

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

July, 2022

Genesis 18:20-32

Christians pray. For Christians, praying is as natural as breathing. Prayer is simply a heart-to-heart talk with God anytime, anywhere, for anything. But there are times when we don't pray – and we could have – maybe, should have. As we consider our text, we will focus on what we are to pray for and on how we are to pray. Abraham encourages us to -

Pray, Christian, pray!

Before our text, the Lord God and two angels appeared in human form to Abraham and Sarah. They had dinner together. God told them that next year they would have a son. After the meal, two of the men continued on their way to Sodom, but the Lord said to Abraham, The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down to see.

Since God knows all things, He knew of the perversions done in those cities, but God wanted to see how Abraham would react to this news.

Abraham stood face to face or side by side with God. Here was the Mighty One who would allow Sarah to give birth, the same Mighty One who had the power and right to destroy the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. So Abraham began to pray boldly and confidently.

Abraham said, I am nothing but dust and ashes; May the Lord not be angry. We need to approach God humbly, realizing that when we pray we are nothing in the sight of almighty God! We don't deserve anything good from God because our sins have separated us from God! But God wants us to pray!

Yet, what often happens when we pray? There are times when we barge into God's throne room and hand the Mighty One our list of demands: "Gimmie this, God." or "Lord, I really want this." Then

we hold out our hands and wait for God to give us what we think we need! That's not how to pray!

Television commercials tell us that we "deserve a better life" and that we should have this or use that because we are "worth it!" Like the old country song, our prayers may be nothing more than, "O Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way." Remember: we are sinful, we are worth much to God only because of Jesus Christ!

We aren't perfect! Prayer is a privilege. Remember what you are when you pray. We are sinful! We should pray, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Abraham knew that he was sinful. His life showed his sinfulness. We know we are sinful. Just think of what we did, said, and thought just yesterday! The same kind of sinful hearts that beat in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah also beat in you and me! The only thing that saves us from the anger of God is the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus! So when we pray, let's be humble and repentant!

God was pretty good about answering Abraham's prayer. Six times Abraham prayed to God. Each time Abraham's faith and confidence grew. First Abraham prayed that God would spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if there were 50 believers in them. Then Abraham asked God to spare the cities for the sake of 45...then 40...then 30...then 20... and finally for the sake of 10 believers.

It was amazing that Abraham would keep on asking God to change the number of people, isn't it? It was more amazing that God permitted Abraham to keep on asking! God could have said anytime, "That's enough, Abraham!"

When we pray be aware that we are praying to the One who can do anything! Our prayers are often for things that are not all that important. "Lord, I didn't study for my test today because I was too busy." "Lord, help me at my job interview." Lord, help me find my

wallet with all my credit cards.” “Lord, help the Packers win the Super Bowl this year.” I don't think that Jesus is a Packer fan.

If the only time we pray is when there is a minor crisis in our life, and ignore God the rest of the time, we cheat ourselves. Jesus promised, Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you. In other words, pray boldly!

We can pray for the little things in life, but we can also pray for more important things: a cure for cancer, peace in the world, water for crops, Christian leaders, a stronger faith, a broken marriage to be restored, for someone who is having surgery, delinquent members to be more active, or for protection during a storm. Remember: our God is a BIG God, He can handle big challenges.

Hezekiah was a good king of Judah. The Assyrians were threatening Jerusalem. They sent Hezekiah a letter suggesting surrender to Assyria or face total destruction. Hezekiah took the letter and went to the temple and spread it out before the Lord and prayed: “Lord see what these godless people are planning! They insult You! Help us, Lord!” That night God sent one angel and he put to death 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. The threat was gone! God answered the prayer!

God is rich in mercy and He is generous with it! God wants us to go to Him with the big problems in our lives as well as the small stuff! God wants to help us! He is our Friend! He wants us to pray! Pray boldly and persistently!

That is how Abraham prayed. It was Jesus who promised: Keep on asking and it will be given to you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. When praying: Don't give up!

God answered Abraham's prayer, but not in a way Abraham expected. God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because there weren't ten believers in those cities. However, God sent two angels to rescue the believers, Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his two daughters.

Prayer is heaven's telephone, free to all, never busy or out of order. The mighty King has dialed our number through His Word. He wants to speak to us. He speaks words of hope and invitation. We hear that God forgives us, so a tear forms in our eye. We hear that God loves us, so a smile appears on our face. Maybe we sigh at the sound of a promise God has made. Perhaps a “thank-you is on our lips when we hear the good news that we have a risen Savior. Can't pray out loud? The Lord knows your thoughts.

So Friends, let's pray: humbly, boldly, and persistently. When we pray know that God will grant whatever is good for us in the best way. So, pray, Christian, pray. We have a Friend in Jesus.