



THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



Sermon Series Notes

“The Potential for Powerful Prayer” (Mark 1:21-45)

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v.21 For those going to Israel with us next year, Capernaum is one of the sites we will visit. It is on the north shores of the Sea of Galilee, and it became Jesus’ base after he launched his public ministry.

v.22 The teachers of the law taught religious tradition, not the Word of God. Unfortunately, the teachers of the law and their practices are still with us today. Examples? The Catholic Church, etc.

vv.23-28 When Jesus showed up on the religious scene of His day, it was quite noticeable. He not only taught with authority, he demonstrated authority over evil spirits.

vv.29-31 When we visit Capernaum we will visit the ruins of what is believed to be Simon and Andrew’s home. It is right next to the ruins of an ancient synagogue.

Every time I read this text, I wonder why Simon did not tell Jesus that his mother-in-law was sick. Any thoughts?

vv.32-34 I have from time to time wondered why we do not see more demonstrative power manifest in the church today. Certainly it could have to do with a lack of faith, or not believing that God is doing miracles today. But it has also become clear to me that the miracles Jesus performed, and the miracles performed by the apostles, were for a special time in history. That does not at all mean that God is not doing miracles through his saints today, only that those during Jesus’ public ministry, as well the ministry of the apostles was unique.

Hebrews 2:4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Eph.2:20 Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

But there is another reason I believe we do not see God moving powerfully in and through the church today, (I’m talking about the American church) and the reason is a lack of what we see in the life of Jesus in the next couple of verses.

vv.35-37 Imagine the pressure put upon Jesus to minister to the crowds that demanded his attention!

vv.38-39 Interesting, Jesus is not swayed by the crowd, not influenced to make decisions in life based on popularity or public opinion.

vv.40-42 I am so glad God put the record of this particular healing here for us. It reveals volumes about Jesus, and the Father who sent him. He is willing to touch the most unclean, and is full of compassion, grace, and mercy.

vv.43-45 The motivation for touching and healing this leper flowed from the compassionate and caring heart of God, but the directive Jesus gives this now healed leper also flows from a compassionate and caring God, who wants all men to be saved, even those who are the most hard hearted and difficult to convince of the truth. That would certainly refer to the priesthood of Jesus’ day. It was the Jewish

leadership that was the most antagonistic toward Jesus, and so he directs this leper to go to them & offer the sacrifices required under the Law of Moses. But instead of doing what Jesus said, this guy goes out and begins to blab to everyone that Jesus healed him.

Now, before we begin to condemn this guy for what he did, let's ask ourselves a question. How often have we done what Jesus told us to do? Jesus told this guy not to talk freely about what Jesus had done for him, and instead he begins to tell everybody openly. Jesus told us to go & share the gospel with everyone, and many professing Christians never share Christ with others. That is the ultimate irony!

Read verse 28. Once Jesus launched His public ministry, His popularity spread pretty much overnight. And the demands from people for his attention and time was as much or more as for anyone in all of history. Read again vv.35-37.

Luke 5:15-16 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places where he prayed.

Prayer was the key to Jesus' life. And there was something about Jesus' prayer life that caused his disciples to ask him to teach them to pray. They had often seen and heard the prayers of the Jewish leaders of their day, but there was something about Jesus' praying that was different. In response to the disciples' request, Jesus gave them a model for prayer, we call it "The Lord's Prayer." Before we're done today we'll take a fresh look at that prayer and what we learn from it.

The apostles became devoted to prayer, and they led the early church in being devoted to prayer.

- Acts 1:14 They all joined constantly together in prayer...
- Acts 2:42 they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.
- See Acts 4:23-31; 8:59-60; Acts 16; Col.4:2

The OT gives us tremendous examples of the power available to us through this thing called prayer:

- Gen.18-19 Abraham interceded on behalf of his nephew Lot
- Gen.20:17 (fascinating)
- Exodus 8:12-13a, 30-31; 9:33; 10:18-19
- Exodus 17:8-16; I Tim.2:8
- Moses repeatedly prayed for Israel when God was ready to destroy them.
- Deut.9:20...the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too.
- Joshua 10:10-14 (Summarize context)
- I Kings 17:17-22
- I Kings 18:36-38 (Summarize context)
- II Kings 4:32-35 (Summarize context)
- II Kings 6:17

I don't know about you, but I read these true stories of God working powerfully through prayer, and I want to be like these great servants of the Lord, but I sometimes feel they are on a different level than me, one that I could never achieve. And then I remember a passage of Scripture that both encourages and at the same time challenges me.

- James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Elijah after Mt. Carmel, running from Jezebel, hiding in a cave, discouraged, depressed...

Moses was a murderer, failed to circumcise his child (Zipporah his wife saved his life by doing so), was extremely reluctant in going back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh, failed to go into the Promised Land due to his outburst of anger toward the Israelites (Num.20). Even after seeing Israel delivered from the bondage of Egypt, Moses' father-in-law had to teach him how to administrate the task of pastoring such a large flock of people (Ex.18). Moses, even after the lessons learned by spending 40 years on the backside of the desert, was still far from perfect.

The apostles were unschooled, ordinary men ("ignorant idiots")

- Illiterate "idiotes"

Anybody can have a powerful prayer life.

Most if not all Christians struggle to develop a meaningful prayer life.

