

Prayer That Moves Mountains 8-11-02

Last week's message covered the first half of the LORD's prayer. We saw in the Sermon on the Mount several important lessons in Jesus' teaching. When we pray we should examine our motives. We should consider the attributes of God so that we pray according to His perfect nature, asking for what is righteous and just, merciful and good. God already knows what we need. We don't need to go on and on or say some secret expression over and over. We pray and listen from our spirit.

He longs to meet our need, as any Father would long to meet the needs of His child. When we begin as Jesus began this prayer, He is free to meet our needs in a way that is consistent with His character. The prayer begins with acknowledgement of the holiness of the Father's name, God's kingdom coming, and God's will first and foremost. When you begin there, your heart is turned away from selfish vanity and turned toward God's eternal purposes. "Your name, God, your kingdom (rule and reign as You alone best see fit) and Your perfect will be done." Prayer is willful submission to and cooperation with the heart of God. Since His ways are loving, gracious, just, but merciful, my desire is to yield my will to His in prayer.

Understanding our old nature, that is the selfish and destructive nature we were born with, should give us the motivation to pray God's will instead of our own. Even when it looks painful, as it did for Jesus in the Garden, if we submit to the truth that God knows best and loves us, we can pray for His will and expect His peace to fill us. I could give numerous examples of people, including myself, praying what sounded good and even innocent, but what was really contrary to God's will. It cost them a great deal as they proceeded with their own will. I remember asking God for things that I thought were even sacrificial, and yet if God had given those things to me at that time it would have been contrary to God's kingdom and His purposes. I thank God He withheld them.

Let me give you an example close to home. I'm sure many of you have prayed for the property to be sold. Yet, if it had been sold two years ago would the church have been ready to handle the funds wisely with God's leading? We don't know if this sale will go through. How should we pray? Pray as you are led by the Spirit. Then you will be praying God's will instead of in opposition to it. It will sell in His perfect time, when we are prepared to handle the finances for the glory of God and the advancement of the Kingdom. If that is 10 years from now, praise the LORD. Surrendering to God's holy name, kingdom and will, puts you in unity with your Father, not in ignorant or intentional opposition to Him.

When we found out how sick Donna was, the elders anointed her with oil and prayed for her as the passage in James 5 instructs us to. Donna is not getting better. Are we to conclude God did not hear our prayer? We see in other portions of Scripture that our times are in God's hands. (Psalm 31:15) He has numbered our days. (Lam 4:18) There was one fellow in the Bible who was told his time was up, and God gave him an extension on his days on earth. He was King Hezekiah. He pleaded with God for more years and God granted him 15 more. (2Chron 32) During those years he made some blunders that were spots on his otherwise perfect record. Would he have been better

Commented [Q1]: 15 My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.
Psalms 31:15 (KJV)

Commented [Q2]: 18 Men stalked us at every step, so we could not walk in our streets. Our end was near, our days were numbered, for our end had come.
Lam 4:18 (NIV)

off going when God first told him his time was up? God works all things together for good if we love Him and are called to His purposes. We must trust that He knows the perfect time to take us home. If it were up to our preferences, none of our loved ones would ever die. Understanding this does not make it any easier. It does, however, give us a peace in the midst of the storm. It is a peace the world cannot understand. We know where Donna is going and we know the Lord will be with the family through these difficult times. Again we see it is about His name, His kingdom, and His will and not what we would prefer, because we trust that He knows what is ultimately best.

After putting His kingdom and will first we can pray the rest of the prayer Jesus gave us. Matt 6:11-13 (NIV) *11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

We have need of two kinds of bread. We need physical bread that sustains our physical bodies. We can go without it for a time, but we need to take care of the temple of the Holy Spirit. God has placed this vehicle, my body, in my care, and as a good steward I should care for it. So I ask God to be the Provider of my food, one day at a time. I don't ask for a storehouse, for then I would become self-dependent and not seek Him. (Prov 30:8,9) That is human nature. That is why it is so difficult for the wealthy to trust in God. It is easier to trust and rely on wealth because it is visible. What a comfort we have when we know it is God that provides our daily bread. The Psalmist said he had never seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. (Psalm 37:25) The God that feeds the birds all over the face of the world feeds us. (Matt 6:26)

The other kind of bread is spiritual. Jesus said He was the bread that came down from heaven. (John 6:51) He is the Word made flesh. He said, "*This is my body which is broken for you, take, eat in remembrance of me.*" (1Cor 11:24) This bread is the spiritual food that we feast on when we open His word, when we hear from Him in prayer, or when a message is relayed by the Holy Spirit through some human instrument. We are feasting on Jesus, the heavenly bread. How often do we need that? *Give us this day our daily bread* - daily. When we pray, do we think only of the physical? We need to pray our spiritual needs are met just as we pray for our physical needs. We need an appetite, a spiritual hunger, to remind us we need the Bread of Life. We have the promise that our God will supply all our needs, according to His riches in glory, in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:19) He will meet our physical needs and our spiritual needs, if we will just ask and have a will to receive.

