

Mark 11:20-25

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[0 : 00] And amen. Please take out your copy of God's Word. Turn to the Gospel according to Mark chapter 11. As you're getting there, let me just by way of reminder, as I saw so many new precious little faces down front, we're very happy to have children in the service with us, but it's a work in progress, isn't it?

And it's a challenge. It takes some sacrifice on everyone's part. For those of you without children, the great work ahead of us is to learn to be okay with kids because kids are not wired like we are, and they haven't quite yet learned what it looks like to sit perfectly quietly in a setting like this. So embrace kids, love kids, and love them for some of their oddities and their challenges as well. So for parents, it takes some sensitivity to that also.

Recognize as parents, we get this really amazing skill as parents to tune out, to totally check out what's happening with our kids. It's pretty amazing how your child can be hitting you on the leg and saying your name over and over again.

You just check them out, right, all together. It's harder for single people without children to do that thing. So remember that and be sensitive in that. It's a work in progress to have kids with us in here.

[1 : 22] Sam and I work really diligently with Cade and Judah. We practice at home. We have book time. We make them sit and be quiet. It takes a lot. And even still, my wife mostly has the burden placed on her.

I think she's chuckling because there's some challenges going on even right now. But we do have some space across the hall for that. So if it's time to step out, that's a place that you can bring a little more stern discipline.

You can, as I used to do with Cade and Judah, stick your two fingers in their collarbone. Be quiet. You can do that over there a little more easily than over here.

I would encourage you to that because it does take work. I wish they would magically sit still and quiet, but it does take a work. It's amazing. I've discovered by the grace of God what I can preach through, but I'm not too sure about people's threshold for listening.

So let's be sensitive to that. Mark chapter 11. I'm going to begin reading to you in verse 20, and we'll read through 25. As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots.

[2 : 33] And Peter remembered and said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree that you cursed has withered. And Jesus answered them, have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive. If you have anything against anyone so that your father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

This is God's word to us written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's pray together.

Father God, we do thank you today for your word to us. And I thank you, Father, for the church, this unique institution in the world that you have called out of darkness, a people who were once not a people and you have made us a people.

And you have given us the task of gathering together and opening your word and having it applied to our lives. This application is a supernatural thing.

[3 : 57] The great miracle in preaching is not that I even managed to get up here and say things for the length of time, although that is a miracle in itself. The real miracle is the way in which you apply your word to our hearts.

So I would ask this day, Father, because of your graciousness, because we know that you love your people and we know that you're zealous for your glory, that you will make us more like Christ to that great end.

And we pray this in his name. Amen. So we looked last week at a rather remarkable event in the ministry of Jesus when he has gone into Jerusalem and he cleanses the temple.

He goes in and he turns over the tables and he runs out the money changers. But prior to that, he cursed a fig tree. We saw on his journey into town, this is by my very best intellect, Tuesday of the Passion Week.

He's entered Jerusalem for the first time on Monday. We now see him, verse 11, he's returned to Bethany. Now he's coming back into town on Tuesday and he's hungry and he sees a fig tree from far off and it's in leaf.

[5 : 14] And so it's probable in the life of the fig tree that it should have had unripened fruit on it. But it doesn't. And he uses this as an opportunity not to exert his power over creation in some kind of spiteful manner against the fig tree.

But he uses it as an opportunity to show the disciples the coming judgment for the fruitlessness of Israel. And that's driven home for us as the story of him cleansing the temple is sandwiched in between, is bookended with the resulting words of the disciples concerning that very fig tree, which we see in verse 20 and verse 21.

So this is Wednesday of the Passion Week. Jesus will be crucified on Friday. We will spend the next four to five months in this period of time in Jesus' ministry in the Gospel according to Mark. Much will happen. He's packing it in. He's giving the very last teaching. They have yet to realize this is the event that's going to happen at the end of the week, but he's fully aware of it.

He knows what's about to come. And he's trying to impart to them all of the final truths they must understand. The lesson before us today is primarily a lesson about prayer.

[6 : 43] We certainly see his response in verse 22, have faith in God, and we could readily make it primarily about faith, but it is about prayer which is fueled by faith.

Now, the disciples, their lives before encountering Jesus, being called by Him and following Him for the three-ish years that they followed Him, would not have been devoid of prayer.

