**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 11-14-2021
Jesus Praying for Simon Peter**

One of the things that I very much appreciated about my seminary was that shortly before my class graduated, the professors led a worship service in which we all attended. And this time of worship concluded with the professors praying over us. Some prayers were pre-written and others were spontaneous, but all of them were very meaningful.

And I remember speaking with one of the professors at the conclusion of the service and telling her how I really felt those prayers blessed my spirit.

The professors knew that just because seminary was ending, life and ministry would not be easy. And so, they prayed for us in advance of our graduation.

Perhaps your mind goes to moments in your life when someone or perhaps many people have prayed over you or you knew that they were praying for you.

I pray that those moments have blessed you and impacted you as you continue to follow Christ.

Truly, prayer on the behalf of others is very important.

We have been taking a closer look at the 7 times in Luke’s Gospel where we find Jesus Himself praying. Each of these moments is filled with significance and teaches us different things about who He is and who we are called to be as His followers.

Today we look at the 6th of those 7 times in prayer. And we find this moment taking place just prior to Jesus’ passion and sufferings for us.

With Jesus knowing all that was around the corner and certainly weighing on His mind, it is interesting that we find Jeus praying for someone else. He was praying for Simon Peter, one of his closest disciples.

Jesus knew what was coming around the corner for Simon Peter as well. He knew his faith would be tested and Simon would fail. But Jesus did not want Peter’s journey to end in failure and despair, but in faithfulness. And so, He prays for Him.

Let us hear of this moment from Luke 22:31-34

**31“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”**

**33But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”**

**34Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”**

There are many significant things in these four verses. And while Jesus is not actually praying during these verses, these verses have Jesus telling Simon Peter **“I have prayed for you.”** So it describes at least some of the substances of one of Jesus’ prayers, likely having taking place shortly before this interaction.

There are 2 big observations from this passage that I would like to make.

**The first thing to highlight is that Jesus begins by telling Simon that Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.**

This is a reminder that Satan is not all powerful. Satan is a created being. He was an angel, part of God’s good creation. But unfortunately, he chose to rebel against his Creator and became evil to the core.

So here we are reminded that as powerful as Satan is, he has to come to ask permission from God to do some things. In this case, permission to sift Simon and the others as wheat.

Now what does that mean? What does it mean to be sifted as wheat?

To sift wheat meant to violently shake the wheat as it goes through the threshing process. When wheat would go through this, various impurities such as dirt would be separated from the wheat.

So sifting is certainly not a bad thing in and of itself. Here though, Jesus is saying that Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.

What was Satan’s goal? What Satan wanted to do was to violently shake Simon Peter’s faith. Satan wanted to get Peter to permanently turn away from Christ.

But Jesus allows Satan to sift Simon Peter, because he knows that ultimately Satan’s attack would backfire and Peter would become an even purer and more faithful disciple. The dirt of Peter’s insecurity and fear would be sifted out to a greater extent in his life than ever before.

Sometimes the Lord allows us to be sifted as wheat as well. And truly, the storms of life come to all of us. The Lord allows us to be shaken through trials and testings and temptations – not that the Lord is behind all of these things and God never tempts anyone to sin. But the Lord can use all of these things to purify us in our walk with Him.

**The 2nd observation is that Jesus prays for Simon Peter**. It was a preemptive prayer strike, we could say.

And so He prays that this imminent failure of Peter would be very temporary and that Simon would not only turn back to publicly affirming his commitment to following Jesus, but also be the leader that he was called to be. That he would be a leader that strengthens other followers of Jesus.

The remaining verses describe Simon Peter arguing that he was ready to go to prison and to death and Jesus telling him that before the rooster crows he would deny knowing him 3 times.

Certainly, this is a sobering passage. It is a reminder that believers in Christ are not impervious to giving in to fear and temptation.

So, what is the major takeaway from our passage for us today?

**\*\*I believe it is the vital importance of praying for one another.**

This type of pray is called intercessory prayer, because someone is interceding on behalf of someone else.

My professors were interceding for me and the other graduating students. We intercede for others when we pray for them during our worship gathering or as prayer requests are shared.

As we consider the vital importance of praying for one another, I would like to encourage you to do two things today.

**First, make it a regular practice to pray for others.**

Perhaps you knew people that are going through a tough time, that is a clear green light to lift them up in prayer to our heavenly Father.

Or maybe you sense someone may be approaching a challenging time or a tempting situation, you can do what Jesus did and lift them up as a preemptive prayer strike, if you will.

Even if things seem to be going fantastic in someone else’s life, it is important to still pray for one another.

Satan loves to sift us as wheat and sometimes he tries to come against us when everything seems to be going great.

*Over the course of the next year, I challenge you to call everyone in our church directory or ask them in person how you can pray for them*. If you don’t get a hold of them, pray for them anyway.

A praying church is a powerful church! I personally would welcome prayers for myself and my family. For our health, for clarity of vision as I seek to help lead us forward in following Jesus, for continue to grow in wisdom and understanding. And you can pray in other ways as you feel led.

**And the second thing, and possibly a more difficult thing to do, that I would like each of you to do is to be intentional in receiving prayer from others.**

Asking for prayer is not a sign of weakness, but of spiritual maturity. Paul himself asks for prayer from the churches that he oversaw. This could be through finding a prayer partner. Perhaps it is by marking a certain day each month on your calendar and on that day you ask someone to pray for you in specific ways.

The good news is that the same Jesus who interceded for Simon Peter, He prays for us as well. He is interceding for us.

Nevertheless, it is still very important to open ourselves up to receive prayer from another brother or sister in Christ.

We are meant to be a community following Jesus together. And one way that we live this out is by our prayers.

***And we must remember, friends, that we are at war.*** Whether we realize it or not, we are all in a spiritual war. We have a powerful enemy that is literally hell-bent on our destruction. He is not all-powerful, but he is powerful and he wants to sift us in hopes to turn us from Christ.

So pray. Pray for ourselves. Pray for one another. Pray for our neighbors. Pray for leaders in government. Pray for those who do not know Jesus.

And finally remember this, do not let failures keep us from praying. Jesus knew Peter would fail, but He still prayed for Him. Please do not let our failures or the failures of others hold us back from continuing to pray for God’s plan to be realized in each of our lives.

Sources:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/sift-you-as-wheat.html>

www.BibleGateway.com