

“HOW’S YOUR PRAYER-LIFE?”

John 14: 1-14

So, do you know how to pray? The good news is, that the Bible tells us that God helps us to pray – likewise the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we don’t know how to pray as we ought, but that very “Spirit” intercedes with sighs too deep for words. So, we are pretty safe that when we pray, we’re doing it right, because God helps us to get it right! Did you know that there is only one thing we know for sure that the disciples asked Jesus how to do? They didn’t ask Jesus to be “fishers of men”; they didn’t ask how to preach; They didn’t ask how to run a church committee meeting; But, they did ask Jesus to teach them to pray – Praying isn’t that hard – Parents pray for their children – Students pray to pass exams – People pray that they’ll pass the interview and get hired – A young man prays that pretty girl he asked out will say yes – Soldiers pray for God’s protection – What are most of our prayers like? Are we forever asking God for things? “How’s your prayer-life?” Jesus makes us an incredible promise this morning – Let me read John 14:14 again for you, “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” Wow! This is some promise! Do you believe what Jesus said? Do you think it’s true? Well, I do! I believe that every prayer is answered – Now, this doesn’t mean that every prayer is granted – If you ask for an “A” on your exam, and only get a “B”, it doesn’t mean God didn’t answer your prayer – it means you should’ve studied more – God is not a vending machine – God is not this cosmic Santa Claus granting us our every wish! So, if you want to know about the answer to prayer – you need to know something about prayer, and you don’t have to be a Christian to know there is a relationship between the subject who is asking that something be granted, and the power with the said-ability to grant this request. So basically, we the weak, go to the one with power for something we want – Then the power decides whether or not to give this request to us. My guess is, this is how most people think of prayer. So, we need to clarify, is this how the New Testament talks of God? Is God the all-powerful grantor of what people want? What did Jesus call God? What did he tell us to call God? “Father”, “Our Father who art in heaven...” Now, when you want something from your father, it becomes a question of you wanting something your father can give or refuse to give – It may sound like that...when you want the car keys Friday night – And what may seem like an important issue to a teenager at the moment, would not necessarily characterize his or her relationship with their father that way – No, there is love, respect, caring, guidance, discipline, and many more things with love at the root of it all. So, what do we learn about prayer? We learn that prayer is a relationship – prayer is a meeting – prayer is a coming together. Just like my wife and I – Friday night is our “date night”, and it doesn’t matter where we go, or what we do – The important thing is we’re together! A survey was done before Father’s Day, and a group of young boys were asked, “What’s the most important thing about being a father?” The answers were things like, “he plays catch with me”; “He shows me how to work”; “He takes me on errands with him.” Every single thing in the top 10 answers had to do with spending time with his son. It’s about coming together – it didn’t matter exactly what they did together, as long as they went together! Prayer is the same! It matters that you are together with God.....Just you two – God and me! Our scripture lesson from John 14 this morning is a favorite – “Don’t let your hearts be troubled! Believe in God, also believe in Jesus; in my Father’s house, there are many rooms – would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you also may be where I am – You know the way to the place where I’m going.” After reading this passage, do you think, “Hey, I wonder what my room will be like? Will it be decked out or plain? Will it have an entertainment center with a big-screen TV?” But that’s not the point of this whole thing. It’s nice there are many rooms, but that isn’t the point – Listen to the end of the passage again. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” You see, it isn’t so much about the room in heaven that matters – It’s the fact that our Lord Jesus is going to be our next-door neighbor in heaven! It’s exactly like what Jesus said to the thief as they hung together dying on the cross – “Today you will be with me in paradise!” And Jesus wants us to know that every prayer is answered – Jesus is the answer, and part of the secret of answered prayer is being satisfied with the answer! There’s a story of a man who lost his footing at the edge of a cliff and tumbled over the side – As he fell, he grabbed a thin branch on the face of the cliff and held on for dear-

life....With each passing minute, his hands grew more and more tired – Finally, he cries out in desperation, “Is there anyone up there?” A voice answered, “Yes, it is the Lord!” The man cried out, “Help me!” – The Lord answered, “Let go of the bush, and I will save you!” The man looks down at the huge drop to the bottom and yells, “Isn’t there anyone else up there that can help?” Are we guilty of that kind of praying? God is standing by to give us Jesus – but Jesus wasn’t exactly what we had in mind? We need faith! We need to trust God! The African-impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet, yet, these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3 foot wall – You see, these animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will land – Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to trap us. If we seek the Lord, he will answer us and deliver us from our fears – God has the power to crush our fears – God will deliver us out of our troubles – Maybe not solve our problems as we wish – But none-the-less give us divine perspective, and this is even better – One of the biggest problems for Jews of Jesus’ day was their perspective – They were ruled by Rome, and every single day, the Jews had to look at the occupational Roman army who ruled the country – Because God ultimately rules! And, how much can we trust God? A couple of more stories for you.....There’s a story of the pioneer-days of our country – How a man was making his way west when he came upon the Missouri River. It was winter and the ice covered the river from bank to bank. But, how could the man be sure the ice could hold his weight across the river? There had been people who drowned in that river when the ice broke, yet, he had to cross. He walked out a little way, then fear gripped him – So, he started to crawl on his hands and knees – He looked back and saw the bank ahead was closer than the bank he had left, and he would surely drown now if the ice gave way, so he spread out on his belly and slowly drew himself sliding across the ice a few inches at a time. Suddenly, behind him, he hears whistling – He turns to see a farmer walking across the ice leading a team of horses drawing a heavy, wooden sleigh full of hay. The farmer was smiling and whistling, and he tipped his hat to the man crawling on the ice. The timid soul sprawled on the ice stood up, brushed off the ice from his belly and managed a sheepish-smile. That old farmer had crossed this ice many times and knew it could be trusted – So, how we doing? Are we crawling inches at a time in our faith, or are we standing upright and whistling along our way? There was a photographer who was a skydiver – he had jumped numerous times with other skydivers and filmed the group as they fell and opened their parachutes – On the film he shot that day that was viewed later by the group – As the final skydiver opened his chute, the picture went berserk! The announcer reported that the cameraman had fallen to his death, having jumped out of the plane without his parachute – It wasn’t until he reached for the absent ripcord that he realized he was free-falling without a parachute. Until that point, the jump seemed exciting and fun – But tragically, he had acted with thoughtless haste and deadly foolishness – nothing could save him, for his faith was in a parachute never buckled on – Faith in anything but an all-sufficient God can be just as tragic...spiritually! Only with faith in Jesus Christ dare we step into the dangerous excitement of life – Jesus asks – What Father, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Imagine the cruelty of teeth cracking against rock – Jesus says if we, sinful as we are, can give good gifts to our children – Just imagine the gifts God will give to us, his children, when we ask! This week – Rev-Up your prayer-life! When will it be? On the commute to work? Making the time to take a few minutes at lunch-time? Maybe, after you watch the news? While you’re washing dishes? “How’s your prayer-life?” Will you set a time to meet the answer to pray in your daily life? Just imagine the good things God has in store for you! The Niagara River has run mightily to the ocean for millennia – But one day, someone wondered if you could harness all that rushing water to generate electricity – More than 100,000 cubic feet per second! And what power came from that river! Jesus is a mighty river! His power is flowing right there for you all the time – All you need to do is tap into Jesus – Into the most powerful force of all time – And become the Christian that God wants you to become! May this be so! Amen!