This was not a new thing. This wasn't that they were not praying, and now they knew that they were supposed to be praying. The New Testament people of God prayed to God.

The Israelites prayed to God. There's an Old Testament record of so many precious and beautiful prayers, which we'll look at some of them today as an example for the way we should pray.

But perhaps their prayer lives had faltered as of late. Perhaps they had ceased praying the way they ought to be praying because they were spending all of their time with Jesus.

[7 : 45] They had all of their needs met by Him. They were close and underneath the leadership of the Christ. They had lived with the provision and the power and the presence of God.

But Jesus is going to soon leave them. This is going to change dramatically in their lives, and Jesus wants to say to them here how very, very important prayer is going to be.

They seem to get this message because after He does leave them, what do we find the apostles doing with other disciples of Christ? We find them praying. We find them asking for the very thing that Jesus promised He would send, the Helper.

And they do receive that. They receive God's presence in the form of the Holy Spirit. Yet, they still need God's continuing power and provision.

They have now His presence in the form of the Spirit, but they also need His continuing power and provision. We find ourselves, beloved, in the same place.

[8 : 51] If you are in Christ, you have the Spirit of Christ. You have His presence. But we need His provision and we need His power if we want to properly honor Him with our lives.

And this is going to require prayer. Do you want to see God move and work in your life? Do you want to see Him move and work in the world around you?

And if you do, and I hope that you do, then you will want to pray powerful prayers. Now hear me before we get into the particulars of what a powerful prayer life looks like, that God does not need us.

He is God, the sovereign, who rules over everything. He is Himself self-existent. He doesn't need us, and nor did He create us in such a way that He needs us.

God could accomplish what God wants to accomplish with or without us. But, God loves us.

[10:01] And because He loves us, He wants to, He desires to include us in His purposes and His plans. He invites us along as the means to His great end.

And one of the ways that that happens is through prayer. So prayer enacts the power of God. Prayer is used by God to accomplish His will.

But He doesn't need us for that. Prayer is primarily for us. That we might experience Him and participate in His goodness to this world.

So let me give you the outline for this morning in brief, and then we'll go back and fill in the details. And four points this morning. Prayer is, powerful prayer is, historical.

It is theological. It is spiritual. And it is practical.

[11:02] But firstly, powerful prayer is historical. And by that, I don't mean that people have prayed powerful prayers in the past, although they have.

Many wonderful examples of prayer in the past, both in our Old and New Testament, as well as beyond, many valuable recorded prayers. This is not what I mean by powerful prayer being historical.

We're not taking our lesson here from history. But rather, look at the way that Peter remembers what Jesus had done. Verse 20, and then into 21.

He had cursed the fig tree. We find that out in verse 21. 21, because Jesus says in verse 14, and he said to it, may no one ever eat fruit from you again.

Jesus said, said something. And then the very next day, they observed that it came to pass. Not just that the tree wasn't bearing fruit still, but that the tree was dead.

[12:01] And here saying withered away to its roots means that it was completely dead. There was no life left. The thing that Jesus had said, no fruit will ever come from you again, had certainly come to pass.

There's this little word in verse 21, and Peter remembered. He remembered what Jesus had said would be accomplished, and here it was accomplished before him.

So this first component of powerful prayer is to recognize that God has put His power on display in the past. God has done great things.

God has accomplished so much. And powerful prayer is grounded. It is rooted, no pun intended, in this reality, that God has been good, and we have record of this.

Israel is instructed in the Old Testament time and time and time again to remember. In fact, all of their festivals, all the things they celebrated were aimed at them remembering the things that God had done on their behalf.

[13:12] The way that He had preserved them by sending them to Egypt to begin with. That He had saved the nation in that way. That He had delivered them from the oppressive hand of the Egyptians, which happened some years later.

That they had passed through the Red Sea on dry land and He had destroyed Pharaoh's army behind Him. That He preserved them in the wilderness by bringing manna from heaven, water from a rock.

That He shaded them by day in the form of a cloud, and He warmed them by night in the form of a pillar of fire. That they crossed into the promised land and they became conquerors in that place.

That they conquered mighty people again and again and again. It said to them, remember. This last week's community group text was Isaiah 46, verses 8-11, which says, remember this and stand firm.

Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things of old. For I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all My purpose.

[14:34] So God has said to them in Isaiah, even as He's about to bring judgment, remember the things that I have done. I am God. Turn with me to Psalm 77.

