



Sermon Reflection Guide; John 16:23-27

1. Jesus is again teaching us about prayer and emphasizing the necessity of prayer. What do you think most Christians understanding and relationship to prayer is?
2. What does it really mean for us to pray in Jesus' name? How would our prayers change if we began to really pray in Jesus' name?
3. In what way will our joy be made full through prayer? If we really believed this how would our prayer lives begin to change?
4. What does Jesus mean when he says, "²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;"? How should this change the way we approach prayer?

Sermon Summary

Throughout the farewell discourse as Jesus is teaching the disciples, he comes back to a few topics repeatedly. One of the topics that Jesus repeatedly emphasizes is that of prayer. Jesus knows that for his disciples who will face persecution and difficulty, prayer will be a necessary discipline and practice. I am sure we can all agree that prayer is a practice we know is a necessity but we would all desire to grow in our prayer lives and that is the intention of Jesus as he teaches us the pattern, the promise and the privilege of prayer.

Jesus begins by teaching us the pattern of prayer in verse 23, "²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." First, Jesus tells the disciples that once the Holy Spirit comes, they will be enabled to understand Jesus' teaching and will no longer ask him in confusion about what he means as they have so often done in the upper room. But then Jesus directs them to truly listen to him about how to pray. If we examine the verse closely, we see that prayer is Triune in its very nature. When Jesus says "In that day" he is referring to the outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, therefore Jesus is teaching us that the pattern of prayer is, that we pray to God the Father, based upon and through the mediating work of God the Son in his name, and our prayers are empowered by God the Holy Spirit. So, we pray to God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Spirit. This is the pattern of prayer we see throughout the New Testament. James Boice writes, "Prayer must be lifted out of some mysterious realm of religious rites or practice, where only special people can go, and instead brought down to the common experience of normal men and women. It means that prayer is essentially a conversation in which we talk to God." This means that prayer is for all of us. No matter how young or how old. Not just for pastors and elders and church leaders but prayer is a vital necessity for all followers of Christ.

Jesus emphasizes that all prayer is to be in his name. What does this mean? We must make certain that we properly understand what Jesus is directing us to do in order to obey him and pray meaningful, biblical prayers. It means much more than ending our prayers, "in Jesus name". Praying in Jesus name means that we come to God the Father in prayer based on the merit and righteousness of Jesus alone not

our own, for we have none of our own. It means that we recognize that apart from Jesus' atoning work on the cross and our faith in Christ alone we could never approach the throne of God and that God is never obligated to give us what we ask for simply because we ask, as if God could somehow be indebted to us. This also means that we are to pray in line with Jesus' revealed character and word. We are to desire the things that Jesus desires, we are to hate the things that Jesus hates, simply put we are to pray the way that Jesus would pray. The more we know Jesus through hearing the word of God preached, studying the word of God and obeying the word of God, the more our hearts change and the more our desires change and the more in line with Jesus our prayers will become. Richard Phillips writes, "According to Jesus' promise whenever we pray for the priorities he has taught us in Scripture, we should pray with an absolute certainty of divine answers. Do we pray for grace to believe, for compassion on the lost world that we will witness the Gospel, or for courage to stand against the pressure of the world and of sin? We must pray for these things, and when we pray Jesus' own words back to our Lord, when his teaching forms the substance of our pleas, we can be assured that they will be heard with favor in heaven...The "secret" to power in prayer, then, is to live closely enough to Christ that our own desires, expressed in prayer, have been molded by his Word."

In verse 24, Jesus moves on to the promises of prayer, "²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." First there is the promise of God working through prayer. God promises that when we pray, he not only listens but he will answer every prayer according to his wisdom and will. We must believe the witness of the Bible that through prayer God changes things. Prayer is powerful and this is an invitation to us to pray big, bold and powerful prayers in Jesus name and never stop praying. Secondly, Jesus promises that through prayer our joy will be made full. Now Jesus does not mean that we will have joy because God will answer every selfish prayer request, we make but rather that prayer is a means to commune with God and by this communing we will be made full of joy. What could bring us more happiness, more fulfillment or more joy than to commune with our Triune God? By prayer we can do this and as we do this our joy will be made full.

Finally in verses 26 and 27 Jesus teaches us about the privilege of prayer, "²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." What Jesus says here may be confusing at first but rightly understood this should be one of the most encouraging and awe-inspiring verses in all of Scripture. Jesus is telling us about how close to God the Father our adoption through faith in Christ alone has really brought us. By faith in Christ we have been adopted into God's family and been made one of his children. This means that like any child we have complete and unfettered access to our Father. Jesus is our mediator but that does not mean he is some sort of go-between taking our prayers to God the Father and bringing us back a response. Rather, as Jesus says, "the Father himself loves you..." What an amazing promise and privilege. We can pray to God the Father, in Jesus name, by the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that God himself hears our prayers and we are a true child of God whom he loves. Prayer is an incredible privilege. The more we pray according to the pattern of Scripture the more we will find our joy being made full and all the more privilege it will be to commune with our heavenly Father.