

Sermon Manuscript:

Matthew 26:36-46

Dongwon Jung

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Theological Theme: The Christian Life
Focus Statement: Prayer is one of the most essential elements of our lives.
Function Statement: To Invite People to Live the Life of Prayer

Since last week we have been talking about
the essential elements of our lives.

Last week,
we talked about meeting Jesus and walking with Him.

Now, this week, we will continue to talk about
the essential elements of our lives.

This week we'll think more specifically about prayer.

Let me tell you a story first.

Imagine this:

Satan and his disciples were meeting monthly.
Meeting agendas always included items related to prayer.
It was about how to prevent Christians from praying.
Satan's disciples asked a question.

“We did our best to keep Christians from praying.
We made their lives difficult by causing bad things to happen,
and yet, they prayed, real hard.
Their earnest prayers make me hardly ruin their lives at all.
Can you stop them from praying?”

Satan, who was listening, speaks to his disciples.

“Such fools, don't you even know that?
Don't bother Christians.
Just leave them alone.
Help them live a peaceful life.
Please don't make them worry about anything. Then it works.”

The disciples did not understand what Satan meant,
but they did nothing for a month as he told them.

And a month later, they got together again.

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At that meeting, the disciples reported to Satan:

"Really, we didn't do anything.

We just let them live a comfortable life,

and Christians didn't pray!

It was definitely the best way to put a stop to prayer."

Of course, this story is fiction.

However, even though it is a fictional story,

something about it pierces our hearts.

It makes us wonder

do *we* only pray when we need something

or when we are in the midst of suffering.

What does prayer **mean** in your life?

What do you **think** of prayer?

Do we really **need** prayer in our lives?

If so, **how** should we pray?

Today's text is a scene of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Let's go into the Word together.

(Bible passage Video clip)

Before Jesus was arrested,

He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

(Slide for Garden of Gethsemane)

What can we learn through Jesus' prayer in the garden

before his final arrest?

Through Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane,

we can learn what prayer is and why we need it in our lives.

Also, Jesus' prayer teaches us exactly how we should pray.

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The reason we need prayer,
as we see through Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane,
is because prayer gives us the strength to overcome suffering and move forward.

The Gospels describe vividly the moments around Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.

In Matthew 26:38, Jesus tells his disciples,

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."

In such a situation, Jesus' choice was

to pray to God right away, rather than worrying about it.

But what's surprising is

that after Jesus finished his prayer, he said to his disciples, "Rise! Let us go!"

Before praying, Jesus showed his heart to his disciples,

how painful and difficult this very moment was.

However, after praying, he did not stay there or worry,

but he told his disciples

that they should actually go to those who were coming to arrest him.

This is the power we can gain through prayer.

Prayer gives us the strength to overcome the hardships

that lie ahead for us, those situations which make us tremble in fear.

It allows us to move forward beyond those difficulties.

Imagine Jesus' face when he was telling his disciples,

"Rise, let us go."

Jesus' face must have been more full of confidence than ever.

Also, the reason we must pray is

that prayer enables us to live according to God's will.

Jesus began to pray when he was in pain.

The Bible says that Jesus prayed three times.

If we look a little more closely

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at the first and second prayers, we find a surprising fact.

Jesus first prayed, “My Father, if it is possible,

may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

But the second time he prays,

he prays a little differently.

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup

to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

The words that continue to show up in Jesus' prayer are for God's will.

However, the nuances of the two prayers seem a little different.

Did you notice the difference between the two prayers?

In the first prayer,

Jesus, of course, asks that his Father's will be done

but reflects his wish.

If possible, I ask you to take this cup, this death from me.

But the second prayer is a little different.

In the second prayer,

the content of Jesus' own wishes disappears.

In his second prayer,

we notice that he accepts the cup of suffering, His death.

Jesus knew the time of his death was approaching

and he was troubled in his heart.

So, he asked God if God's will could change.

But during prayer,

Jesus adjusts his thoughts to the will of God.

In other words, what we can see from this scene is

that prayer is not our effort to change God's will

but to change ours.

Prayer is a process in which our hearts and minds

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become aligned with God's will.

Prayer enables us to discover God's will,
not ours, and to live our lives according to it.

That is why prayer is essential in our lives.

So, what is the way of prayer we can learn
from Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane?

How does God's Word teach us to pray
to gain the strength for living our lives and discovering God's will?

Today's Word shows
that we must pray in every situation.

The first important point in prayer is
that prayer should happen in all circumstances.

Do you remember the story of the monthly meeting of Satan and his disciples
that I told you?

