

기도의 삶 "Becoming a person of prayer"

Bible reading will be taken from Matthew 26:36-46. The message will aim to challenge people, on the basis of the core reading above, to look at the way Jesus prayed and the key takeaways from Jesus' teaching on prayer. We want to learn from it in light of becoming a praying person and praying people.

In daily Christian living, prayer is very important

Especially in our relationship with the Lord, our prayer life is as important as praise and worship.

After all, in a world where people are never satisfied, prayer is all the more NECESSARY.

Let's go back to the garden of Eden. Do you think prayer would have existed there?

Almost everything in the garden of Eden were perfectly in place.

God's creation was in such a way that satisfied a person's needs.

If we look at the order of God's creation, it's almost as if it's in the order of man's hierarchy of needs.

If we look at Genesis chapter 1, God created light as the very first thing, and then it was followed by sky, land and the sea.

For six days God established everything that man[kind] would ever need.

And finally He created man.

In chapter 2 He saw that man by himself would not suffice and so he also created woman to be by his side, to help him.

When we consider all the things that went before Adam and Eve, we can see [that] they lacked nothing.

Neither did they lack in food. In Genesis 1:29, we see that God provided them with food in abundance.

However in Genesis 2:17 God told them to stay away (or abstain) from one thing. It was from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Bible tells us, however, that because of this one thing, Adam and Eve – the first created beings on earth – sinned against God by going against his word. They were unable to withhold from their burning desire and eventually fell into the serpent's schemes.

This resulted in disobeying God and obeying Satan instead,

Basically the children of God became children under Satan.

Because of this they were no longer able to inherit the kingdom of God and were inevitably put into exile...

If life in the garden of Eden was a life of shalom, in another words a life filled with peace...then life after exile turned out to be a life full of anxiety and fear.

This is the difference between life BEFORE falling into sin and AFTER [THE EXILE]

Life of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden BEFORE SINNING was a life of happiness and joy by walking WITH God.

But after they sinned, they hid before God to hide their face away. Since then fear swept them and they were no longer filled with peace.

Because of this fear, people began to look for some kind of a godly being.

However while some looked for God in the right way, some others looked for false godly beings.

In the same way, there are people who pray to true God, while there are some who pray to other [false] gods.

Even in South Korea [where I'm from] there already existed such a thing as prayer before Christianity came in.

For example, there was the Buddhist way of praying, or praying to ancestors - which are still apparent today.

We also find people who pray to gods without even knowing who they are praying to. And so when you ask them 'who did you pray to', their answer is 'I don't know...I don't know who it is I am praying to but it gives me some peace of mind, so I still do it'.

Across these kind of prayers, there exists also 40 days of prayer or even 100 days of prayer.

These people's zeal is remarkable.

Other examples might be those who would bathe themselves in freezing cold water during winter time, or those who would go to a Buddhist temple to pray as they go round-about the tower/pagoda.

Summer in Korea is very hot, while in winter it's very cold.

Yet we see people praying with all their might in these extreme conditions.

It's to suggest that even those who don't believe in God of the Bible [also] PRAY.

But WHAT you pray for is quite similar across all of these types of people.

Firstly, they pray for their well-being –for good health.

In fact they tend to pray especially when people face illness.

Secondly, they pray that in whatever they do, they will prosper.

In Korea, many people are like that. I'm not sure what people are like in the UK.

Throughout the history till now, we find that majority of the people seek gods [of their own] for answered prayers.

In another words, they would try and USE gods as a means to achieving for themselves what they want.

Meanwhile, when we look at verse 39 of today's bible reading, we find Jesus ALSO praying in a way we might find across people in general.

Verse 39 reads *my father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me*

Jesus is saying that he wishes NOT to go through the pain of the cross.

But his prayer did not end there.

In verse 39 – *yet not as I will, but as you will.*

Not for MY will to be done, but for HIS will; that whatever the consequences, GOD'S WILL BE DONE.