Proper, biblical prayer is learned.

- Teach us to pray

Many churches fail to provide good examples (or teaching) on biblical prayer.

If all our study on prayer focused on stories about deliverance and seeing God move in ways we ask Him to, we would not come away with a good theology on prayer. To get a proper perspective on prayer, we must examine all the Scriptures tell us about prayer. For example:

- See Deut.3:23-26
- II Kings 13:14 tells us that Elisha died of an unnamed illness.
- Acts 19:11 tells us that God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, yet Paul's ministry companion Epaphroditus, was sick and almost died, yet God did not use Paul to heal him through a miracle (Phil.2). Paul's number one disciple and ministry associate, Timothy, had frequent illnesses (I Tim.5:23). And Paul himself, though he repeatedly asked the Lord to remove his "thorn in the flesh," was denied (II Cor.12).
- Hebrews 11:32-38...conquered kingdoms...shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword... became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies...women received back their dead...others were tortured...some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death with the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated...they wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.
- John 11:4; It would be quite easy to misunderstand Jesus' words here, and certainly pretty much everyone who heard them did. Both Martha and Mary say to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (vv.21 & 32). And note v.37. Couldn't Jesus have healed Lazarus? Of course he could. But what he meant by his words in v.4 went beyond this present life. He wanted these people to be able to face the inevitable, death, with hope. He wanted them to be able to face what appeared to be a "premature death," and certainly a tragedy for a family that Jesus loved, and that loved Him.
 - How many people in the Scriptures were raised from the dead? Widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17); Shunamite's son (II Kings 4); Dead man thrown into Elisha's tomb (II Kings

13:2); Widow of Nain's son (Luke 7); Jairus' daughter (Luke 8); Lazarus (John 11); Various Jerusalem saints (Matt.27); Tabitha (Acts 9); Eutychus (Acts 20); Jesus.

- Based on these few accounts, it is highly unlikely that God is going to raise the loved ones we have lost from the dead, at least not until Jesus returns.
- Isaiah 57:1 The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.
- I had a cyst drained this past Thursday at the "doc in the box." The most uncomfortable part of the procedure was the shots to numb the area before the doctor came at with me with the knife. I told this doctor, "Even at the age of 58 years old, I still hate shots." Why? Because they sting. The doctor even asked me as the needle was plunged underneath my 58 year old skin, "Does that sting?"
- I Cor.15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
- Despite knowing this truth, our humanity still desires to avoid pain, or anything else associated with death. And Jesus knows exactly how we feel!
- See Luke 22:41-44
- Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Sometimes it is God's will to glorify Himself through a cross rather than a crown, through a thorn rather than a rose.

CONCLUSION

- Jesus' answer when the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, we call it "The Lord's Prayer. Daniel Henderson gives us a great way to learn what Jesus intends to teach us from this prayer in his book "Transforming Prayer."
- The 4/4 pattern of prayer (based on music's most basic beat)
 - Upward Stroke = Reverence
 - "Our Father in heaven, holy is your name."
 - "If our prayers are not focused on God, we are guilty of idolatry, as we are putting someone (or something) else in God's place." (Transforming Prayer, p.165).
 - The upward stroke starts us at seeking God's face rather than his hand.
 - "Prayer is not primarily a means of getting something done, it is a concern for the glory of God." (Redpath, p.18).
 - Downward Stroke = Response
 - "May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as it's done in heaven."
 - "...yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit and recommitting ourselves to God's kingdom purposes....pledged obedience to the will and Word of God, desiring the accomplishment of His purposes in our lives." (Transforming Prayer, p.166).

- John 7:28 I am not here on my own authority
- John 8:28...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.
- John 8:42; 12:49; 14:10
- “The object of all true praying...is not to bend the will of God to mine, but to get my will in line with His.” (Alan Redpath, Victorious Praying, p.18).
- Jesus = Yet not my will, yours be done
- “The deepest need of an assembly of God’s people as they worship is not that God would touch their bodies, but that He would break into their hearts by His Holy Spirit.” (Redpath, p.18).
- “Our prayer lists can easily become so saturated with our desires for ease, comfort, convenience, and accomplishment, that the goal of God’s glory becomes obscured. Our human tendency to avoid pain, loss, and difficulty can dilute our passion for God’s glory. When our goals and God’s glory are in conflict, it can be hard for our hearts to choose.” (Transforming Prayer, Henderson, p.93).
- Inward Stroke = Requests
 - “Give us this day our daily bread...”
 - “...we do not really know what to pray for until we have worshipped well and surrendered completely.” (Transforming Prayer, p.166).
 - “Praying about “daily bread” is more than hoping we can scrape some funds together to buy a fresh bagel at Panera Bread. This idea represents “all that we need to sustain life as we serve the Lord.”
 - Virtually every prayer list includes a resource or relationship concern.
 - I John 3:21-24; 5:14-15
 - Acts 24:16 I strive always to keep my conscience clear between God and man.
 - II Peter 4:7...be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.
- Outward Stroke = Readiness
 - “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...”
 - “...recognize our own inability to overcome the temptations and snares of daily life.” (Transforming Prayer, p.168).
- As we conclude our time together, I encourage you to seek first God’s face before you seek His hand, to yield to the control of the Holy Spirit and recommit yourself to God’s kingdom purposes.