

1-22-23 Sermon #3 PRAYER

Today I'm going to go back to the question, "Why do we pray?"

To set this up, I'm going to ask you to think about the relationship we have with our earthly parents and with our children. When a child comes to their parents with questions or wants, we don't always act immediately, and sometimes it can take weeks or months for an answer. Parents have to try and see past today, and we need to teach children something that will guide them through tougher times down the line. Children live in the moment and at times, we can be like that with God.

As children of God, it's only through the Spirit that we learn to hear God's voice and are able to wait on the Lord for answers. Just like our children, it takes time and patience to teach them to be less challenging with our answers.

Our voices are different. They're distinct and when a child hears our voice, that brings them security.

A few years back, while in California, Trish and I went to Chuck E. Cheese with our grandchildren. I was holding my granddaughter because she was only a couple years old, and I asked her if she could see her dad. She instantly started looking around, but she couldn't see him. What she didn't know was that he was sitting in a game console right next to me, and I was blocking her view of him. I whispered to my son-in-law, "Say her name." When he did, she immediately leaned forward and looked right at him.

Hearing his voice made all the difference. She immediately reacted to his voice.

If God said your name in a crowd, would his voice overpower the noise of the crowd? For this to happen, it takes having an intimate relationship with God. I've met many people who feel unsure about knowing when God is talking directly to them. I've also heard some people say that the relationship we have with God is greatly influenced by the relationship we have with our earthly fathers.

Children can be tough on parents. Think about when you go to a store, and a young child is having a meltdown. They want everything in sight and they believe they can have it all.

Telling them "NO", makes them very angry. We've all seen children have severe tantrums, and as a parent, we just want to crawl in a hole and cover our faces. As a parent, we never abandon our child, and all we can do is to just keep on keeping on.

We are John 1:12-13

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

God has to do the same thing with us. He has to wait for us to grow, and we can act like a small child for many years.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 says,

3 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

Hebrews 5:11-14 says,

¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

God isn't giving up on us – He's trying to encourage us to grow up.

If someone asked you; when was the last time you grew in your Faith, how would you answer that? What would we need to do or experience for that to happen?

How do we take a good relationship with God and make it even better?

Instead of just knowing God is REAL, can you say that you've grown or matured in a way that would cause you to respond in a way that makes you say Christ has made "ME" more REAL? Last Wednesday in the final Galatians class we studied chapters 5 and 6. Most of our time was spent talking about the Holy Spirit and his power. One person (Carol) made an interesting observation. She said we spend a lot of time studying about God and Jesus, but she wondered why we don't study about the Holy Spirit.

I think she's right. Do we really study the Holy Spirit and his power?

Galatians 5 starts by saying,

5 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

As we move down to verse 16 it says,

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the

flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

When Paul first started his ministry with the Galatians, he was bringing Christ to people for the very first time. Prior to that, the entire history of man was based on the law, and he needed people to understand that no longer were they bound by the law. Christ's death changed the world, and for those who believe and are baptized, now they live by Faith and are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Accepting Jesus' death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sin is about Mercy, Grace and Forgiveness.

Learning to LOVE the way Christ LOVES is only attained by having the Holy Spirit living in us. This is God's voice. Acts 2:36 – 37 says,

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Then Acts 2:38 answers it:

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

The Holy Spirit gives us an intimate relationship with God. It's not earned, it's a free gift that has to be opened.

Verse 38 is also a “PROMISE”:

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I'd like to share a brief story (Morgan's gift of the smart phone).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is our connection to God. Learning how to use the Spirit is very similar to a smart phone. Once we learn the basics, we can choose to never move from there. Having a smart phone and only using it for calls, texts and pictures is like having the Spirit and only using him for knowing we have salvation and an eternity in heaven with God.

There are so many different apps and functions that come with a smart phone. Christ is the device and the Holy Spirit is our settings app. We can't do anything without our phones. Leaving our house without it puts us in a panic.

Having that same passion for taking the Holy Spirit everywhere we go may be different.

We've talked about the "Up, In, & Out" process of Jesus' ministry. This is similar to the other apps on our phones. Do we download it, or do we just need the basic functions?

This app is in the App Store and labeled, "A prayer of Jesus". It's FREE.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is God living in us, and through the Spirit we have the power to no longer be controlled by the law.

Galatians 5:4-5 says,

⁴ You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

Where is our citizenship? Is it in the world or is it in Heaven? When we allow ourselves to get caught up in the ways of the world, we're not living in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-21 says,

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Every one of us is guilty of something in these verses, but we must continue to verses 22-25:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, it's our only way to have the power to stop giving in to worldly pleasures. The fruit isn't available to those who deny Christ.

We can't earn salvation. We can't master sin. Without the Holy Spirit, we could never find the true love from God.

Verses 19-21 are the conscience of the believer because we have the Spirit. Without confessing or receiving Christ's forgiveness, we're just using a rotary phone from the 60's.

Christ is the smart phone and the Holy Spirit is the settings.

We've been learning about developing NATURAL God conversations with others and about how important it is for us to be planting & watering. Studying the Holy Spirit is how we grow into having a "relational" God. It's about gaining a deeper meaning for feeling Grace – it brings

more Peace, it causes more Joy, and it gives us a deeper Hope and Love for God and our neighbor.

Through the Spirit, we get a heart that knows the true meaning behind Mark 12:28-31 and the Greatest Commandment:

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him,

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “**The most important one,**” answered Jesus, “**is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’^[e] ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’^[f] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[g] There is no commandment greater than these.”**

These aren't just “HEAD” verses! They're heart verses. The intimacy with God is only found by having the Holy Spirit alive in us.

We need to install the app called 1 Cor. 13:4-7:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Having a deep intimate relational God in our hearts and knowing God's voice through the Holy Spirit is our only way to grow in this kind of LOVE.

Answering the question, “Why do we pray?” is alive at First Church. I would like to challenge us with including in our prayers that God help us with becoming more aware of the power of the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us.

Galatians 5:16 says,

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[c] you want.

Hebrews 12:1-3 is also appropriate:

¹² Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the only way to have this kind of power.

Galatians 5:24-25 is for all of Christianity to seek:

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

At this time, you're invited to come and receive this gift.

Let's pray.