



2019 April Sermon Series: Beauty for Ashes

Message #4 – Praying Out of the Ashes

Getting the Nod

Open with the Video: **God Co Prayer**

Prayer Illustration: What is the intention of prayer? The simple bottom line of prayer is one of two actions... as a boat man, we use our boat hook to either pull the shore to the boat... or pull the boat to shore. **Which one do you practice?**

Humorous Story: “The Only Prayer I Know.” Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull coming straight toward them. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The raging bull followed in hot pursuit and it was soon apparent they wouldn’t make the fence in time to reach safety. Terrified, one shouted to the other, **“Put up a prayer, John. We’re in for it!”** John answered, “I can’t. I’ve never made a public prayer in my life.” “But you must!” implored his companion. “The bull is catching up to us.” “All right,” panted John, “I’ll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: **‘O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.’**”

Transition: The sermon series has been entitled, “Beauty from Ashes.” Many of us have a powerful testimony of how the Lord turned tragedy into beauty. But if we are in the ashes presently... where do we start with the Lord to get out? The answer is found in your prayer life. **There are prayers that never works while in the ashes...**

Connecting Us

Prayer That Never Work in the Ashes:

1. **When Your God is too small.** (**Thomas:** Doubt in God’s abilities to transform your life and dilemma)
2. **When your God is too impotent.** (**Mary and Martha:** Not enough power to break chains or overcome Satan)
3. **When your God is too far away.** (**Aaron and the Golden Calf:** “From a Distance” is the belief and disconnected)
4. **When your God is too impersonal.** (**Job’s Friends:** His love is questioned, and His concern is weak)

Illustration of Prayer’s Best Position: Three ministers were talking about prayer in general and the appropriate and effective positions for prayer. As they were talking, a telephone repairman was working on the phone system in the background. One minister shared that he felt the key was in the hands. He always held his hands together and pointed them upward as a form of symbolic worship. The second suggested that real prayer was conducted on your knees. The third suggested that they both had it wrong--the only position worth its salt was to pray while stretched out flat on your face.

By this time the phone man couldn’t stay out of the conversation any longer. He interjected, **“I found that the most powerful prayer I ever made was while I was dangling upside down by my heels from a power pole, suspended forty feet above the ground.”**

Transitional Statement: The Hebrew writer gives us a great picture of what **kind of prayer works in the ashes...**

God's Take

NKJV | Heb 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus modeled this for us...

- **The Feeding of the 5,000:** NLT | Mk 6:41 Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share.
- **Raising Lazarus:** NLT | Jn 11:41 So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me."

Fixing Your Eyes Beyond the Ashes:

1. Fix your eyes on the One with unlimited resources.

- When He fed the 5,000 men and their families... He proved His resources are unlimited.
- Is this the Person you have in mind as you pray?
- **Billy Graham and the Jets over Shea Stadium:** SIMPLE PRAYER OF FAITH
- Billy Graham was doing a crusade at Shea Stadium in New York. The airplanes from La Guardia Airport flew over the stadium, dozens by the hour. On the opening night of counsellors training, Graham was talking from the podium as the engines roared overhead. He paused, glanced up and quietly said, "We'll have to do something about this noise. This just won't do." He bowed his head and said a simple prayer to the effect: "Lord, we ask you to shift the wind and send these planes in another direction. Thank you. Amen." The counselors were pretty shocked at such a prayer and didn't really know what to expect. But God did it. He answered their prayers in a wondrous way! The morning newspaper reported that the winds had changed during the night, and the airplanes over Shea Stadium had to be routed another way. For several days thereafter, thousands of people came to Christ under Graham's anointed preaching. At the end of the crusade, the winds reverted to their normal flow, and the airplanes returned to their normal flight patterns.

2. Fix your eyes on the One who reigns.

- NLT | Ps 93:1-2 **The LORD is king! He is robed in majesty. Indeed, the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength. The world stands firm and cannot be shaken. 2 Your throne, O LORD, has stood from time immemorial. You yourself are from the everlasting past.**
- **PRAYER OF A YOUNG CHILD:** "Bless my mommy and daddy...and dear God, take good care of Yourself. If anything happens to You, we're sunk."

