayer because it was integral to His relationship with the Father. This teaches us that prayer is not about necessity but about intimacy.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus teaching His disciples to pray. Despite being the Son of God, Jesus regularly withdrew to solitary places to pray. This begs the question: If Jesus, who was divine, saw the need to pray, how much more should we, in our human frailty, prioritise it? Jesus' prayer life shows us that prayer is not just about getting things from God but about being with God.

We see the importance of being with Jesus over doing for Jesus in the story of Mary and Martha. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet, recognising that being in His presence was more important than busyness. This highlights a critical point: our spiritual activities (including our work inside of the church), while good, can sometimes stand as a replacement for the most important thing—our relationship with God.

In our fast-paced world, we often expect and are demanded to produce quick results. We might approach prayer with the same expectation, but prayer is more like sowing seeds. We don't see immediate results; growth takes time. Prayer requires patience and trust that God is at work, even when we cannot see it.

We might not always feel something extraordinary when we pray, but prayer is not about feeling; it's about the relationship. It's not a transactional exchange where we give something to get something. It's about the faithfulness to keep showing up, regardless of feeling or outcome. When we lay down these expectations of "results", prayer simply becomes about being in God's presence, about the beauty of communion with our Creator.

Prayer shapes us deeply as we intentionally carve out time to be with God. It's less about saying the right words and more about showing up, being present, and recognising our status as sons and daughters of God, knowing that we always have access to Him.

Prayer is a beautiful, transformative practice that draws us closer to God. It's not about the utility or the immediate results but about the ongoing relationship and the profound impact it has on shaping our hearts and lives into the image of God.

DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think Jesus, who was divine, prioritised prayer in His life? How can His example shape our own approach to prayer?
2. In what ways can our service or busyness doing for God distract us from cultivating a deeper relationship with God? How can we ensure we maintain a balance?
3. How can we shift our perspective from viewing prayer as a transactional exchange to seeing it as a relationship-building practice? What practical steps can we take to make prayer a more integral part of our daily lives?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the gift of prayer and the example of Jesus, who showed us the importance of spending time with you. Help us to prioritise our time with you, and to seek Your presence not for what we can receive, but for the joy of knowing you. Shape our hearts and deepen our relationship with you as you teach us to pray.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.