

WELCOME 12th July 2020 – 6 Pentecost '20 A

Colossians 1:9-14 & Matthew 6:5-15

Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you are blessed immeasurably in this brief time on-line. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

We're continuing to adapt our worship in this season...Again today there are more Group Study/Discussion resources available for you on our website & I hope you've got those handy. Our on-line service is going to be more compact so you have time to go through that material & the Growing Praise with those you've gathered in your homes. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into this city to declare what God has done for you. **As we move into this week...**

"Hot spot" – a place of exceptional connection or reception or increased transmission.

What if you could become a "hot spot" for the gospel? What if there was a way to make your life exceptionally connected or receptive to God's working in your world or increase your capacity to transmit the good news of Jesus to someone else?

Discipleship is an intentional journey in grace where we seek to walk Jesus' way and become more like him each day. The behaviours of faith: prayer, reading the Bible, relating to & serving others, and generosity are more than just rote rituals, but are shaped by the depth of love we have received & the breadth of trust we offer in return. The practice of these behaviours is how the Holy Spirit transforms you into a "hot spot" for the gospel.

Your **FAITH FORMED PRAYER** opens your life not to more "answers" from God but more intimacy with him & more obedience in return. As Jesus prayed & immediately turned his life to the Father's will, you too become more aligned with God's work in this world through you.

We'll explore and experience that together today...especially when we turn worship over to you in your homes with those other disciples around you... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Heavenly Father, God of compassion, in this unrelenting season of isolation, be close to those who are ill, afraid or quarantined. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light. We ask those same gifts from your hand to each of us: consolation, hope, light, release from this panic that has beset your good world. We pray through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, and for us has overcome the world, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FAITH CHAT:

1. Why do you pray?
2. Do you ever get the sense God answers your prayers?
3. What are you praying for most...right now?

BIBLES

6 Pentecost '20 A - FAITH FORMED PRAYER

'There are no atheists in foxholes.' Military chaplains, & many others, have lived by that simple folk wisdom: Most everybody prays when they're desperate. When a loved one is sick, friend/child is struggling, marriage is on the rocks or finances are in the toilet... You find the rock & the hard place ^{b/t} which someone feels trapped & there's probably prayer going on in that spot... We all get to a point in life where we realize we can't accomplish something or get out of some mess ^{w/o} divine intervention, so we pray. There's truth there...but the BIGGER truth is this: That attitude of "I got nothing. God you gotta help me or I'm toast" is where we should live every moment of every day. That sense of total dependence on God...absolute surrender to his power instead of mine...complete reliance on the Father not just in emergencies but in every moment is precisely the place where God invites us to live ALL. THE. TIME. Seriously? Absolutely.

Take the prayer Jesus gave his followers in Mt 6: the Lord's Prayer. It is actually part of a much longer sermon/series of teaching we've come to call The Sermon on the Mount. The opening line of that sermon/teaching: *God blesses those who are poor & realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (spiritually helpless/poor in spirit) – Mt 5:3* The foundation for the offer of forgiveness life & salvation that Jesus makes to all of us is that the Father invites our absolute surrender to his power at work in & for us...God stoops to save & rescue & redeem those who can't help themselves...God calls us to place our complete trust wholehearted faith in his capacity to make right what we have made wrong.

What Jesus shows us is that prayer...at its very heart is not about our effort but about God's offer. Too often I want to make prayer some Herculean exertion/Mt Everest sort of thing that I have to do...It's not. Prayer is an acknowledgement at every step of my life that I am absolutely dependent on the Father to bring good & wholeness & fullness to my life... because all that is beyond my ability. In fact, that is precisely the way Jesus lived. Jesus did nothing apart from prayer... It's true. *Jn 5:19 - Jesus explained, I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Jn 5:30 - I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me.* This is JESUS saying, "I take my cues from the Father." How can I do anything other or greater than that?

This is why the disciples came to Jesus & asked him to teach them to pray. It's not that they didn't know how; they all had prayed in the synagogue & on the Sabbath & in various circumstances & knew how to follow religious rituals. But they knew when Jesus prayed it was different. They saw in his life something more than just a religious routine & heaps of words piled all over each other. Prayer was something that literally nourished him. It was a necessity for him & his life was dependent on it. The disciples saw the difference, so they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray like YOU DO.*" Prayer is a conversation with the Father...but it is more: Prayer is an acknowledgement at every step of my life that I am absolutely dependent on the Father to bring good & wholeness & fullness to my life... because all that is beyond my ability. I can do nothing apart from him...and when I try...no good comes from it. Faith formed prayer is first that admission of powerlessness – complete surrender absolute trust wholehearted faith in his capacity not my own.

