

**Intro:**

Q: How's your prayer life?

Illust:

This morning, as we continue in our study of Jesus' Upper Room Discourse in John 14, our journey brings us to vv 12-14. Jesus' words are shocking. In fact, He makes what (to me) is nothing less than a staggering announcement about prayer.

**Proposition: From our Lord's words in John 14:12-14, we learn 2 important truths we must never forget about prayer.**

I. Prayer involves Privilege (12).

- A. Who?
- B. How?
- C. Why?

II. Prayer involves Power (13-14).

Notice 3 components of effective prayer...

- A. The Guarantee
- B. The Guideline
- C. The Goal

**I. Prayer involves Privilege (12).**

"Verily, verily I say unto you"

Whenever Jesus spoke, He commanded people's attention. He spoke with authority. His penetrating words caused people to marvel. But whenever He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," it was like cranking up the PA system. "Listen up! What I'm about to say is super-important."

His disciples needed the announcement that would follow. Remember the context. He'd just told them the disturbing news that He was leaving them, and His departure was via the Cross. The disciples were in shock. To them, life without their Master was not life at all. Three years earlier, they'd left all to follow Him. And now He was leaving? It was on that disturbing note that Jn 13 ended.

To calm their fears, Jesus offered the comforting message of John 14. "Let not your heart be troubled." I'm going to prepare a place for you (2). One day, I will return for you, and take you to that place (3). I am the only way to that place (6). The reason I am the only way is because of Who I am--I am one with the Father (11).

But what about in the meantime? It's great that Jesus is coming again, but He's gone now. As His followers, we need Him now. What about the present? Can we communicate with Him now?

Yes! Here's where His staggering announcement enters the picture.

READ vv 12-14

In vv 12-14, Jesus talks about the interum time period, that phase of history between His departure 2000 years ago, and His imminent return.

The first thing He emphasized, and the first truth we must never forget, is that prayer involves Privilege. Although in v 12, Jesus is not talking directly about prayer, what He says prepares us for His direct statements about prayer in vv 13-14.

Three questions...

A. Who? Who benefits from this privilege called prayer?

V 12 "He that believes on Me"

Who is entitled to the privilege of prayer? The one who "believes in Jesus." We learned last week, from v 10, that our biggest problem in life is "unbelief." Unbelief is what keeps a non-Christian from eternal life. Unbelief is what robs a Christian of joy.

But listen. If we overcome unbelief, if we learn to "believe" Christ, we have a great door of privilege opened before us! The privilege belongs to those who believe.

Let's clarify what Jesus means by "believe." First, notice He didn't say, "Whoever believes ABOUT Me." Most people believe ABOUT Jesus. Jesus said the one who believes ON Him. The word is literally "into" (as in Jn 3:16). To believe "into" Jesus implies this is a person who has entered into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. I say "life-changing" because the tense of the greek verb is present, which indicates continuous action (we could lit. translate, "The one who continues to believe into Me").

That answers the question, "Who?" The privileges we're going to see are ours only if we have a person to person relationship with Jesus Christ.

One more thing. Remember, Jesus is talking to 11 men who had already made the decision to follow Him. They were "Christians." Yet they needed to exhortation to "believe" Jesus (11).

Illust:

B. How? How are we privileged? In what way are we privileged?

V 12 "the works that I do he shall do also"

Not that's an amazing statement. But there's more!

V 12 "and greater works than these shall he do"

Greater? Jesus said His disciples would do "greater" works than He did. Let that announcement sink in. Greater than Jesus?

Just think of what Jesus did. What could be greater than taking 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, and feeding 5,000 people! What could be greater than freeing a tormented, demon possessed man who lived in the tombs?

What did Jesus mean by "greater"? Apparently, He didn't mean that His disciples would do more stupendous miracles. It's hard to imagine miracles more sensational than those Jesus did! So how are Jesus' followers privileged?

Jesus gave His disciples a key as to what He meant by "greater" back in Mt 11. Remember what Jesus said about John the Baptist in Mt 11:11, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a GREATER than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is GREATER than he."

What's the point? This. John the Baptist was a great man, yet he never participated in the kingdom of God. He lived too early in the history of God's redemptive plan. He lived before the King inaugurated His Kingdom. He never had the privilege of participating in the benefits of the Kingdom.