Psalm 77. In a day of trouble for the psalmist, here being Asaph, excuse me, He asked some questions in verse 8.

Has steadfast love forever ceased? Are His promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in anger shut up His compassion? Then I said, I will appeal to this. So He's not experiencing this present help of the Lord, but He says, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right

hand, the mighty right hand of the Most High.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember Your wonders of old. I will ponder all Your work and meditate on Your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy.

[16:00] What God is great? Like our God. You are the God who works wonders. You have made known Your might among the peoples. You with Your arm redeemed Your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

When the waters saw You, O God, when the waters saw You, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder.

Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of Your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea.

Your path to the great waters. Yet Your footprints were unseen. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

And so He casts all of His hope back on the sure thing that God had already done. He had already manifested His goodness to the people of Israel in this way.

[17:01] And this is a great encouragement to the heart of Asaph in this time. In so many ways, God has placed Himself on display in the Scriptures.

In so many magnificent ways. He's done so in your life as well. Remember. Remember the things that He's done for you.

Remember Christ's presence power and provision in your salvation. Remember it in your daily needs having always been met.

We sit here together because of God's graciousness to us. We've always had all that we've needed whether you think so or not. you have had your needs met.

You have seen, likely, God work in countless particular ways. Little things accomplished on your behalf. Things that you prayed for. Things that troubled you that were little and momentary and light.

[18:02] And God came through on your behalf. This is true for me as well. We so readily forget them though. We encourage you to journal what's happening in your life through prayer that you might remember some of these things.

I was able yesterday to participate in a wedding for Daniel Gentry who's a member of our church and he married a young lady by the name of Mackenzie. They'll be here in a couple of weeks and let me just at this time encourage you to wrap your arms around her.

She's leaving behind a very precious church family and will need our love and support in this transition. Two springs ago, the spring of 2013, Daniel and I traveled together to Nicaragua to look at some potential future work for us to do there together.

And during that time, we became very aware as we were praying through God's future plans for Daniel if it was going to be in this place that he was going to need a wife.

It's a very matriarchal society and a wife was going to be a massive, massive help to him down there. And so we prayed together while we were down there that he would provide a wife for Daniel.

[19:15] And I learned yesterday, I didn't know the backstory, but I learned yesterday that Mackenzie and her father kind of had their eyes turned towards Daniel when he came back and got together a bunch of people to share this trip that he had taken to Nicaragua.

So when they began to take some note of him and begin to pay attention. So it was a blessing for me to get to be part of this wedding and it'll be a blessing to have Mackenzie here because she'll be a reminder of God's goodness, the way in which he works through the prayers of his people.

I prayed for a godly wife. She's here. Sam's a reminder to me of God's goodness to me and the way in which he uses my prayers. We prayed for children and they're here.

Also God's goodness to us in our prayers. I shared with you last week at the beginning of the service in case you didn't hear it and maybe just need to be reminded of it that a couple of weeks ago this property, a pullout on the street was struck by lightning and it surged in the building and it knocked out the wireless.

The modem got fried. The wireless routers got fried. The copier itself got fried. And there was a real good chance that the copier was going to be exorbitantly expensive to fix.

[20:32] The guy was saying somewhere between like \$600 and \$5,000 to fix it. So we called our insurance company. We have insurance. \$1,000 deductible. And I shared with you that I had some real anxiety about that and had to confess last Monday just like, Lord, I haven't trusted you for this.

I haven't come to you in prayer for this. I have depended on simple numbers, right, which are fleeting and really not that important in the large scheme of things. And in that process to trust God again that He knows these things, He sent the lightning.

He knew it was going to happen. He knew this very thing. And then I share with you about this very bizarre check that came after this. It came on Tuesday. Pray on Monday. Check shows up on Tuesday.

From a very obscure source, I have been able to confirm that from an individual that used to attend church here, graduated, he's gone, was kind of involved. And his father sent us a check in the exact amount we needed to pay the deductible to get all of these things all sorted out.

And so now, every time I get on the wireless internet here at the building, it's a reminder of God's goodness to us. Our church prayed and we've been praying for families.

[21 : 50] Families, you're an encouragement to me. Look around and see the way in which God uses prayers to bring about His will. Remember. Remember these things.

This becomes a foundation for us to plead with God on. After Israel is delivered from the Philistines, one of the times they're delivered from the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7.12.

