

**THE IMPERFECT PRAYER LIFE AND THE DESIRE FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD - Part fourteen - Sunday, January 12th 2025 - 5:30 p.m.
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

MANY TIMES IT'S BETTER TO PRAY TOGETHER - HERE'S WHY:

There's a deep, Bible-based reason for regular times of *together prayer*. And I want to work quickly through *three texts* to get us started off with a sound understanding of the mind of Jesus and what we're doing when we pray together:

The first text might seem surprising:

- 1) **Matthew 27:45-46 - "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. [46] And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

True, this is Jesus quoting that great prophetic Messianic twenty-second Psalm. The opening two verses are strikingly bleak - **God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? [2] O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest."**

But there were other prophetic texts. Why does **this** text frame Jesus' cry from the cross? I believe Jesus chose these dark words to teach us something very precious about prayer. ***This is the only prayer from Jesus' lips in which He doesn't refer to God as "Father."*** Absolutely the **only** one.

This is Jesus and the Father - from Jesus' earthly situation - **out of sync**. Fatherhood has been momentarily darkened and untethered. This prayer from Jesus reveals Jesus removed from a **conscious experience** of God's Fatherhood as He bears our sins. He experiences this **orphaned** prayer to **adopt** sinners like you and me into a **Father/child** relationship with a holy God.

And here's what that means. The **Father/child** relationship you and I enjoy in prayer isn't a reality that depends on our **feeling** of that relationship. This isn't something **emotional** or **psychological**. It has been **permanently purchased** by the **Father-forsakenness** of Christ's sin-bearing work on our behalf on the cross. Jesus senses being **forgotten** by the heavenly Father so you and I will be **permanently remembered** by the same heavenly Father.

This matters to how you and I pray. Your own **heart's condemnation** is a far greater barrier to effective prayer than the reasoned arguments of atheists in your head. **Logic** will never keep you from God as your listening Father in prayer. **Guilt** will.

Christ's finished work is the only remedy for our unworthiness in prayer. Remember, we are not saved by the ***love for God we sense in our own hearts as we worship.*** We are saved by our faith in the ***love of God for us through Christ's finished work.***

- 2) **Matthew 6:9** - "Pray then like this: '***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.***'"

In the only prayer Jesus ever gave to teach prayer there are ***no individual requests.*** The words ***I, me, my, and mine*** do not occur. It's not that we never prayer ***alone.*** We do and we must. But in the only ***instruction*** Jesus gave He was teaching how we must pray ***together.***

Peter Beskendorf was a barber who shaved and cut Martin Luther's hair. While intoxicated Peter stabbed his own son-in-law to death. Martin Luther led this man to Christ and gave to him the only recorded teaching on how to learn to pray when discouraged or depressed.

And Luther tells Peter to make sure he doesn't try to keep up his prayer life on his own. Luther tells Peter that, ***"....when I feel I have become cool or joyless in prayer....I hurry to the church where a congregation is assembled....because we do not conquer a hard, cold prayerless heart on our own, through personal exercises...."***

Luther is only repeating what He saw Jesus teaching. Prayer can't be learned apart from a praying ***community***. There is an ***"our-ness"*** to prayer that can't be ignored or minimized. Prayer can't be what Jesus wants it to be in my life without my involvement in a ***praying community***.

- 3) **Isaiah 6:1-4** - ***"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" [4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke."***

Now we get to see the curtain pulled back. This is the prophet Isaiah peering into the undimmed presence of the throne of God. And angels are there praising. And the first thing they do when they **see God** is **talk to each other**. Encountering God makes their words **communal**. They aren't just admiring God **individually**. They are pulled into **sharing the glory**.

This is the scene around the throne Jesus would have been familiar with when He taught His disciples to pray, "**Our Father in heaven....**" ***The more heavenly bread we share, the more we have***" - C.S. Lewis.