In that sense, the least person this side of the cross is greater than John the Baptist. Why? Because a person living in this time period is privileged to participate in Christ's completed work.

Q: Do you grasp how blessed we are to live this side of the cross?

Christ has already won the victory. His redemption is complete. All we have to do is claim what He has provided for us. What a privilege!

Illust:

"Greater works"--We get an idea what Jesus meant by comparing His ministry with the ministry of His apostles. Compare the Gospels with the book of Acts.

Jesus ministered in relative obscurity, in a corner of the Roman Empire known as Palestine. Do you realize that only a small % of the world's population living at Jesus' time ever even heard of Jesus? (Illust: hold up an arrowhead; Jesus lived for 33 years, yet the American Indians never heard the news that God had entered the human race; Nor had the majority of the Chinese, and the inhabitants of India. In fact, the King of the Universe entered this world and left it, and the Roman Emperor was hardly affected, if he even knew it). After 3 years of public ministry, how much fruit did Jesus have to show for His efforts? A handful of 120 frightened followers hiding in an upper room!

50 days after Jesus left, Peter preached a message in Jerusalem. Do you remember what happened? As the result of that one message by Peter, 20 times as many people were converted as in the entire ministry of Jesus! Think of it. When Jesus left, hardly anyone outside of Palestine had ever heard of Him. But within one generation, the early church spread the news of Jesus to nearly every corner of the Roman Empire!

Jesus had said, "Greater works than these..."

Not greater in quality, but greater in quantity. Someone has said, "There is no greater work possible than the conversion of a soul." There's no doubt that Jesus' miracles were amazing. But what He's doing today is just as, if not more, amazing! Through His Church, He's rescuing lost people from their sins.

Illust:

### C. Why? Why do we enjoy this privilege?

V 12 "because I go to My Father"

Q: Why can we do "greater" works? Here's the reason. Because Jesus returned to His Father. You say, "I don't get it. What does Jesus mean by that?"

Q: How did Jesus return to His Father? His return trip to the Father was by means of the cross, and the Empty grave. He had in mind His redemptive work.

Q: What did Jesus do after He returned to His Father?

A: He'll tell us in vv 16-18. He sent the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was on the earth, He could be "with" only a few of His followers at a time. And since He had to sleep, and since there were times He needed to be alone, His ministry was limited.

But here's the privilege. When Jesus returned to His Father, He sent His Spirit, at Pentecost. Now He's with all of us, all the time! He never leaves us!

Application: This truth ought to affect the way we pray. We ought to pray in light of this privilege, "Lord, we know we are a privileged people! We know You promised to do a greater work in and through us. We invite You to do this "greater" work in the Wheelersburg area. O Lord, give us accounts weekly of lives being changed by the power of Christ."

Q: Is Jesus doing a "greater work" in your life right now? Are you cooperating with Him?

Tran: Prayer involves Privilege.

## **II. Prayer involves Power (13-14).**

Someone has said, "Prayer is the slender nerve that activates the muscles of omnipotence." I heard John MacArthur make the observation, "Reading the Bible is like eating. Praying is like breathing." (tape "How to Pray")

Prayer is necessary. Prayer is vital. Prayer involves great power.

Notice 3 components of effective prayer...

### A. The Guarantee

V 13 "And whatever ye shall ask, that will I do"

That's a guarantee. It's so certain, He repeated it.

V 14 "If ye shall ask anything...I will do it."

Listen. This must be pretty important for Jesus to repeat Himself. Jesus' promise is so straightforward, "Whatever you ask, I'll do it!" Think of that. Jesus takes personal responsibility for our requests! He promised that if we asked, He'd answer.

This isn't the only time Jesus made such an offer.

Jn 15:16 "...whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Jn 16:23 "Whatever ye shall ask the Father..."

Jn 16:24 "Hitherto have ye asked nothing...ask and ye shall receive..."

Mt 7:7-8 "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock..."

You say, "What did Jesus really mean?" He meant what He said! What's our responsibility? To ask. That implies we'll be in constant communication with the Lord.

That's what prayer is. Prayer is simply communicating with God. Prayer is not reciting pat recitations to God. Prayer is talking with God. Prayer is communing with

God. Prayer is conversation. When we read the Bible, God talks to us. When we pray, we talk to God. We need both to have communication.