Samuel takes a stone and he sets it up between Mizpah and Shin and he called its name Ebenezer, which means stone of remembrance.

For he said, till now, the Lord has helped us. You guys familiar with that line in the song Come Thou Fount that we sing so often.

Here I raise my Ebenezer. Here by thy great help I've come. If you've wondered what that's all about, Ebenezer is not an old man who doesn't like Christmas.

[22 : 50] It's a stone of remembrance. A thing that we can go back to and recall the goodness of God to us. That He has helped us thus far.

And therefore we have confidence that He will continue to do so. So powerful prayer in this way is historical. Powerful prayer secondly is theological.

Jesus answered them. It seems like this was often the case that Peter was the spokesman of the apostles. So he says something and Jesus answers them. Have faith in God.

So the second component of prayer being theological is not the issue at hand. Not the primary issue at hand. The very character of God is.

Who is God? Powerful prayer being historical is about what God has done but who is He? Do you have faith or do you trust God?

[23 : 57] Do you trust Him? Do you believe that He knows best? Do you trust His plans? His purposes? His ways? And His will?

Do you know His plans? His purposes? His ways? His will? If you want to pray powerful prayers you're going to have to.

You're going to have to. When the disciples ask Jesus how they should pray what does He tell them? Matthew 6 9 and 10 Pray then like this Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come whose will?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. If we want to implore God as Jesus instructions to pray like this He doesn't say pray this recite this and some magic blessing will come to you He says pray like this use this as a pattern pray things in the will of God how are we to know what this is unless we know God we must know about Him we must know about His plans His purposes His ways therefore we can know His will powerful prayer recognizes God's sovereign goodness His very character in fact it relies upon it 1 John 5 14 the apostle John says and this is the confidence that we have toward Him that if we ask for anything according to His will He hears us and if we know that He hears us and whenever we ask we know that we have the request that we have asked of Him powerful prayer banks on God's character makes withdrawals from the very person that He is a little while ago it's already been two summers now we studied the great Old Testament book of Nehemiah and Nehemiah serving as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes the Persian king Persia came and overthrew Babylon remember Israel was overthrown by and dispersed by Babylonian invasion and now the power has shifted and Nehemiah hears that as the people have been allowed to go back they have yet to rebuild the wall and this greatly troubles him and he prays a prayer because he believes he needs to go be part of the process to bring restoration to Jerusalem but he's serving this king right and this king has said some years previous he's issued an edict to say that the wall will not be rebuilt that he will not allow them to fortify the city so this is what confronts him to go to the king and ask for permission to go back we later find out he actually asked for a line

of credit to actually be able to do this very thing and the way he begins his prayer to God makes this very point

[26 : 57] Nehemiah chapter 1 verse 5 and I said O Lord God of heaven the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments he knew who God was the God of heaven the great and awesome one and he knew the way in which he dealt with his people that he could not lie that he could not go against his very own character and that he must keep his steadfast love because it's who he is so we know him by his scripture do you know his promises do you know the things he's promised to do for us I will tell you this if you find your prayer life to be lacking in fervor there is a direct correlation to your devotion to God's word this is the way in which God communicates to us beloved so many people want to walk around what is the will of God for my life what is the will of God for my life stop and open his word he has written a book to you the Lord

God almighty in heaven came down and wrote you a book read this this is the way he communicates to you it is precious every little dot every iota is precious to us and I will promise you that as he speaks to you through it you will automatically respond to him in prayer the conduit by which we communicate with our Lord there's always a correlation between the true God's love God absolutely loves hear this God loves for us to make our cases to him by his own word get this this is fascinating turn back to Mark chapter 7 I just want you to see the story of the Syrophenician woman I won't read it to you for the sake of time but she comes to him asking for something she's outside of those who are of Israel and Jesus says let the children be fed first for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs but she answered him yes Lord yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs she argues with Jesus by God's very own character and in regard to this let me read you a quote from a wonderful biography written by A.T.

