



2020 January Sermon Series: Storyline

Message #3: The Midnight Request

Getting the Nod:

Opening Video: [Prayer](#)

If there is one thing that the human race is hardwired to enjoy... it's a great story. Can you picture any of these from childhood? [Green Eggs and Ham](#) with Sam I Am; [Little Red Riding Hood](#) and the lurking big bad wolf; [Hansel and Gretel](#) and the breadcrumbs; [Snow White](#) and her 7 little friends; [Jack and the Beanstalk](#) and the goose that laid the golden eggs; [The Ugly Duckling](#) who came out of the shell looking differently.

Jesus believed in a great story! No one knew better the value of a good story. His stories changed the world. Stories like [The Good Samaritan](#) who was the unexpected hero of the story; [The Prodigal Son](#) who came to himself in a pig pen; **The Valuable Lost Coin** and the tireless search for it ; [The Mustard Seed](#) and how it can grow into a tree; [The Wise and Foolish Builders](#) who chose very different materials with very different results when the storm came; and of course [The Good Shepherd](#) who keeps a watchful eye on these very wayward creatures.

These stories of Christ have changed our world. And with each one we find a **non-negotiable**. Last week it was forgiveness. Without receiving it and offering it... we can't get to heaven. **This week our non-negotiable is the absolute dependence on prayer.**

Some say that prayer is a waste of time. I say just the opposite: that nothing, nothing is more relevant and responsible; that **nothing else can ever cure our sick world except for saints who have been made by prayer.**

But prayer is too often wrongly viewed as...

- A rabbit's foot for luck.
- A mop that obligates God to clean our messes up.
- A permission slip to roam the halls of sin.
- A direct line to Santa Claus for that next great possession.
- A get out of jail free card when we willfully disobey a law of God or ignore His voice.

It's more than that:

- **Martin Luther said that to be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.**
- **Soren Kierkegaard said that prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays.**
- **Mother Teresa said that prayer is no less than putting oneself in the hands of God.**
- **An anonymous writer said that If you only pray when you're in trouble... you're in trouble.**

Transitional Statement: Prayer changes the world... by changing one believer at a time. Dare I ask, **"Do you pray?" It can break addiction! It can heal a broken heart! It can bring revival!**

Connecting Us:

Jesus used a story (A Parable) in Luke 11 to address this non-negotiable of the importance of prayer...

NLT | Lk 11:5-13 Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 6 ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ 7 And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can’t help you.’ 8 But I tell you this—though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. 9 “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 11 “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? 12 Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! 13 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.”

The Backstory:

- **In a certain place... Jesus is praying, and the disciples are watching.** Daily they watched Jesus pray. Sometimes they watched from afar in the mornings... and sometimes in their presence.
- **The way He prayed was compelling to them.** It was so compelling, but not impossible to learn. How Jesus prayed was so impressive that they thirsted for the ability to do it like Him.
- **If it was impossible for them to pray like Jesus... He wouldn’t have followed their question with a lesson on prayer.** So, He taught the Lord’s Prayer.
- **The Lord’s Prayer wasn’t intended to be the only prayer we pray...** to become a ritual for spiritual zombies... but as a prayer of valuable content in how to pray. It covered all the bases.
- **So, after the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus tells this story to better answer their question,** “Will you teach us to pray like you?”
- **In this story...**
- **A late night traveler visits a friend.** TRAVELLERS often journeyed late in the evening to avoid the heat of the midday sun. In Jesus’ story just such a traveler had arrived towards midnight at this friend’s house.
- **Jewish hospitality is a sacred duty;** it was not enough to set before a visitor a bare sufficiency; the guest had to be confronted with an ample abundance.
- **The householder with an embarrassing situation, because his cupboard was empty,** and he could not fulfil the sacred obligations of hospitality. Late as it was, he went out to borrow from a friend. The friend’s door was shut.
- **In this part of the world no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative.** In the morning the door was opened and remained open all day, for there was little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed. But the seeking householder was not deterred. He knocked and kept on knocking.
- **The poorer Palestinian house consisted of one room with only one little window. On the raised part the stove burned all night, and round it the whole family slept,** not on raised beds but on sleeping mats. Families were large and they slept close together for warmth. **For one to get up was inevitably to disturb the whole family including livestock, the hens goats, into the house at night.** Is there any wonder that the man who was in bed did not want to rise?

- **But the determined borrower knocked on with shameless persistence**—that is what the **Greek word means**—until at last the householder, knowing that by this time the whole family was disturbed anyway, arose and gave him what he needed.
- **The lesson of this parable is not that we must stand knocking at God’s door** as if we have to awaken Him... like He is an almost deaf and unwilling deity. That’s not our God!

