**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 2-20-2022
Ask, Seek, Knock**

The other day I was in the waiting area where my daughters’ do gymnastics. And I noticed this woman near me the day before she was on her phone and during her conversation she mentioned the Lord a couple of times.

And I began to quietly pray and ask God if He wanted me to go over to her and just mention to her that I overheard her talking about the Lord and was wondering if she is a Christian.

I knew that any time you approach someone to engage in conversation there is some risk involved. A risk of being rejected or not treated kindly. I really didn’t know if she was a believer or not, but I felt the Holy Spirit responded to my prayer by encouraging me to go over to her and to bring up about yesterday and overhearing her.

And so I did. And I tell you what, this woman is on fire for Jesus. She responded to my question by saying that she loves Jesus Christ and I said that I do too. And we just had this beautiful conversation.

We talked about God and the Bible and Church and our families. And I even brought up the show *The Chosen*, which she hadn’t yet heard of.

But the next day, when I briefly saw her again, she thanked me for mentioning *The Chosen* and described how blessed she was to begin watching it.

Speaking of which, all of us have an opportunity to be blessed as well. Today, from 3-5 in our fellowship hall, and for the next 3 Sundays, we will be watching Season 1 of this great show. I hope to see many of you there. It is a golden opportunity.

But this conversation I had with this woman, who happens to be named Addy and who was born and raised in Nigeria, reminds me of how our Lord desires to work through our prayers in powerful ways. In this case it led to a great and encouraging conversation with a woman of God named Addy and probably everyone in her church now hearing of *The Chosen*.

Friends, though you have heard it many times before, we cannot overstate the importance of prayer in the life of a believer. And Jesus highlights this as we pick up again with His Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 7:7-12.

**7“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.**

**9“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

Earlier in this powerful sermon of Jesus, our Lord taught the crowd a couple very important things when it comes to how we are to approach God in prayer.

First, in His very first teaching in His sermon, Jesus says “blessed are the poor in spirit.” To be poor in spirit is to recognize one’s utter helplessness and neediness before God.

Jesus desires His followers to come to God with great humility, looking to Him for help in all things.

And second, as Jesus taught what we call “The Lord’s Prayer” He was teaching them that their prayers needed to be God-centered and God-focused, rather than self-focused.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Again, the Lord must be the focus.

But with these foundations having been laid, Jesus now speaks about a lifestyle of persistent prayer.

Asking, seeking, knocking --- each of these verbs are describing prayer in some way. Jesus is inviting His followers to ***actively*** participate in promoting His will being advanced on this earth through their prayers.

Asking involves requesting.

Jesus speaks about a scenario in which a son comes to his father and asks for bread or asks for a fish. Almost every parent who is able to provide these things to their child will do it, even though the parent is a sinner. They still would want to give good things to their child.

And Jesus says “**how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”**

Jesus is telling them that they have a perfect Heavenly Father that is not sinful in any way and is fully good. This God wants His people to ask of Him.

And if they are praying according to His will, they will receive what they ask for. **It will be given to them.**

Jesus builds on asking by saying **seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.**

Sometimes prayers are not noticeably answered immediately. But this doesn’t mean that God hasn’t heard those prayers or that He isn’t responding to those prayers.

There is a fascinating passage in the Book of Daniel chapter 10. Daniel was praying and fasting. And 3 weeks goes by with Daniel in deep prayer and eating only a vegetable diet in his fast, as he is seeking understanding about something.

And then Daniel sees this Person that looks like a man, but He speaks to Daniel as if He is God. I think there is reason to believe that this is a pre-incarnate Jesus that Daniel sees, but that’s a sermon for another time.

But the point today to highlight is that this Person tells Daniel that his prayer was heard right away, but it has taken 3 weeks to see the response manifest.

Daniel persevered in prayer. He continued to actively seek. And eventually Daniel found understanding from God.

Jesus in His sermon is telling this crowd of followers that they needed to do likewise. He instructs them to not only ask through their prayers, but to also persevere by seeking and knocking.

And finally, Jesus sums up this teaching on prayer by giving what is often called the “Golden Rule.” Have you heard that expression before – the golden rule?

Jesus says “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

The golden rule is an active commandment of Jesus. Do unto others what you would have them do unto you. There have been similar statements by other prominent figures in history (“do not do unto others…”), but only Jesus puts this in a positive, active way.

One of the ways that one actively does this is by praying on behalf of others. This is called intercessory prayer. And if in our prayers, the Lord calls us to take other actions towards the other people, we are to do it. Like with me approaching Addy to speak with her.

According to Jesus, this sums up the Law and the Prophets. In other words, this is critically important.

So friends, what is the practical takeaway from this teaching of Jesus?

I believe it is that followers of Christ called to be active and persistent in prayer, knowing that God is hearing our prayers and is responding to them in powerful ways. Our prayers are powerful in the hands of Almighty God. Never forgot that.

What are you asking for in prayer? What are you seeking? Is there something that you are persevering to knock on the door of prayer for?

Please know that if we are praying according to God’s will (not with selfish motives), and with humility and sincerity, please know that your prayers are ascending to heaven. And never forget that our loving and perfectly good Heavenly Father is actively responding – it may not look the way that we expect or in the timing that we would like, but we can trust in Him.

So sisters and brothers, let us keep on praying.

A praying church is a living church. Our active prayer walk is essentially a congregation to live out our vision of being a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

So let’s pray…