Pearson about the life of George Mueller he wrote we are to argue our case with God not indeed to convince him but to convince ourselves in proving to him that by his own word and oath and character he has bound himself to interpose we demonstrate to our own faith that he has given us the right to ask and claim and that he will answer our plea because he cannot deny himself God loves for us to come to him in that way to plead with him by his very own words and God is not a liar he cannot deny himself let's look at another example together Exodus chapter 32 this is after I hope it's obvious to you the Exodus out of Egypt they have come to the foot of Mount Sinai the people of God and Moses has gone up onto the mountain to meet with God to receive the Ten Commandments and in the meantime under Aaron's leadership the people construct a golden calf and begin to worship it Moses is unaware of this he's meeting with God he's receiving the Ten Commandments but God is fully aware of it and he says to Moses we've got to take a break from this giving of the law because I've got to go down and destroy the people because they're now worshipping a false God a false idol and look at what Moses says but Moses verse 11 I'm sorry chapter 32 verse 11 but Moses implored the Lord his God and said oh Lord why does your wrath burn hot against your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand why should the Egyptians say with evil intent did he bring them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people now here we go remember

[32 : 02] Abraham Isaac and Israel your servants to whom you swore by your own self and said to them I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and all this land that I promised I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever and the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people so he banks on the very promises that God had made now hear me God didn't forget about the promises that he had made he didn't need to be reminded but what happened here is Moses implores him and says you've promised to do a good thing and God says to him yes did God change his mind absolutely not but he used the prayer of his servant he used the prayer of Moses he got Moses his heart to catch up to where he was loving a people loving a people regardless of what they did and Moses was going to need this lesson in the coming 40 years in the wilderness so powerful prayer is historical it is theological draws from banks on

God's very character thirdly powerful prayer is spiritual verse 23 back in Mark 11 it's truly I say to you whoever says to this mountain be taken up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will come to pass it will be done for him this third component is spiritual that is you can't pray powerful prayers just knowing in your head the things that God has

done or knowing some things about him but you have to believe in your heart it's taking that knowledge and it's turning it into reality in your very being I love that he extends this very general offer for this rather miraculous thing he says whoever whoever says and doesn't doubt but believes these are the conditions that he places!

Now there's been a lot written about what he is referring to specifically about this mountain massive amount pages wasted in my opinion about what he means particularly where is he standing exactly is there a mountain that's going to be moved into the sea what's going on here I believe this is hyperbole he's just simply saying this massive amazing thing will be accomplished let me strongly encourage all of you to not sit in front of a mountain and try to find the measure of your faith by seeing if you can get it to up and move I must admit very early in my Christian life I'm thinking around seven or eight I used to just see if I could get things in my room to move I think that would be pretty amazing I will start with this pencil and see if this is possible this is not the point that he's trying to make he's using hyperbole we used to use that kind of language today you talk about somebody who's unstoppable you have a person you know that really gets things accomplished and they'll say he can move mountains right this is the thing that he is communicating to us the point is ultimately about faith he says if you doubt in your heart who is it that you're doubting what are you doubting you're doubting

God that God can accomplish what God intends to accomplish by your prayers now beloved we can get this really wrong and many many people have our belief or faith our belief does not have power God has power he chooses to use in a very particular way our faith to accomplish things by his power but it's wrongly taught often that you have you've been given therefore you have power we do not we ask for right God to use his power through us and this is the way in which we have power but it's ultimately his James 1 6-8 says this powerful but let him ask in faith with no doubting for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the

Lord he is a double minded man unstable in all his ways doesn't trust in the God who is worth trusting!

[37 : 02] in powerful prayer is theological and it is spiritual because we have a God to place our trust and faith in. Now let's remember together an example of faith that enacts the power of God so that we can be encouraged at this point because you want to ask the question, well, how much faith is required?

Because if your experience is anything like mine, and I am confident that it is, our faith falters so much in so many ways. We're living between two times.

We've been given faith in God, but it's not perfected yet. We carry around the baggage of flesh and we struggle with faith.

So turn back just a page or two in your Bible to Mark 9. We observe together the story of a father with a demon-possessed boy.

Jesus has come down off the mountain, Peter, James, and John, and he has left the other apostles alone for some time and they are trying to cast out, they've gotten into this conflict because they've tried to cast out this demon and they're not able to do so.

[38 : 21] And the overarching point of this story is that they had no faith at this point. The apostles had zero faith at all. Previously, they have gone out and they've cast out demons.

So what's lacking in this case, they're not able to because they don't have faith. And then we see Jesus' interaction with this father, this poor child who's been thrown into fires, is likely having epileptic seizures because he's been battered on the ground by this demon.

It's a horrid situation. And beginning in verse 21, Jesus asks him, how long has this been happening to him? And he says, from childhood.

