

HEAR MINISTRIES

Sermon for Sunday, **May 25th, 2025**

Text: John 16:23-33

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Let us Pray: Father, open our ears and our hearts to hear the message You have for us today. Help us to clear our minds of anything that is not of You and take in the truth of Your Word. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight. In Jesus name. Amen.

Do you remember, as a child, when you wanted something from your parents but you were afraid to ask? So you would get your brother or sister to ask! “No, you ask....” “No, YOU ask....” And back and forth you would go!

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus is teaching his disciples that, because of His death and resurrection, they can come directly to God the Father in His name and they can ask anything! They don’t have to go through another person, like a High Priest, and they can come to the Father anytime.

So can we. Jesus is talking about prayer.

In John 16, Jesus is preparing His disciples for the reality that He will be leaving them. He speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit, revealing that they would not be abandoned or left to figure things out on their own. **By stating that "in that day ye shall ask me nothing," Jesus was indicating a shift in how they would communicate with God.** He was anticipating the moment after His resurrection when access to the Father would be more immediate, direct, and powerful.

This phrase signifies a pivotal transition; **the disciples were used to coming to Jesus directly for their requests. However, after His ascension, a new relationship would blossom because of the Holy Spirit's presence. This new dynamic shifts the focus from Jesus to the Father, empowering believers with the privilege of asking directly in His name.**

When we pray in Jesus' name, we are not simply adding a “formula” at the end of our prayers. Instead, **we are invoking the authority and power of Christ. To ask in His name means to align our requests with His character, His will, and His mission.** It is an invitation to present our desires and needs while recognizing that the answers may not always align with our preconceived notions of what is best.

Therefore, when we come before God, we should be reminded to check our hearts, **asking ourselves: "Does my request reflect the heart of Jesus? Am I seeking my will, or am I genuinely seeking His?"** This introspection transforms our approach to prayer, encouraging us to seek a deeper relationship with the Father rather than simply a means to an end.

The second part of Jesus' statement is a resounding promise:

“He will give it you (John 16:24).”

This assurance reinforces God’s readiness and willingness to respond. It highlights God’s nature as a giver and provider. It invites us to trust not only in the act of asking but also in the goodness of the Father. His resources are limitless, and He is eager to pour out blessings upon His children who come in faith.

When we encounter challenges or feel weighed down by the burden of the world, we must remind ourselves of this promise. It calls us to bring every concern, big or small, before the Father without expectation. Whether it is for clarity in a difficult decision, healing for a loved one, or peace in turmoil, we can approach God with confidence.

This all sounds great.....**so why don’t we do it? Why is prayer so difficult for human beings to utilize?** Well, **prayer is difficult because of the devil and our own sinful flesh.** The devil wants to cut us off from God. He works very hard to keep us from hearing God’s Word, distracting us with busyness, interfering thoughts and any other distraction he can think of! He will do whatever he can to keep us from praying or talking to our Heavenly Father.

Satan will even enlist our own flesh against us! We may say, *“Oh, I’m too tired.....or I’m too sick.....or too depressed.....or I should be able to figure this out myself, what is God going to do that I can’t?”*

And, when it comes to Jesus' words in our text about prayer, **satan will especially attack the words “....in My name....” because, if we aren't praying in Jesus' name, our prayers are in vain.** Jesus stated as much if you look at *John 16:23*,

*“.....whatever you ask of the Father **in My name**.....”*

Remember: to pray in Jesus' name is to pray according to His Word.

Prayers of praise and thanks declare what God has done according to His Word. Prayers of intercession (of asking for help) are claiming the promises of God for our life. First we hear His promises and then we speak them back to Him.

We will always be tempted to pray in such a way that is in accordance with what WE WANT versus according to God's Word. That is the devil and our flesh at work!

In John 16, Jesus taught His disciples four things about prayer. First, we see that Jesus taught His disciples to be **confident and strong in the power of our heavenly Father.** The Lord said,

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!