Jesus' prayer was about God's will being done,

It means that everything Jesus said and did were all to fulfil what the Bible prophecies.

So today we want to learn [to pray] from Jesus' example of prayer.\

1. First, let our prayers be a Prayer concerning Jesus' concern

Just because you are a Christian doesn't mean you are all the same.

Claiming to be a disciple of Jesus doesn't make you all the same disciples.

In our reading today, Jesus and his disciples went to a place called Gethsemane to pray.

They all went together. But not all of them prayed together,

In Gethsemane, the disciples are split into two groups.

Jesus said to them (in verse 36) *Sit here while I go over there and pray.*

The HERE and THERE in this passage is clearly referring to different places.

Then he takes the 3 disciples to somewhere further along. The three were Peter, James and John,

Jesus told these three about what troubled (or concerned) him.

In verse 38, Jesus said to them *My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*

It's showing that Jesus wanted the disciples to partake in his sorrows, and so to pray WITH HIM.

In verse 38 Jesus said *stay here and keep watch WITH me.*

Essentially this means, as in verse 41, to WATCH AND PRAY.

Peter, James and John were required to pray together [with him] concerning what 'troubled' Jesus.

Jesus was praying particularly for what was troubling him.

But the disciples weren't able to pray to the full measure,

It's not like they didn't pray *at all*,

They still would have prayed to a certain extent...

But not quite as much as Jesus would have liked them to.

That's because their *body was weak* (vs 41)

Eventually they fell into temptation.

Peter disowned Jesus 3 times.

All the other disciples deserted him also.

Why? Because they didn't fully obey when Jesus told them to keep watch and pray so that you don't fall into temptation.

Nevertheless, Jesus prayed for them.

In [Luke chapter 22 verse 32], we see that Jesus already knew that Peter would fail.

And he prayed for him. He prayed for Simon (Peter) that his faith may not fail.

And after he has *turned back*, tells him to *strengthen your brothers.*

Jesus' prayer strengthened the disciples to later on be used for God's great purposes.

James was the first among the apostles to become a martyr.

Peter was persecuted. But he carried out his mission to the end.

And John lived to the end of his life and wrote the book of Revelations for us – that is, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' concern at the time was the cross. What would be Jesus' concern for today? Or What would be Jesus' concern in and for 'us'?

A true person of prayer prays while being concerned for what Jesus was [and is] concerned about.

I hope that all of us will become a people of prayer, who shares the concerns of our Lord Jesus.

2. Secondly, Let us build good prayer habits by following Jesus's example.

In our reading today, Jesus prays [again] in Gethsemane ahead of his crucifixion.

If we look at Luke 22:39, it says Jesus *went out as usual*.

In another words, praying was a habit of Jesus.

I believe that Nuneaton Christian Fellowship, during the months of July and August, is going through a Series that is reminding us all of the essential habits of 21st century Christians. Good habits can take shape in many ways. Many other pastors and leaders will tell you.

Today I am telling you about one of those good essential habits - prayer/praying.

Jesus had a strong habit of praying.

In Matthew 14:23, after Jesus fed the five thousand with just five loaves of bread and two fish, *Jesus went upon a mountainside*. Also in John 6:15 - when many people came to *make him king by force, he withdrew to a mountain*.

Jesus went by himself to pray. This was Jesus's evening prayer.

In Mark 1:35 it says *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed*.

This was Jesus's early morning prayer.

Korean church is often known for praying. In nearly all churches there takes place the early morning prayer time.

Officially the Wednesday and Friday prayer service takes place in the evenings.

In the past, it was quite common for the Friday evening prayers to last until the next morning, but today we can only see this in very few churches.

On one hand, it may be that our fiery zeal have become rather lukewarm. On the other hand, it may well be that people have less time to spare because they are more busy.

It's one of the areas that the Korean church must restore – to be earnest and pray.

Please pray for churches in Korea.

Let us look at what the author of the book of Hebrews testifies concerning Jesus's prayer.

