

Sermon Brief, Helpful Links, Discussion Questions

March 14, 2021

Luke 11:4

“Repentant Prayer”

Sermon Brief

1. We are going to talk about one key step to experiencing fellowship, closeness and communion with God.
2. Objectively, we are close to God. We are in Christ. But experientially, we don't always experience and enjoy communion with God as much as we would like.
3. This desire for closeness, for fellowship with God, for communion, is part of why we are talking so much about prayer, because that is one of prayer's purposes. It's a way we commune with God. It's not just something we do to get stuff from God. Prayer is part of how we enjoy our relationship with God.
4. And yet, of course, we know it doesn't always seem to work like that for us. And so it's like we've been coming to Jesus the past few weeks and trying to learn from him what is wrong with our prayer life and how to improve it.
5. As we have, two big things have been standing out. First, one reason people are having problems in their prayer life is because their prayers aren't connected to the gospel, which is perhaps why, when Jesus teaches on prayer he has us begin by basically rehearsing some of the fundamental truths we confess as Christians. As you are pursuing intimacy with God in prayer, you have to connect your prayers back to truth, to theology, you've got to get your doctrine straight, prayer is theological, and yet obviously you can't stop there, with just getting your theology right, because there's a second major obstacle we face in prayer, even if we are saying all the right things as we are talking to God, and that's just straight up, pride.
6. God is opposed to the proud. That's a problem, because we are often very proud. Even as believers we struggle with pride and this creates problems in our day to day relationship with God. Therefore if we are going to enjoy communion with God, we need to pursue humility, and one way we do that, is in prayer.
7. Humility is key to real prayer. John Calvin once said, “He who comes into the presence of God must strip himself of all proud thoughts, lay aside all idea of worth, in short, discard all self-confidence, humbly giving God the whole glory, lest by taking anything, however little to himself, empty pride cause God to turn away His face.”
8. If we are going to experience fellowship, closeness and communion with God we continually need to be fighting against pride as we come to God in prayer, and as we look at the Lord's prayer here in Luke 11, in the second half of the prayer, it's like Jesus is showing us some practical ways to do that. You want closeness with God, you need to be humble, you want to be humble, you are going to need to work, how do you work?
9. The first step Jesus gave was to ask. In other words, express your daily dependence on God for your physical needs. That was last week. A second way we fight pride is by humbling ourselves before God spiritually by confessing sin and asking God's forgiveness. And this is key word number 5. How do you pray? Believe, remember, hope, ask and **CONFESS**.

10. Confession is key to enjoying a relationship with God, but what are we talking about when we talk about confessing our sins?
11. To answer that, let's think a little about what the Bible teaches about confession. We know when we were first saved we confessed our sins and God forgave us all our sins, but here Jesus is talking to us as believers, and calling on us to make confession of sin a regular part of our prayer life. Why? If we are forgiven of all our sins at conversion, why do we continually confess?
12. There are a number of reasons. One reason we confess sins is because sin grieves God. A second reason is because of the ways confession of sin helps us. A third reason is because confession keeps us from becoming self-deceived.
13. Confession isn't simply another ritual. It's a way of sincerely humbling yourself before God. Emphasis on sincere. But, obviously, we are all good at going through the motions. So, if humbling ourselves like this and confessing our sins is so important in our relationship with God, how can we tell we aren't just faking it as we add this to our daily prayers?
14. Jesus gives us a test. One way to know you have really been humbled by God and are appreciating how much you need Him to show you mercy is by looking at your relationships with others. Actually forgiving someone who has really hurt you is much harder than saying God forgive me and yet one proof you really have been humbled before God and know your need of forgiveness is your willingness to forgive others who sin against you.
15. If you are united to Christ one key step you must take to experience and enjoy daily communion with Him is to pray believing the gospel, remembering you are talking to God, hoping in His great promises, and humbling yourself, first by asking for your help with your daily physical needs and second by confessing your sins and asking for forgiveness, while evaluating your sincerity by looking at your willingness to forgive those who have sinned against you.

Helpful Links

1. [All of Life is Repentance](#) (Tim Keller on Martin Luther and the nature and need for genuine repentance)
2. [John Calvin's "4 Rules" of Prayer](#) (Short Summary)
3. [Calvin on Prayer](#) (Excerpt from Calvin's Institutes)
4. [A Personal Liturgy of Confession](#) (David Powlison, Help knowing how to confess)
5. [3 Blessings of Seeing our Sin](#) (Ed Welch)
6. [The Nature of True Repentance](#) (Thomas Watson)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think should be our expectations for the quality of our everyday relationship with God? In other words, having been united with Christ, what do you think we should be hoping for and desiring in terms of communion with God on a daily basis? What leads you to say that?
2. Prayer is one of the means God has given to help us fellowship with Him. He speaks to us in His Word and we respond by speaking to Him in prayer. This is not just about a ritual. This is at least in part about enjoying a relationship. But unfortunately, we often struggle in just this aspect of our Christian lives and so we

are going to Jesus and asking him to help us with our prayer lives. What two obstacles did we say on Sunday often keep us from thriving in prayer and what guidance does Jesus give us in the Lord's prayer to help us overcome those obstacles?

3. Specifically we focused on the problem of pride. What are some evidences of pride that show up in our prayer lives?
4. One of the big evidences of pride is our failure to ask God for help and our failure to confess sin. So, we can fight this pride by learning to depend on God for everything and making a habit of confession. Sometimes people struggle with the idea of confession though because they feel like God has already forgiven them of all their sins, so why are they asking again? What would you say to someone like this? Why might God want us to confess our sins if He's already forgiven us our sins?
5. What is some counsel you would give about confessing your sins to God? What do you think good confession looks like? Is there any possible way we could go wrong when it comes to confessing sin?
6. What is the connection between confessing sin and the way you view the cross?
7. What suggestions would you give someone who is a Christian but doesn't feel like he has much to confess because he feels like he is a pretty good guy?
8. What's the difference between regularly confessing your sin and just being the kind of person who feels badly about themselves all the time?
9. Jesus adds an explanation to this statement in verse 4. What does he say? What is possibly confusing about that? In other words, how could people get that wrong? What do you think Jesus is intending to teach us?
10. What does an unwillingness to forgive others say about us and our relationship with God?
11. What is your big take-away for your life from this message on prayer?