**The Prayer Series: wk 1 - A call to Prayer**

**I think this year for many of us has been a year of tremendous trials – and difficulties. Personally for many in our church (Is that you?)**

**There is a real enemy – but our God is greater than it all!**

**Today we start a series that is a solution and a challenge**

**One of the greatest gifts and most neglected privileges – Prayer**

**Thousands of books – devotionals – and bible studies.**

**We’ve turned it into formulas, forms, and methods**

**Few things stir sleep or guilt like the word prayer for many**

**We’re called to, encouraged to, charged to, commanded to - pray**

**Probably the most important opportunity we have been given in this life (even above God’s word)**

**Yet the #1 most neglected spiritual tool we have. It has power to break us and heals us – Yet we see it as a last resort.**

**Listen! We need to get this - our spiritual life depends on it - our family depends on it – our world depends on it – our church depends on it!**

**At its basic definition – prayer is – “Talking to God”**

**It is not meditation or reflection. Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal.**

**BUT -** **Prayer isn't just something we do, it's someone we're with**

**Prayer is a place - In that place – we speak / request / petition / cry out / submit – but it begins with a place and a His presence Good news is – that place is anywhere you are!**

**Psalm 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.**

**It is not just a position, posture or point in time – it is a place**

**It is realizing and finding our self in the presence of God.**

**Today, a call to pray. A challenge to not just hear about it - but to do it. To become people of prayer. And today - lead us in a time of prayer.**

**Paul – writing to and pray for church in Ephesus – Ephesians 3:14 For this reason (God’s will) I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (this is why I pray)** **16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.** **And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

**Wow – what does this mean for us today? The Place of Prayer**

**Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, (a relationship – next week) 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.**

* **We pray with humbleness – a place of humility**

**Posture of the heart – submission – awe – fear. An understanding of who is charge of all things– not us. We pray knowing who we are not.**

**This is only place prayer can start – the sovereignty of God.**

**James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."**

**Ephesians 3:16****I pray that out of his glorious riches…**

* **We pray with assurance – a place of confidence**

**We not only knowing who we are not, but also pray knowing who he is. The knowledge of his great glorious ability and provision.**

**God is owner and operator of all things – he can handle it**

**Eph 3:16b I pray that… he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

* **We pray God will wreck us – a place of deep change (transformation)**

**When we get in that place – when we draw near - it deconstructs, rebuilds, and strengthens the inner man / woman in us.**

**Prayer changes you before it changes your circumstance**

**2 Cor 4:16 …our outer self is wasting away, but the inner self is growing day by day. (Prayer deconstructs & rebuilds from the inside)**

**Eph 3:17b And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,**

* **We pray for a love beyond the surface – a place of deep love**

**Love that is not forced but deeply grounded and established.**

**Like a deep tree not a blade of grass – truly loving! Prayer makes us great lovers. In that place of pray – the power of God’s love and the power to love others – deeply established**

**I pray that you… 18 may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide (broader than the ocean – wider than the universe) and long (so long – it never runs out – can’t get to the end of it – reaches to the darkest places – can reach even you – what you have done is not too far) and high (as high as the heavens) and deep is the love of Christ, (deeper than the mysterious ocean depths – deeper than any grave – not even death can stop his love)**

**Psalm 103:11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him…"**

**When we get in his presence – the place of prayer - the doubt and question of his love is settled once and for all – We grasp it in awe!**

**Eph 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge… (we can know it)**

**In the place of prayer, we connect to the power of God’s love - We often emphasis the mind – but what happens in that place before God – surpasses human knowledge and understanding**

**Later Paul says - Ephesians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (go to that place – empty our self before God – look what we get in return – a great exchange) 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

**Intellectual assent does not mean a transformed heart. Prayer takes our spiritual life to a level surpasses understanding.**

**It closes the gap between my head and my heart.**

**Eph 3:19b I pray… that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (God does not hold back his power when we pray – we are filled!)**

* **We pray out of desperation – for God – a place of hunger**

**God I need you! In our times of need – and pain. These are the times we are broken – taken apart – God responds with his love and power – and we are rebuilt and filled with the fullness and clarity of God.**