Then we ask for forgiveness AS we forgive others. We have had our sins covered by His blood, but I'm sorry for continuing to sin. It grieves me that I would act in rebellion toward such a loving Father. You would think that since I became a new creature in Christ I would quit sinning. I'm still in this earthly body though. It is prone to error. I ask the heart of the One with the hallowed name to forgive me. Unforgiveness in my heart will block His forgiveness from flowing into my life. If I won't forgive those who owe me little, why should I expect God to forgive me when I owe Him so much? Unforgiveness is a poison that restricts your communion with God. Unforgiveness hinders prayer and our relationship with God.

Commented [Q3]: 8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.
9 Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.
Prov 30:8-9 (NIV)

Commented [Q4]: 25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.
Psalms 37:25 (NIV)

Commented [Q5]: 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
Matt 6:26 (NIV)

Commented [Q6]: 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
John 6:51 (NIV)

Commented [Q7]: 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."
1 Cor 11:24 (NIV)

Commented [Q8]: 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
Phil 4:19 (NIV)

Our last request in this prayer is to not be led into temptation. I recognize how weak I am and how strong the Evil One is, so I ask to be kept from his attacks. The Psalmist prayed to be led in a plain path, because of his enemy. (Psalm 27:11) We should pray the same. Lead us plainly, for the enemy of our soul desires to capture what territory he can. Test and grow me, but keep me out of his clutches.

Commented [Q9]: 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Psalms 27:11 (KJV)

We start with His name, His kingdom, His will and move on to our needs physical and spiritual. Then we ask for forgiveness for our sins, and to be led away from the Enemy's traps. The prayer is so simple a child can pray it but so rich it can encompass the deepest expressions of our spirit.

As we pray the will of God into our life and the lives of those with which we are in contact, our faith increases. As we listen with our spirit, our spiritual senses become more acute. We increasingly become a vessel through which God intervenes in the world. There is no higher calling or honorable work.

Look at the glorious promises that are ours! John 15:7 (NIV) *7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.* John 15:16 (NIV) *16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.* John 14:13-14 (NIV) *13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* 1 John 3:21-22 (NIV) *21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.* 1 John 5:14-15 (NIV) *14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.*

"Whatever you wish", "Whatever you ask", "anything you ask", these are very broad terms. Then why do many of our prayers seem to go unanswered? Let us look back at some of the conditions we so readily skip over. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you..." What does it mean to remain in Christ? KJV uses the word 'abide'. That is to live in. I abide in my home. I'm not always there but it is where I spend most of my time. Do you spend most of your time in Christ? If Christ is your home, you have a heart for His will and His untainted desires, you will ask for those good things that are His will, even when they would not be your first choice.

Look at the next one. If you bear fruit that will last, the Father will give you whatever you ask in Jesus' name. There is really a double condition there. To bear fruit that lasts means you are acting according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He is the only One that bears lasting fruit. All our carnal endeavors will pass away. Our good ideas and best efforts that had their origin in our old nature will come to nothing. God says, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD." (Zech 4:6)

The second condition is asking in Jesus' name. If you go to the Office Administrator of the church and ask for something, you might get it or you might not. But if you first

say, Pastor Paul asked me to come get this thing from you, then you will probably get it. You are asking because I asked you to ask. We often add on our prayers, "In Jesus' name." That means, at His direction and per His will and with His authority. Has someone ever yelled to you, "Stop"? You might stop or you might keep going. But if they say, "Police! Stop in the name of the Law", then you better stop because they represent the legal system of the government under which you live. They command in its name. They have the backing of that system to make demands in accordance with the law and the right to use force to enforce it.

When you add to the end of your prayer, "in Jesus' name", you are saying, "I am speaking as an ambassador of Jesus and asking these things on His behalf." Jesus says that when you do that, Dad answers. I won't go over the rest of those promises and their conditions because you're probably getting the idea. (Look at them for yourself and pick out the conditions included in the promises.)

Now some of you might be thinking, "How disappointing! I thought I was going to find some formula to get what I want without surrendering to God!" That would be neglecting the first principle of prayer, seeking God's kingdom and will. Did you raise your children, giving them anything and everything they asked for? I hope not. I've seen a man let his 5 year old run around with an 8 inch razor sharp hunting knife. I asked him about it and his reply was, "Oh he's careful now. He almost cut off his finger last week." I thought, "Thank God he didn't fall on it and lose his life to learn the lesson." Your Father only gives you what is good for you. Even the difficult things can be in our best interest.