And it has often cast him into fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can, if you can do anything, he says, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes.

And look at the father's response. Immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, I believe. Help. My unbelief. And Jesus casts out the demon.

[39 : 36] So you see a great expression here of the father's imperfect faith. I believe, but help my unbelief. There's a part of me that thinks and knows that you can do this thing, but I'm just not sure.

Help. Increase my faith by casting this demon out of my child. So he didn't have a perfect faith, but he had a sufficient faith. Beloved, this is one of the beautiful things about prayers.

That we offer up prayers of faith and we see God respond to those things and it increases our faith. It works in this wonderful, beautiful cycle.

That we pray things in the will of God. He accomplishes those things. And in that we see the way in which he enacts his power in our life and it moves us to further prayer.

I hope this is true in your life. If it's not, you need to begin. You need to start praying that you might see this be the case for you. As powerful prayer is historical and theological, it's spiritual, it also has a practical component.

[40 : 47] Powerful prayer is practical. This fourth component is one of great practicality. Verse 24, he says, Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, if you want to pray powerful prayers, you must pray.

And I know that might seem a little bit obtuse to you, but we live in a prayerless generation. I will admit, I struggle with prayer.

It is a challenge to place my face before the Lord. My knee-jerk reaction is very rarely to go to my knees in prayer.

I kind of got a business mind. I tend to run to my own solutions, which never sort anything out. I learn this lesson after time and time again. Prayer is a struggle, but we must pray if we want to pray powerful prayers.

Jesus says, James 4, verse 2, you do not have because you do not ask.

[42 : 03] Jesus says later here in verse 24, believe that you have received it. What is he talking about? The things that you've asked for, that you've actually offered up to him, and it will be yours.

I would imagine that the apostles' minds were drawn, I hope yours are, to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7. Jesus said, Ask, and it will be given to you.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. And the one who seeks, finds. And the one who knocks, it will be opened.

Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

He's a good, loving, kind Father. And he will give to us if we will ask. Now, well, you could run wild with that one, can't you?

[43 : 14] And many denominations have. This is dream teaching to some people. But he puts some parameters on this. He clearly puts some parameters on this.

In fact, if we continue reading in James 4, verse 3, he says, Jesus gives you a wonderful example in the garden as he's quickly approaching the time of his crucifixion.

Mark 14, verse 36, one account of this. And he says, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.

It was his desire in that moment that he not have to go and be crucified. If there was another way that God could bring about redemption, that it would happen that way. And then he finishes by saying, yet not what I will, but what you will.

So God will give to us anything that we ask within his will. Psalm 37, verse 4 makes this point well. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

[44 : 38] This is not a show up to a service and have some fun. Find some joy in singing music. Delight. And then God's going to give you whatever you want to gratify you and your flesh throughout the week.

It's find all of your joy. Love God and therefore love the things of God. And he will give you those things. This is the seeking first his kingdom and everything else.

All of that stuff that's necessary for our living will be added to us. John chapter 14. Jesus makes the point for us once again.

Verse 12, he says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father.

We are going to do great, mighty things for the kingdom of God because Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father and we have the Spirit of God. That's what he's saying. Verse 13, Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

[45 : 46] If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. Now Jesus' name is consistent with his person and purpose.

His name is who he is. So this is the point that we would pray in the will of God. Again, how do we know that?

We know it by the Scriptures. Now we don't know it in every case, in every little circumstance. It's difficult when we have somebody going through, let's say, a health issue.

We have a pretty young congregation, which means I don't do a lot of hospital visits, but on occasion I have. And our prayer is always a desire. We want to see this person be healthy.

We want them to stay with us. We want them to be able to continue to serve alongside us. We'll miss them dearly if they didn't stay on with us. I don't think it's right and proper to express our desire in that, but it's always, always proper to say, but Lord, we don't know what's best.

[46 : 52] We're not God. It seems best to us, option A. But if you choose option B, we are going to be happy and content with that. Help us.

Help us to be happy and content and to be joyful in your sovereign will, in the gray things of our lives. He puts parameters on what it means to ask and it will be granted to us.

And He does that here for us in verse 25. And whenever you stand praying, standing was a common position for praying in that day as well as kneeling and laying on your face.

When you stand praying, forgive. If you have anything against anyone so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. Now, some of your translations before you may include verse 26 with brackets around it.