**These are the prayers – that create hunger and thirst for righteousness**

**Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

**These are the prayers that link to David in the Psalms**

**Psalm 42:1 As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.**

**Psalm 27:4** **One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.**

**Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

**In that place of hunger - These are the prayers that breed divine discontentment and bring life transformation.**

**The result of prayer – the next two verses – Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**

* **We pray to the God who can do anything! – a place of power**

**NKJV - 20 …exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think – as a teen**

**Jesus declares - Matt 19:26 "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."**

**That place of prayer – affirms who is the king and ruler – a place of hope, power, and results!**

**KNOW THIS TODAY**

1. **God is inviting you to come into his presence**

**We are not unwanted houseguests – holiday visitors – or short visit neighbors – God is calling us to come!**

**Isaiah 55:1 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; (the cleansing presence) and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine (symbol of joy) and milk (symbol of strength) without money and without cost.**

**We’re invited as children of God into the presence of God - he removes any excuses we tell our self.... "There's no way I can pay for that. There's no way I've lived well enough to experience that, to be given joy by God, to be given strength by God. I can't pay for that." That's why he invites those who don’t have any money.**

**2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? (life’s non-essentials / fun stuff – cannot satisfy) Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, (the presence of God) and you will delight in the richest of fare. 3 Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. (David was perfect – but God never cast him aside – that everlasting covenant is Jesus)**

**Echo’s Jesus the invitation –** **Matthew 11:28 - Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (get in here! – It is only through Jesus that we can come!)**

1. **God is inviting you to keep coming – don’t stop!**

**Luke 18:1** **Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (pray without ceasing) 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. (a bad dude. No fear of God, no respect for others) 3 And there was a widow in that town… (widows place in society… on the bottom - The contrast – a poor nobody & an arrogant godless judge – a gnat and a lion.) who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ 4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” (keep bothering me)**

**6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. (Listen to the invitation) 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”**

**The invitation is this – keep bothering me – keep pestering me**

**Don’t quit asking me (small groups this week). If an unrighteous judge who hates people can do it - think of your loving father who loves you.**

**A child’s constant tapping of the shoulder - we do the opposite. Can I go– no / can I go– no / can I go– no! “Ask me one more time… and not only no now – but never! Not with God – he says keep calling my name. keep asking – keep praying – never let up.**

**Jesus tells us this parable for two reasons –**

* **To know that - we can and should always pray**
* **That we would never lose heart (give up)**

**Everyone here has a story where we prayed – really prayed – it was not a selfish or bad – (examples) – and it seemed God was not listening.**

**Look how Jesus ends this parable invitation to pray – Luke 18:8b However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”**

**Understand this – there are things of God we will never (never) understand. In this life or the next. Out role, our place – as children of God is to simply pursue God & trust Him. This goes far beyond our understanding.**

**God is over every event – every life – every cell – every atom in the universe. He is fully always in charge and sovereign. So why pray?**

**Because God has called us to and ordained to accomplish his will thru the prayers of the body of Christ.**

**God has invited us to pester him – bother him – press in - he takes delight in us coming to him and trusting him. Because - Prayer isn't just something we do, it's someone we're with**

**KNOW THIS TODAY - 3. God hears the prayers of His own**

**2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.**

**What place? Anywhere you are humbling yourself before God. That place we seek forgiveness of sins and turn to God. In that place, God hears, and he responds. He sees – he hears.**

**If you are a follower of Jesus - God always answers our prayers**

**They are either…**

1. **Direct – answered right away**
2. **Denied – God says no**
3. **Delayed – God says not yet**
4. **Different - God answers differently than we expected**

**Keep praying until... You get what you ask for. You change your mind. God clearly says, "No."**

**During this series we will learn how to pray – and we will pray.**

**We will pray for our life, family, church, community, nation, world.**

**Next week we are going to take a look at how Jesus said to pray – there are surprising misunderstandings about prayer that we tend to believe.**

**Right now - We are going to take some time to pray –**

**If you are new or not a follower of Jesus – I invite you to pray with us.**

**Eph 3:16 Pray that God may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being…**

**Pray that God would work in our life in a profound way – and as well at Livingway**

**Eph 3:17 Pray that your life would be rooted and grounded in God’s love…**

**Pray God would shape and root our heart in the love of Christ that we be great lovers of people – as well at Livingway**

**Eph 3:19 Pray to know God’s love that surpasses knowledge…**

**(more than a bumper sticker love) Pray to experience God’s deep amazing Love for you – and for our church too**

**Eph 3:19 Pray that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

**Pray that God will fill you and bring all that God has for you – cupped hands – here’s my life – take me and fill me**