If you are disappointed because of God's goodness in withholding things that would be detrimental to you, you have a worldly perspective. You need your heart transformed so that your desires become His. Your prayers are not answered because as James says, "...*You ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3) Or they may not be answered because you have stopped listening to God and His will and ways. Listen to what the prophet Zechariah warned God's people was happening. Zech 7:13 (NASB) 13 "*And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen,*" says the LORD of hosts... They wouldn't listen to God so He would not listen to them. That is not some childish response but insuring their own good. If we won't listen to God's perfect and holy desires, we plead our own selfish and destructive desires.

If the prospect of praying God's will into your life and the lives of those you come in contact with excites you, it is because you realize His will is the answer to the evil in the world around us. It is not our methods, and our ideas and programs, but a sovereign move of God doing what God has planned. That is what will transform this city. If you are here to just play golf, and watch TV, and take an occasional vacation, you have a boring existence! If you are here as an ambassador of the King of the Universe to request His power and life flow into lives and situations both here and around the world, then you have an eternal destiny and an exciting life both now and throughout eternity.

The author of Hebrews tells us we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, those who have gone before us. (Heb 11:1) They are watching the good fruit of their lives in Christ earn compound interest. They are watching the fulfillment of their prayers. They are routing for Wayside Chapel to become a House of Prayer!

Commented [Q10]: 1 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. Heb 12:1 (NIV)

Jesus promised if you had the faith of a grain of mustard seed you could say to a mountain, "be moved", and it would happen. (Matt 17:20) I used to wonder about that. Why didn't I have faith to do that? When I was a child, I would pick a mountain and ask, but nothing ever happened. Thank God! Can you imagine the title wave and the number of people that would have been killed? I wrestled with this seeming contradiction between God's word and experience until I realized I needed to be asking in God's will. If I know I am asking for God's will to be done, praying at the direction of the Holy Spirit, then I know I am praying with Jesus' authority, that is, in His name. Then I will believe it will be done! Then I will be sure the answer is coming.

Commented [Q11]: 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Matt 17:20 (KJV)

Listen to Romans 8:26-27 (NIV): *26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

We are learning from Christ how to pray, but we don't know what we ought to pray for. Isn't that what this verse just said? We need the help of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we can't even express it, so He does for us. See how He prays? He prays in accordance with God's will.

God's will is so much better than what you or I would pray for ourselves. He sees your deepest need and knows every possible path you could choose. He may take you home quicker than you like or leave you here longer than you'd prefer, but He knows best.

Sometimes we don't consciously know what God is doing. Remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? They chose to obey God. The king said he would throw them in the furnace if they didn't bow to his image, a huge golden idol. They answered, "Our God is able to deliver us and rescue us from your hand, but even if He doesn't, we want you to know we won't worship or bow down to your idol." (paraphrase of Daniel 3:17,18) They must not have known with certainty God's will for their future. They were prepared for either outcome because they believed God is God and they were men. And God did deliver them. Yet, for everyone God has miraculously healed or delivered there are as many that have not seen the answer in this life. They were healed or delivered through death – our great graduation. Why some and not others? Only our Sovereign God knows and we must trust and believe He knows best how and when to answer our prayers. We say with righteous Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15)

Commented [Q12]: 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Dan 3:17-18 (NIV)

I would ask for some things to be different. Sin wreaks havoc on this world. The curse upon sin with disease and inequity is heart wrenching. Man's inhumanity to man never ceases to shock me. What we are praying for is the culmination of this time of man reigning in the earth. We are praying against the evil that would harm the innocent. The freedom to choose God also allows the freedom to choose evil, and that evil causes

Commented [Q13]: 15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. Job 13:15 (KJV)

so much pain. John looked into heaven and prayed, "Come quickly Lord Jesus!" As an old man in his 90's he had seen the horror of life in this world where man could so brutalize man. He'd seen enough sorrow and suffering, but he had also seen answers to prayers as the church thrived in the face of such evil. He saw prayer open up heaven and the future before his eyes. He had seen Jesus praying when the Spirit descended on Him like a dove. He was there when they gathered in a room and prayed until the Church was born in the outpouring of the Spirit. He saw prayer break Him out of prison and fill the disciples with boldness in the face of persecution. Here was a man who realized the mighty conflict we enter when we pray God's kingdom and will into the world around us. His prayer in response to seeing both the horror of the rebellion of man and the glory of the Kingdom of God was, "Come quickly Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20)

Until He comes, we will be His instruments to pray His will into the world around us. Pray His will as you are led by the Spirit and you will be praying in faith, believing. Mountains moving will seem like nothing compared to the transformed lives and the redeemed situations that your prayers will bring about. Pray God's will into your life, your home, this church, and this city! Pray, House of Prayer, and watch the Kingdom of God manifest itself before your very eyes. Will you do as the Apostle Paul instructed in Colossians 4:2 , "*Devote yourselves to prayer*"?

Commented [Q14]: 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
Rev 22:20 (NIV)