In Hebrews 5:7. We can say that this particular passage refers to Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane.

WHOM he prayed TO was *the ONE who could save him from death*.

In Mark 14:36, Jesus calls to God *Abba, father!*

He offered up *prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears*.

It wouldn't have been a 'quiet' meditation.

What would [calling *Abba, Father* WITH loud cries and tears] sound like?

You'll find a lot of Christians from Korea praying in loud voices. When they begin to pray and call to God, they often say [in a loud voice] 'O, Lord!'.

- Not a silent 'lord' but on top of their voices, 'LORD!!!'.

Sometimes, we need to pray in such a way – with loudness, cries and tears... especially when we are faced with something important that the Lord is concerned about.

We also need to know how to meditate in our prayers (i.e. in solitary places).

But once again sometimes we need to be able to pray **earnestly**.

God answered Jesus's tear-filled [**earnest**] prayer.

The secret to his answered prayer wasn't just about the tears but God heard his prayers because of his **REVERENT SUBMISSION** (Heb 5:7)

His reverent submission wasn't about his external appearance, but springs from his obedience that *he learned from what he suffered*.

Jesus's obedience was about being obedient to the word of God.

In verse 45 and 46 of today's reading, Jesus already knew that he would be betrayed in the hands of sinners. So then he could have avoided it. But he chose not to.

In verse 46 Jesus says, If I had resisted them in a man's way, *how then would the prophetic words of the scriptures be fulfilled?*

The reason behind Jesus letting himself be arrested was to fulfil what the scripture says.

Again in verse 56 he says that *this has all taken place that the writings of prophets might be fulfilled*.

This is what Jesus was praying for. It was to fulfil the prophetic words of the Bible.

Likewise, OUR prayers should also reflect God's word being fulfilled rather than for our own [selfish] desires.

[Dear friends] - If we want our prayers to fulfil God's will, we need to KNOW God's will [beforehand], and this we can know through the Bible; the word of God.

Jesus clearly illustrates this when he prays. In today's reading, verse 39, while Jesus is praying he says *Yet not as I will, but as you will*.

Jesus makes this as a very important part of his prayer.

In Korea, 'I believe you will do as I will' is how many people would put it, and is unfortunately a very common way of praying by many.

I wonder what the situation is like in the UK.

But Jesus's prayer is always 'not as I will, but as YOU will'.

3. And lastly, Let us pray in preparation for the future [and stay alert]

In Matthew 26:31-35, Jesus warns his disciples *You will all fall away on account of me*

But Peter replies *Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will*

Then Jesus warns Peter that *this very night...you will disown me three times*

After hearing this Peter replies, confidently, *even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you*. And all the other disciples said the same.

Does that mean Peter and the other disciples were lying to Jesus? They would have done so intentionally.

But at the end of the day, the disciples didn't keep to their word.

Why was this the case?

This is because the disciples weren't able to anticipate the forthcoming events. They did not know it nor see it. In fact, it wasn't even far from happening. They did not know what was going to happen 'that very night'.

Peter disowned Jesus 3 times.

All the other disciples deserted him and fled.

We are born in time, live in time and go back in time...

But often, not knowing WHEN is our reality.

Back then the disciples trusted their minds.

And so there was not a single intention of deserting Jesus in their minds.

Peter DECLARED that he will never disown Jesus. At the time their hearts would have been just as they had declared. But their assertions didn't even last a single day.

Jesus knew this already, which is why he told the disciples to 'keep watch and pray' so that they will not fall into temptation.

What are WE like now?

We need to be prepared [and stay alert].

So, let us *remind ourselves of the essential habits of 21st century Christians*. We looked at the way Jesus prayed and the key takeaways from Jesus' teaching on prayer. Please remember the following:

- 1. First, let our prayers be a Prayer concerning Jesus' concern**
- 2. Secondly, Let us build good prayer habits by following Jesus's example.**
- 3. And lastly, Let us pray in preparation for the future [and stay alert]**