

PRAYER THAT TRANSFORMS US

Sermon by Bijoy.

First of all, let me thank God, and to the pastors, elders of our church for giving me this opportunity to share this morning. Also, to pastor Kierohn Sims and friends at young adults connect group for their constant encouragement and prayers.

Today I would like you to turn your attention to a passage from the Gospel of Mathew 6:5-9.

5 “And when you pray, do not be **like the hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be **seen by others**. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. (6) But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and **pray to your Father**, who is unseen. Then **your Father**, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (7) And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for **your Father** knows what you need before you ask him.

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“**Our Father** in heaven,
hallowed be your name...

Here as Jesus is teaching his disciples on how to pray, he is also teaching them on how not to pray. There are three kinds of prayer you can find in this passage, the prayer of the hypocrites, the prayer of the pagans/heathens and the prayer disciples are supposed to pray.

So, Jesus is saying that when the hypocrites (religious jews) are praying they love to be seen by others. They love to be seen for their fervency in religiosity, eloquence of their language and possibly their social status; therefore, the foundation of their prayer is in themselves. So, the prayer is about themselves and the ultimate outcome they desire to get through the prayer is the appreciation of the people. Then Jesus is talking about the prayer of the pagans/heathens (gentiles), they pray with many words, mere repetition of the words, again the foundation of their prayer is themselves. They believe that God will hear because of the many words. So, the more they pray, the more likely they please God. So, for them the duration of their prayer determines the outcome of the prayer.

But now Jesus is teaching his disciples that “when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your **Father**”. ‘Close the door’ and be alone in your room while you pray reveals a greater revelation of their (disciples) foundation of prayer, which is **relationship**. Jesus is saying that the foundation of their (disciples) prayer is not on their eloquence of the language or their religiosity or the good works/social status, but it is solely based on their **relationship** with God. Not just any relationship but a Father – Son relationship. In other words, Jesus is asking his disciples to pray in the same manner he prays to his Father.

But It’s almost a blasphemy to call God as father in Old Testament, the fervent religious Jews couldn’t imagine calling omnipotent, omniscient Almighty God as father. None of their forefathers or prophets such as the likes of Moses, David or Isaiah never dared to call God in such a relational manner (father). But now Jesus comes and tells his disciples to call God as their father. To understand this, let’s look at John 17:21-23 “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 **I in them and**

you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Now for a second I want you to remember that most amazing moment of your life, maybe the birth of your daughter or son, maybe the day you got married or bought your first house. I remember when my older brother was at the hospital while his wife was giving birth to their first child, my nephew Joel, My Brother was in tears crying like a little baby girl while looking at the face of his first child. That was the best moment of his life, he was overwhelmed by the love and joy and I'm sure he wouldn't trade that experience with anything. Same goes to many of us.

Now the best of the best moments of our life is just a tiny fraction of mutual love and joy the Trinitarian God enjoy within themselves, and the theologians call it as **Perichoresis**. The epitome of the greatest love is found within God himself. And Jesus is praying in John 17:21, “Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Here Jesus says, Father, I want them to be right in midst of our love, enjoying the fellowship with us and in us. V.23 “**have loved them even as you have loved me**” – Also the theologians call it as **Theosis/union with Christ**. So, Jesus expounds the love of the father, saying Father loves us as much as he loved Jesus. **Can you imagine the Father loves us as much as he loved his only begotten Son (Jesus)**. It is the father's love that was displayed on the cross through his Son. 1 Jn 3:1 says, “see what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children of God!** And that is what we are.” Now you can experience the same intimacy with Father in and through Jesus with the help of Holy Spirit. Galatians 4: 4-7 says, But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. (6) Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” (7) you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Also, Romans 8 :15 says, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’.” Wow, what an amazing passage is this – When Jesus became the Lord of your life, you were adopted to into the heavenly family and sealed with the Holy Spirit, you legally belong to heavenly family through the blood of Jesus. You are not a slave but his beloved child.