Transitional Statement: **So, what’s God’s Word telling us about the non-negotiable truth on prayer?**

God’s Word on World Changing Prayer:

The World Changing Truth of This Story:

1. We are not a people pleading for help from an unwilling God.

- No, we are going to one who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and whose heart towards us is the heart of generous love.
- **13 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.”**
- If we do not receive what we pray for, it is not because God grudgingly refuses to give it but because **he has some better thing in store for us!**

2. There is no such thing as unanswered prayer.

- The answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected; but even when it is a refusal it is the answer of the love and the wisdom of God.
- The way God answers us is in these four words:
 - **No** – In His wisdom there is a better answer than what we want.
 - **Slow** – The timing isn’t right yet. Although God’s timing is sometimes frustrating... He still is an on-time God.
 - **Grow** - He wants us to know that there is a lesson to be learned and a place of growth we need to be to receive the answer.
 - **Go** – It’s the right time... we’re in the right place... so we receive the answer.

3. A **passionate friendship** with God is what leads to a personal resume of God’s blessing.

- This is Jesus... 2nd Person in the Trinity... telling the 12 a story about the motive and purpose of prayer. **And get this... He is telling me that He wants to answer my prayer!!!**
- **Persistence along with friendship reaches the heart of the Father.** Persistence is asking, seeking, and knocking.
- **Our Heavenly Father never gives us snakes and scorpions.** He’s not dishing out crushing answers... He is offering us the presence of the Holy Spirit... which is the Agent of Jesus Who is called “The Comforter!!! **So go on...ask... seek... knock!!!**

Transitional Statement: So, what’s our response?

Our Response to God’s Word:

Challenges from the Midnight Request:

1. **He is telling all of us to deepen our prayer lives. By faith grow deeper with it.**

- To grow comfortable in our prayer time with Him and to come to the Throne with worship where we place our requests. **Is it a daily and deep hunger?**
- 2. He longs for an intentional intimate relationship with us. By faith draw near by it.**
 - To not only know Him as Holy... but also as Friend. **Is He your best Friend? The One you run to first?**
 - 3. He wants to meet the needs of His people. By faith depend on it.**
 - He is moved by our circumstances. **Do you trust His heart?**
 - 4. He desires prayer that is an unbroken conversation. By faith desire daily dialogue.**
 - This Father had His children next to Him in bed. Praying without ceasing. **Do you talk to Him daily like texting someone close to you?**
 - 5. He is moved by prayers focused on bigger things. By faith dive into new possibilities.**
 - We receive not because we ask not... so Ask, Seek, Knock. **Are impossible things possible when you pray?**

According to this story... Prayer that changes the World... (Not in your outline)

- 1. Prepares us for what's coming.**
- 2. Protects us from what's missing.**
- 3. Points us to Who we're trusting.**
- 4. Provides us with the bigger picture through persisting.**

Transition: As the Praise Team comes... let's close with a couple thoughts...

Drawing the Net:

Illustration of the Mom's crossroad of life: When my mother and father were separated... and my mom was struggling with what to do, she took us to our Grandfather's house. It was a difficult place to be. She had battled an alcoholic husband and all the sin attached to it. We were unwanted by her step-mother. She was unemployed with little skill to hire. She had younger children to take care of. She had come to a dead end. It was the toughest time of her life. That's when she clung to the hem of her Lord's garment... and wouldn't let go. And for almost three months she prayed and trusted the Lord for an answer and a path from God to follow. My brother Steve described what happened. He was looking for mom on that large farm and found her in the back yard. She was standing with her arms raised... praising the Lord. **He had met her there!**

Illustration of The Power of Prayer:

J. Edgar Hoover, the first director of the FBI, once said, "The spectacle of a nation praying is more awe-inspiring than the explosion of an atomic bomb. The force of prayer is greater than any possible combination of man-made or man-controlled powers, because prayer is man's greatest means of tapping the infinite resources of God. Invoking by prayer the mercy and might of God is our most effective means of guaranteeing peace and security for the harassed and helpless peoples of the earth."

The Pastoral Prayer of Challenge

(Make the congregation aware of the altar time being both now and after the service)

I don't know where each of you are in your prayer life, so, as I pray I encourage you to come if there is something in your life that needs changed... and you need an answer. Join me as we pray about what God is challenging us with:

- Help all of us to see that you are not an unwilling God who tolerates our prayers...
- You always answer our prayers... sometimes no... slow... grow... go.
- What you long most from us is a personal friendship that out of it comes blessings and favor.

Ways to apply this message:

- Make us a praying people who seek the deeper things from you.
- Draw us nearer to you in our increased prayer times.
- Meet our needs according to your riches in glory.
- Converse with us every day... and help us to reach a place of confidence... that we need not fear the bad things... and the bigger things.
- Move our mountains. Be the Rescuer in the valleys.
- Help us to dream again.
 - Prepare us for what's coming.
 - Show us what's missing.
 - Give us a fresh sight of Who you are so our faith turns to greater trust.
 - Place the priority of prayer on our lives... and change the world.

Join with the Praise Team and Let's close off with this song...

There's nothing that our God can't do!!!