A few years back I read Richard Foster's book *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* where he writes; "Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love." Amazing!...Most of us think the object of praying is to get what you ask for...to get answers...to get results. You sit down with God & run down your list of, "God, I need help with. God, give me this. God, protect them. God, bless them. God, keep them & be with them." Most of us think the object of praying is to get results. Nope. Did you hear what Jesus said, *When you pray, don't babble on & on as the Gentiles do...for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!* Wait...he knows what I need...Why ask? I'll tell you...in Luke's account of Jesus' life, he remembers another time Jesus taught his disciples about prayer & Jesus posed a hypothetical situation...Suppose your child asks for a sandwich. Are you going to give him a smack upside the head? Of course not! *So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Lk 11:13* Not how much more \$\$\$ will he put in your bank account, but how much MORE OF HIMSELF will he give you when you really need him.

If I pray only thinking about the result...I've tried to box God into a business deal & what God wants is a relationship. Listen to Jesus again: *When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, & pray to your Father in private. Why?* The Father who calls all the stars by name also calls you & me by name & that name is "Son" "Daughter." Whatever else may be true about us the deepest most abiding truth is that we through Jesus Christ are heirs & children of Him who names the stars & holds them in their proper place (Isaiah 40:25-26 not one is missing or out of alignment) The entire universe moves just the way God designed it & just the way his hand sustains it...not a sparrow falls to earth that the Father doesn't know & he's counted the hairs on our head...And He seeks that intimacy w/ us so that not only does he know us but we know him...(John 17:3 This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, whom you sent.) Col 1:13-14 He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness & transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom & forgave our sins.

We pray ultimately, to enjoy him & to enjoy being with him & to experience his goodness & his grace & his mercy & love personally, in a way that nothing else in all the world can provide. Phillip Ryker in "The Prayer of Our Lord" says, "Once it was God's holiness that *separated us from God*. (because of our sin) Now it is God's holiness that *brings us to God*, the holiness of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus offered for our sin on the cross." God in deep love for you wraps his arms around you & says: *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, & thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand."* – *Php 4:6* God offers himself...not a business deal...not a transaction. And he holds nothing good back...

- wherever we think we find joy - in the Father we find it to the full
- wherever we think we find security - in the Father we find it unassailable
- wherever we think we find hope – in the Father we find it w/o fail
- wherever we think we find comfort – in the Father we find it everlasting
- wherever we think we find peace – in the Father we find it w/o end
- wherever we think we find satisfaction – in the Father we find it complete
- wherever we think we find healing – in the Father we find it all-encompassing

Faith formed prayer is 1st the admission of powerlessness – absolute dependence on the Father, but 2nd it is an expression of delight in Him – in His presence – in the experience of being embraced as His child in every circumstance of life.

But I want to point toward 1 more thing about prayer...The GP this morning has this from author Lysa TerKeurst: "My prayers don't change God. But, I am convinced prayer changes me. Praying boldly boots me out of that stale place of religious habit & into authentic connection with God Himself." Richard Foster echoes that saying: "The primary purpose of prayer is to bring us into such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son." What happens when we pray is that our lives are transformed by the experience of being drawn close to God...The Father, as we pray, shapes our long-term character instead of reacting to our short-term convenience...prayer is not about getting answers but about getting close & in getting close...Paul writes: *We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will & to give you spiritual wisdom & understanding. Then the way you live will always honour & please the Lord, & your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better & better.*

Remember the last prayers on Jesus' lips: *"Not my will but your will be done"* & *"Into your hands I commit my spirit."* The Father who claims us as his own through the life/death/resurrection of His Son...who wins us from darkness to life/light through the suffering & triumph of Christ seeks to bring our lives into alignment just like that, so that we are in full harmony with him – in complete likeness to him – our hearts & his are completely in synch...our longings are his longings – our desires are his - what brings God pleasure is our delight...The work of the kingdom is to carry out the agenda of the King & the specifics of that agenda can only be accessed in prayer... in that place where our hearts are aligned with the Father's.

Faith formed prayer is anchored in absolute dependence on the Father. It grows as an expression of delight in Him – in His presence – in the experience of being embraced as His child in every circumstance of life. And it finds fulfillment in shaping our lives in obedience & likeness to Jesus Christ.

Your **FAITH FORMED PRAYER** opens your life not to more "answers" from God but more intimacy with him & more obedience in return. As Jesus prayed & immediately turned his life to the Father's will, you too become more aligned with God's work in this world through you. Faith formed prayer makes your life exceptionally connected or receptive to God's working in your world & increases your capacity to transmit the good news of Jesus to someone else..You become a "hotspot" of the gospel wherever you are...

Here's where today's opportunity gets exciting...I'll stop here & we'll sing one last song. I'll leave you to pray together explore the Scriptures & Discussion material together & commune together...maybe share lunch or find some way to extend worship into the rest of your day

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father prepare me for whatever you require today and lead me in faith wherever you call me to go. ...Our Father in heaven...**