Listen. You don't have to close your eyes to pray. Paul said to pray without ceasing (I Th 5:17). Ceaseless prayer is an attitude of God consciousness. If we're going to pray without ceasing we need to learn to see every facet of our lives in relation to God.

Illust: Think of your best friend. Suppose it were possible for your best friend to spend a whole day with you. I mean, literally, everywhere you went, he was at your side. When you got up. While you were eating, riding in the car, at the office, in the restaurant. Everywhere. Every event you encountered you'd relate to the presence of your friend. You'd read the news, and say, "Man isn't that tragic!" You'd see a beautiful sunset and say, "Isn't that gorgeous?!" You would naturally want to share your thoughts with your friend.

That's the way we ought to approach prayer.

Let me ask you a question, "How would your friend feel if in that day, you talked to him as much as you pray in the average day?"

"Ask." And when we ask, what does Jesus say will happen? "I will do it."

Caution: This guarantee is not a "blank check." Notice a second component...

### B. The Guideline

V 13 "in My name" (i.e. "in JESUS' name" not in the Father's name)

V 14 "in My name"

Jesus didn't say ALL our prayer requests would be answered. He said those asked IN HIS NAME would be.

Q: What does it mean to pray "in Jesus' name"?

Does it mean we have to tack onto every prayer we offer, "In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."? Someone has said, "Praying a prayer without saying, 'in Jesus' name,' is like sending a letter to God without a stamp." Is that right?

No. Jesus prohibited pat formulas in prayer. He explicitly said not to use vain repetitions when we pray (Mt 6). Jesus' name is not some kind of a magic incantation.

Listen. To pray in Jesus' name means to ask for things consistent with Who He is. In the Bible, a "name" represents a person's reputation and authority. It sums up who a person is.

Praying in Jesus' name is not some trick formula. It's praying with this question in mind, "What would Jesus want?" Praying in Jesus' name is synonymous with praying according to His will.

See: I Jn 5:14-15 "This is the confidence...ask anything acc to His will"

If a friend says to you, "Use my name," that's a great privilege!

Illust: A few years ago, we went on a vacation to Florida with some friends. These friends had a brother who had some clout. He had a condo in one of those places where they have security checks to get in. I remember how uneasy I felt

the first time I pulled up. All I had to say was, "We're the guests of so and so." That name was all it took!

Think of it. Jesus said, "When you pray, use My name."

That's an honor, friend. It's also a solemn responsibility.

The test of any prayer is this: "Can I make it in the name of Jesus?"

Try this the next time you pray. Instead of ending your prayer, "In Jesus' name," end it by saying, "Father, this I ask because I know this is what Jesus would want." That'll change the way we pray!

Application: Can I say, "Father, I'd like a bigger house so I can impress the people I work with. I ask this because I know this is what Jesus would want. Amen."? I doubt it. Can I say, "Father, please help my neighbor to quit playing games, and admit his need for You. This I ask because I know it's what Jesus would want. Amen." Yes!

Challenge: Learn to pray for things you know Jesus would want!

Objection: "What if I don't know what Jesus would want?"

A: Use James 1:5, "If any lacks wisdom, ask God for it!"

Challenge: Don't just tack onto your prayers, "if it's Your will God."

Sometimes that's an insult to God. Find out what He wants. He's already revealed so much of His will to us. Where? In the Scriptures! Search His Word. Bible study and prayer go hand in hand.

What should be our aim when we pray?

### C. The Goal

V 13 "that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

This is great! Prayer is a way God can display His power. Why does God want us to ask, and why does He want to answer our requests? Because when He does, He puts Himself on display. Through our prayers, He can bring glory to Himself. That's exactly what He deserves.

My goal in praying is to see the Father glorified in the Son. There's no sense even asking for things that will not bring God glory. But when we ask for things in line with His will, we can pray with confidence!

Key: When we pray, God always answers our prayers (MacArthur, tape).

Sometimes He answers immediately. (Isa 65:24 "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.")

Sometimes His answer is delayed (Lk 18:7). Sometimes it's different than what we asked for (II Cor 12:5-7). And sometimes it's more than we ever asked for! (Eph 3:20)

Illust: Carson, 109--story of "Diane"

Prayer involves Privilege. And Power.

Q: How's your prayer life?