I have overcome the world!” (John 16:33)

With the power of Christ, we can prevail over any problem. The Lord gave us His Holy Spirit to make us victors amidst the strife, hardship and adversity we come up against.

Secondly, Jesus showed His disciples **how to be overcomers through prayer.** In *Matthew 26:41* Jesus prayer,

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

Even our hymn-writer understood the power of prayer. In our opening hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” we sang “*We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer....*”

Jesus knew that it is impossible to overcome all of the problems of life without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is why He said in *John 14:26-27*,

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Wow! We could stop right there! Those are words we can take to the bank.....**we have no reason to worry when we put ourselves in the Lord’s hands!**

The **third thing** Jesus taught His disciples about prayer was the understanding that **our biggest enemy would come from within our own sinful human nature.** He said,

“It is not what is on the outside of a man that defiles him, but what comes out of his heart: evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly (Mark 7:20-21).”

That’s quite a list! **Jesus knew that all people need to fear God to be overcomers of this world, our flesh and the devil,** but He did not leave us on our own for the battle. Thank You, Jesus!

Finally, Jesus knew that **great faith is the victory that overcomes the world.** He said in *John 14:12*,

“He who believes in Me, the works that I do will he do also. And greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father.”

Imagine that! Do you see any of us doing greater works than what Jesus did? I don’t! **I wonder if that says something about the degree to which we are committed to the Lord and living our lives according to His will???** Or maybe we truly spend too much time praying about ourselves and our

needs/wants/desires versus praying according to His will.....when and if we do pray.....ouch! This is getting pretty convicting!!

The Good News is that nothing can separate us from our heavenly Father's love. Paul wrote,

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine
or nakedness or danger or sword?"*

God knows us and He loves us in spite of our being much less than perfect! He deals with us the same way we would with our children.... God does not give up his prerogative as King when he tells us to pray, and promises us to answer. He still holds everything in his own hands.

We say to our child, "My dear, I will give you anything that is for your good." He asks us to let him have his father's razors to play with. Well, we know that very soon he will be cutting himself, and we say, "No, my child; that is preposterous."

Or she asks to let her have those sweets that are poisonous, and we say, "No, my dear child; I have no doubt they taste sweet to your palate, but think of the bitter medicines you would have to take afterwards, and of how much mischief they would do you. No, I cannot let you have those."

So it is with our God. He denies us many things we wish for because they are not good for us. But there is one thing that is certain:

"He does not withhold good from those who walk blamelessly (Psalm 84:11)

If it is really good for us, we shall have it!

So, how then can we embrace Jesus' powerful promise about prayer in our daily lives? First, we can cultivate a habit of **consistent prayer**. Setting aside time to engage in conversation with God, expressing our needs, desires, and gratitude helps us grow in intimacy with the Father.

Second, we should practice **discernment and patience**. Waiting on our requests to be answered can be difficult, but we must trust that God's timing and responses are perfect. **We can reflect on our requests, ensuring they stem from a desire to glorify God and not just fulfill personal agendas.**

It is such a gift God has given us, to be able to come directly to Him with anything!! We are missing out when we don't take advantage of talking to our Lord on a regular basis and getting to know Him and His love for us.

I found this a bit humorous as I read it.....it is exactly how God dealt with Israel for sure!

Once there was a rich man who had a son to whom he promised an annual allowance. Every year on the same day, he would give his son the entire amount. After a while, it happened that the only time the father saw his son was on the day of allowance. So, the father changed his plan and only gave the son enough for the day. Then the next day the son would return. From then on, the father saw his son every day. This is the way God dealt with Israel. **It is the way God deals with us.**

Prayer is asking God to help us to do what He has called us to do. Lack of prayer is an attempt to do things in our own power and strength.

Let us fully embrace the promise of asking and receiving, cultivating a deeper faith that mirrors the heart of Jesus, just like the hymn we sang earlier:

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful? Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.*
(Hymn No.439, LBW, v.2)

Amen.