Some of yours may not. If you're with me on the ESV, they just omit it all together. If you look on, we go from verse 25 to verse 27. What a horrific typo.

[47 : 59] It's not. They intentionally did this. Verse 25 is a parallel to Matthew 6.14, Sermon on the Mount. Verse 26, a parallel to Matthew 6.15, which would say something to the effect of, again, I don't have it in my text before me, but this is Matthew 6.15, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Now, it's omitted here or placed in brackets in some of your copies because it's not in the early manuscripts. This is one of those little places that later manuscripts have it, earlier manuscripts don't have it, and so our Bible translators are very careful about what they do in these particular circumstances, that I'm thankful for such faithful men who are so careful in this matter.

However, whether it includes it or not doesn't really change the meaning of the text itself. And this is what we need to hear clearly. This is not speaking of salvation.

He's not talking about you have to first go and forgive others so that you will be forgiven. He's talking about a parameter, a condition of powerful prayers, a very practical one at that.

And that is that if we are harboring up sin in our hearts, we're going to God with unconfessed sin, the Scriptures teach us that God doesn't hear our prayers.

[49 : 33] Not that He doesn't hear it like He's incapable of hearing it, but they are squelched, so to speak, by this. It's not speaking of salvation. So look with me in John chapter 13 just quickly to show you a very brief example of this as we're really getting close to 12 o'clock.

Wow. This lesson is going to be driven in the coming days for the disciples.

Verse 6 of chapter 13, He came to Simon Peter who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? He's taking turns. He's going around showing him this great example of service. And Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. I'm too lowly. You can't serve me in that way.

Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

Is Jesus not talking about washing his feet? No. He's not. If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. What he's saying to him is, If I don't come as a servant and die on your behalf, you're not mine.

[50 : 50] Simon Peter says to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Okay, if this is the condition, then let's get me clean. And Jesus says to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.

And he says, And you are clean. And then he talks about Judas, but not every one of you. So he's expressing to him, right, in this figurative way as people would get cleaned up to come over for a meal.

But when they got there, their feet would get dirty again. We probably understand this in our day more than some because a lot of you wear sandals everywhere you go. Although we have pavement, which might nullify that.

However, your feet get stinky between the shower and getting over to somebody's house. And so the lowliest form of service was to wash their feet. So Jesus used this parallel example to say to Peter, you've already been made clean.

But yet there's a continuing process of purification in our life and that is that we still live lives of repentance, right? We have judicially been dismissed, right, because we're found in Christ.

[52 : 01] The forgiveness of sin has been given to us, has been administered to us, but yet we still need to be in this regular habit of confession. And what they're communicating here, what Jesus is saying, because if you don't, you can't play powerful prayers.

They're not going to be heard. Psalm 66.18 says, If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. 1 Peter 3.7, Peter instructs men to live properly with their wives so that their prayers may not be hindered.

So we must confess before the Lord if we want to pray powerful prayers. It's a very practical way. So powerful prayer is historical, it is theological, it is spiritual, it is practical.

And beloved, we have Jesus' presence because we have the Spirit of Christ. If you have Him, it's because you're His. Right? If you're found in Christ, you have the Spirit of God.

And don't wait for some crazy, unexplainable thing to happen to you. This is a reality for you. Right? You're hating sin, you're loving holiness, you have the Spirit of God.

[53 : 08] So we have the presence of Christ, but we are still in continual need of the power and provision of Christ. So ask. So ask. Ask for the power and provision of Christ in all things, at all times.

Paul goes so far as to say in 1 Thessalonians, pray without ceasing. We always need this. And as such, we need to be a people who are always praying.

There are many ways to do this. Closet prayer is important for you. Get alone with the Lord. Make it a daily habit. Disconnect from everything.

Your phone doesn't need to go with you into this place. Right? Unplug from life and be with the Lord. Rest in Him. Offer up everything that troubles you to Him.

It's going to include you digging into your Scriptures that you might know how to pray. This isn't a complicated thing. Don't arrive at some new plateau of knowledge of the Lord before you start praying. Just open the Word of God and read it and respond in prayer.

[54 : 16] You should get together with the people of God and pray in a corporate setting. We do a number of things to do that around here. It doesn't have to be some formal Christ Family Church event.

Grab a couple of friends. Get together. Pray together. Let's be a people who pray as we should. Let's pray now together.