

As The Children

Sermon - September 12, 2021

Golden Verse: *But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* - Matthew 6:6

Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 6:12-14, 19-23, 26-27, 32-33, 40 & Matthew 6:5-9

Today, let us have a discussion about how we can pray correctly and what the significance is of prayer in our lives. We will have this discussion based on what our Lord Jesus Christ taught us.

The most important thing is that, when we pray, we stand before the Lord of the universe as we pour out our hearts to Him.

Jesus is talking here about wrong prayers, or the significance of wrong prayers, which will never reach God's heart. Jesus is warning us how NOT to pray, and ONCE how to pray: not like the Gentiles, not like the hypocrites, but like the children of God.

Let's see what He meant about this.

First, let's see how the Gentiles pray, according to Jesus.

"And when you pray, do not multiply the word like the Gentiles who think they are being heard for their eloquence. Don't be like them." (Matthew 6:7)

We could surprisingly ask: do Gentiles pray? Those who does not know the Creator and only God, do they pray?

There are people who ignore the Almighty God, and they don't pray to God. With great arrogance, they ignore the Deity. They make themselves a god, thinking they can do and have everything on their own. When they come to the end of their limitations, they are searching for God, with the hope that God would listen to them. I often heard people saying: "Nobody can help me. If there is a God, He should help." The purpose of an unbeliever's prayer is to get from God what he needs. They don't really pray; they just WANT something from God.

They believe that God is somebody, whom they can hold in their own hands, in their pocket, and they pull Him out when they need something.

Furthermore, the unbelievers cannot realize or recognize that God may want something from them. They think God is there to fulfill their desire, saying: “God is there to help me, me and me in all circumstances.”

Unfortunately, this way of thinking can characterize us as well. In a very wrong way, we think that we always can order God to do things for us, and God is obligated to fulfill our desires. After God will give us what we need, we put him back into our pocket, until the next time when we need something again.

“God, help me in this time of trouble. When I am OK I don’t need You.” Or, sometimes we submit a request to God as an order. We almost tell Him what to do. Sometimes we even set deadlines. So many times, our stumbling prayers have many pagan thoughts. Jesus says, “Don’t try to pray this way.”

If the Holy Spirit shows us now that often we act in a similar way, then let’s acknowledge it with repentance and a humble heart.

Jesus said: *“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who like to stop in synagogues and on street corners to pray for people to see them. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward.”* (Matthew 6:5)

For hypocrites, it was important to show to others that they pray. Their prayer was addressed to God, but it was more important to show others that they are so called religious. Isn't that weird? Because of this, Jesus said that their prayers were not accepted by God, because they prayed with a bad intention – to be admired by others.

Unfortunately, I have heard prayers like this:

- “Thank you God that I could help him”. I think, this was not a prayer, but boasting.
- Or – “Lord, please forgive my enemy who was hurting me again.” This was not a prayer, but a public accusation.

We need to have good ears, and be a healthy self-critic to know what and how we should pray without being hypocrites.

But, it could be as hypocritical when people try to hide from others that they believe in God and they pray in hiding because they feel ashamed to reveal that they believe in God.

I will share with you a story of a friend of mine, which gives us a great example. On a very cold winter night, this gentleman noticed that the furnace stopped

working. There was no way to call a service team to fix it. He took some pieces apart and cleaned the engine, but the furnace did not start. He did that process five times, but the furnace did not start. He started to worry for his six grandchildren, since the house became ice cold. Then, as he said, he went on his knees and started to pray: “Lord, you see that the house is getting ice cold and I do worry about my grandchildren. The water pipes can get frozen as well and, in that case, the whole house will get into a disaster. Lord, You can help me. Please be with me as I will give a try again to fix the furnace. I am asking you Lord, God, in Jesus’ name, knowing You can help. Amen” He started to take the pieces apart again, and, when he started the furnace, everything was working well. Then, he asked: “Lord, why did I not start with prayer right at the beginning?”

Jesus said: *“And when you pray, enter into thy most quiet room, and shut the door, and your Father, who is listening to you, will reward you.”* (Matthew 6:6)

If we want to pray powerfully, we have to stand before our heavenly Father as His children. We have received authority from Jesus to be called children of God, and the Almighty God welcomes us as His children.

I once saw a scene, which is deep in my memories. There was a little three year old boy, standing on the driveway next to his father, who was talking to another gentleman. After a while, the little boy became bored, and suddenly he raised both hands and asked his father to pick him up. His father bent down and took him in his arms.

The little one’s face changed. He got a great smile because now his whole worldview changed from being in his father’s arms. Before, he saw only shoes and legs, but now his whole horizon widened from his father’s eye level. A new world opened up before him. He was listening to them, then suddenly he whispered something in his father’s ear. His father kindly said: “No”. Then he tried again. And his father said “No” again. He was a little naughty, but eventually his face brightened and he hugged his father’s neck with a greedy hug and said: “Then it’s OK”.

Then, I thought: this is how I should ask my Heavenly Father to pick me up first.

Usually, the kids are running to their parents and they address right away what they want. But I thought: I should ask my Heavenly Father to pick me up first, and I should not put my needs first, but experience being close to His face, to His heart, to be able to look into His eyes. With this, I should confess that He is more important for me than anything else. Father, pick me up!

And next, if I am in His arms, why should I ask for anything? He knows what I need, He loves me, and He will give me what I really need.

Once, a minister asked some teenagers, “Why do we have to pray, since God knows what we need?”

A 14-year-old girl gave a brilliant answer, based on her way of thinking, saying: “As I tell my requests to God, I can realize if my requests are right or wrong.” The father from our story said “No” to his son’s request.

Often, our heavenly Father might say “No” to us as well. But we might ask again. But, He might say “No”, or “Not now!” And I have to say: “OK then”. And I have to know that my Father will give me the very best, but in His time. And when we pray, we have to be ready to open our arms and accept His blessings, or we have to be ready if He might say: “No”, or “Not now”.

This is how we, as people who pray, will have peace in all circumstances.

If we did not pray so far as a child, we can start today. Let us pray more deeply, more regularly, more honestly, saying: “Nevertheless, not as I ask, but as you will, Father!” And then God will shower us with many blessings in return.

Let the story of this little boy come onto mind daily, and let us follow his example in a deep spiritual way. Amen