3. Fix your eyes on the One very near to you.

- NLT | Ac 17:27-28 “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—**though he is not far from any one of us.** 28 For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’
- The Message | Ac 17:27 ... He doesn’t play hide-and-seek with us. He’s not remote; he’s near.
- **How Do We Know He is Near?** A little girl named Rachel. Like many preschoolers, Rachel had a problem waking up in the middle of the night, scared and crying. The only thing that would sooth her fears was crawling into bed with her mom and dad. *But Mom had to go out of town for a few days on business. That’s when Dad came up with a new solution. He said, “Rachel, I have an idea. -- While Mom is away, suppose I sleep in your room on the top bunk bed.” *She thought it was a great idea, and that night, Rachel went to sleep on time. -A couple of hours later, when her dad crawled into the top bunk, she was sound asleep. And she slept like that all night. *The next morning, Dad congratulated Rachel on a full night's sleep. -And she explained, “It's because you were in the room with me.” *“But how did you know I was there?” Dad asked. “You were asleep when I came in, and you never woke up the whole night.” -Rachel answered: “Because you said you would be there.”
- Church: Jesus said He would be here with us today. In Matt 18:20, He said: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

4. Fix your eyes on the One who died for you.

- NLT | Ro 5:6-8 **When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.** 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.
- **Make Believe Jesus:** The only kind of Jesus we have ever seen with our own eyes is a man playing the role. A few of our men have portrayed the suffering Jesus in our Easter presentation. They did a wonderful job, but they were only playing the part; the blood was stage makeup, and the nails were not really piercing their hands and feet. The scourging and blows from the guards were well-acted "near misses" - a good thing, I'd have hated to see a fight during our worship service! But with Jesus it was a different story - the blood was real, as were the stripes on his back, crown of thorns on his brow, and death!

Transitional Statement:

Our Response

NLT | Ga 4:4-7 **But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law.** 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

In this passage we see three identities with which we approach God in prayer... we approach God either as a slave... an orphan... or a child. The difference in the three has to do with the love of God.

Who Has the Greatest Access?

1. A slave feels they have no right to ask.

- A slave feels reluctant to pray... as if they have no right to ask... so slave prayers pray modest and respectful prayers.
- They spend more time asking for forgiveness rather than praying for abundance.
- Fear is the driving force in their prayer life.

2. An orphan feels they have to beg when they ask.

- They feel desperate. They feel there is a wide chasm between them and the One Who answers prayers... and abundance is the last thing on their minds. It's a poverty mentality. They only ask for scraps... so they get only scraps.

3. A son knows Who's they are and Who the Father is.

- NLT | Ro 8:15 **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."**
- Asking is easy when you know the Father's heart. Praying for big things is fair game when His kingdom is the focus! Impossible things become possible when we pray to Our Father!!!

Transitional Statement: Let me close with this...

Drawing the Net

Final Illustration: President McKinley Was Guided by Prayer in Life and Death

Robert Morgan writes that as President William McKinley lay dying from an assassin's bullet in Buffalo, New York, in 1901, the Lord's Prayer was on his lips. Prayer had been a lifelong practice that guided McKinley through his political career and into the presidency. McKinley had been born into a devout Christian home fifty-eight years before and born again at age fourteen. According to his pastor, A. D. Morton, young McKinley stood up during a youth meeting and said, "I have sinned; I want to be a Christian ... I give myself to the Savior who has done so much for me."

McKinley's mother, a woman of deep prayer, taught him to pray by example and encouragement, but his greatest lessons in prayer were forged under the pressures of his duties as President of the United States. One of his heaviest decisions arose in 1898 regarding the status of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. One day, a delegation of church leaders came to the White House, and McKinley told them how he had decided to resolve the crisis in the Philippines.

"The truth is, I didn't want the Philippines," he said. "I did not know what to do. ... I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. ... I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight, and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I

went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way."

McKinley relayed the strategy that developed in his mind as he prayed: that the Philippines should be taken seriously and helped, that the United States should "by God's grace do the very best we could by them as our fellow-men for whom Christ died." McKinley added, "And then I went to bed, and went to sleep and slept soundly."

Robert Morgan, *Worry Less, Live More* (Thomas Nelson, 2017), pages 49-50