Of course, we cannot say that all Christians pray like in the story,
but I think we can all agree that we will pray more
when we face difficult situations.

Those of you who hear this may point to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane
and say that Jesus also prayed in a difficult situation.

Yes, that's true.

Jesus prayed in a difficult situation.

Let me ask you couple of questions.

Did Jesus pray **only** in difficult situations?

Did he pray **only** when he raised the dead and performed miracles of healing?

The scene of Jesus' prayer recorded in Luke 22:39 begins with the explanation
Jesus went out "as usual" to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus prayed "as usual."

Also, in Luke 5:16 it says,

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“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

Jesus was always going off to a quiet place to pray.

Jesus' prayed in a usual place and usual time.

Not only in difficult situations,

but in every situation, he had a holy habit of prayer.

Like this, prayer should always be continuous in our lives.

Also, prayer must continue earnestly

until we receive an answer.

Charles Eastman's book "Old Indian Days,"

tells an interesting story.

He says,

when the North America Indians prayed for rain,

they always had rain.

Perhaps, when we hear this story,

people who have been waiting for an answer to prayer for a long time

might think that they should pray to a god that Indians believe in,

not to the God of the Bible.

But he explains

that the Indians kept praying until it did rain.

Yes, that is the prayer.

What we can learn from Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

that prayer is not to give up simply

because no answer comes right away,

but to continue to pray until we receive an answer.

Jesus also prayed three times to receive God's answer.

The Gospel of Luke records that Jesus prayed earnestly,

and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

There must be earnestness in prayer.

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With such earnestness,
we must continue until we receive an answer,
and if we receive an answer,
another prayer must begin to ask for help
to live according to the answer.

There is no end to prayer.

Our earnest prayer must continue throughout our lives.

At the same time,
we must be careful about
our expectation when we pray.

That is,
we must be able to accept God's answer to our prayers.

As I said before,
prayer is about aligning our thoughts with God's will.

In other words,
God's answer to our prayers may not be what we expect.

However, sometimes people think
that they should keep praying
because their prayers were not answered
when God's answers just differed from what they wanted.

It's like what happened to this man
when there was a flood in his village.

He was barely able to climb on to the roof of his house,
avoiding his initial danger.

He prayed to God.

"God save me. Please save my life in the danger of this flood."

After a while,
he discovered that a rubber boat is stuck under the roof of his house.

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But rather than using the boat to escape,

he continued to pray.

“God save me. Show me your miracles,” he prayed.

After a while,

a helicopter approached to save him.

But he refused to be rescued, saying,

"God will save me," despite the call from the rescuers.

Eventually, he drowned.

As soon as he got to heaven, he said to God,

"I prayed so earnestly, but why didn't you save me?"

God said to him,

"I sent a boat and a helicopter to save you.

Didn't you refuse my answer?

I definitely answered your prayers."

We must pray earnestly.

But at the same time, through earnest prayer,

we must discover, believe, and rely on God's will, not the answers we think we want.

Also, we must pray with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 22:43 records that when Jesus prayed,

an angel appeared to Jesus from heaven and gave him strength.

Prayer is not possible with our own strength alone.

Our prayers require the help of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:26 speaks of the Holy Spirit who helps us pray.

It says, "the Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."

Through the Holy Spirit's help,

we gain the power to pray,

and when we do not know what to ask for and what to pray,

the Holy Spirit helps us pray for God's will.

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Dear friends,

prayer is absolutely essential to our lives.

Through prayer,

we gain the strength and power to live Christ-like lives
as we discover the will of God.

That is why,

with the help of the Holy Spirit,

we must proceed with earnest prayer no matter what situation we are in.

God is the one who clearly answers our earnest prayers.

He is the only one who can give us the wisdom we need in our lives,

and he is the one who will give us the strength

to overcome great challenges, including suffering.

However,

we might be discouraged and disappointed

when God's answer to prayer is delayed.

In difficult situations,

we sometimes doubt whether God exists.

Philippians 4:6-7 says,

“Do not be anxious about anything,

but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.

And the peace of God,

*which transcends **all** understanding,*

will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

I hope that the God of peace will guard your heart and mind

as you wait with faith for God's answer to a prayer.

Also, I hope that as we persevere and wait on God for his answers,

we will see how encountering Jesus in prayer will help us

live according to God's will.

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Are you having trouble praying?

Are you in trouble

because you have not felt any changes in your life even though you pray often?

The reason we must keep praying is

that God is surely the one who answers our prayers.

God is telling us this very moment.

“Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;

you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.” (Isaiah 58:9)

May we all continue to seek a life in which we find the will of God through prayer.