Adoption

When you look into the adoption process you know that adoption involves consenting adults, a three-month-old child doesn't even know what an adoption is, but the child doesn't grow as an outsider though he/she wasn't involved in the adoption process, but as a child/heir of the family. We are adopted not because of our good works or our merits but by what Christ has done for us. It is his love and grace that brought us into the heavenly family. Therefore, Adoption is the foundation of our prayer. And Jesus is the reason we can call God as our father, you have the spirit of Jesus (Holy Spirit) in you. So, when you pray enjoy that intimacy, and pray as a son and daughter.

Jesus is the embodied in the humanness of how a man is supposed to be in a relationship with the heavenly Father. In him and through him we enjoy the greatest warmth of relationship with the father through the holy spirit – Thomas F Torrance

Therefore, when you pray, remember, God knows you intimately, you are not one left alone person among the vastness of the multitudes of galaxies, but you are a son, daughter and he calls you his beloved. So, when you pray understand that he knows you and loves to communicate with you and he grants your prayer.

Verse 8 “for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

The scripture says that the Lord knows what you need before you ask him, he knows the deepest thoughts of our hearts, yet he asks us to tell him what we need, and to pray. That’s not for his benefit but he is inviting us into the sacred presence of the almighty God. Remember **GOD WORKS IN AND THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE**. He is expecting us to pray for the things he already knows, that also gives us the peace that he knows our inner most pain, our brokenness, our fears, and hardest battles/challenges. So, he empathizes with us and understand us. Mathew 7: 7-11 says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (V.8) **For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.** (V.9) “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? (V.11) **If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!** There are numerous verses in the bible that asks/commands us to pray (e.g., Phil 4: 6-7)

Sometimes we get instantaneous break throughs and sometimes we may not get answers to our prayers as and when we expect but trust in the timing of the Lord and continue to pray. Bible talks a lot about consistency in prayer, seek him diligently and consistently. Bible says “call unto me and I will answer thee”, and the scripture don’t lie, surely our God is a prayer answering God. Therefore, trust God for your provision, your future, family, and everything. Lord, I have nowhere else to go apart from you and you are my only refuge and my provision. Trust him for everything and let him know that you trust him for everything.

PRAYER OF ADORATION – Gazing the beauty of God through Adoration

Verse 9 “**Our Father** in heaven,
hallowed be your name”

We can see beauty in everything. I see and enjoy the beauty when I go for fishing. As we get into the sea very early in the morning, when the sun rises amidst the waves and the cool breeze, I often feel the majestic nature draws me into its beauty. (And if I get a fish on my reel then its ultimate..)

But coming to the presence of Jesus in prayer and gazing the beauty of God can’t be compared to anything of this world. Come to the presence of God as a beloved Child and Look and adore the beauty and love of Jesus who died for you. Look and adore the father who dwells in the glory of glory, yet he calls you his child in Jesus. Look at the beauty of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you and leads you with his calm voice of comfort and love.

You can’t change yourself; we don’t have the ability to fight the battle on our own or to change our life. We need God’s help and his grace. But as you look and adore the beauty of God in his presence through prayer, your passions change, character changes and ultimately life changes. The More you adore and admire God, the more you will know him intimately, the more you know intimately the more you will be transformed into his image.

Our Hope

Christian hope is not built on any material/temporal things, neither on any seen/visible foundations such as wealth or possessions but our Hope is in Jesus: which is we are and will forever be loved by

him, will be with him and nobody would ever separate us from his love and presence. And we are forever his children

In our deepest pain, during our irreparable loss and when pain overshadows us, there is only one place we can find solace and comfort, and that is in the presence of God. Even when we can't experience or feel God. His hands reach us and comforts us and gives us hope to carry on.

Questions for the connect group discussion

- 1, What are the obstacles we are facing in our everyday life that affects our prayer life?
 - 2, Also, how can we overcome those obstacles? E.g; planning the day in advance to have personal prayer time.
 - 3, Do you have testimonies in your life where you have experienced supernatural joy/love while you were praying/worshipping? (also testimonies of any miracles) Can you share those briefly?
- Finally, if you still find time in your connect group, pray for each other.