

LIFELINE: Power Through Prayer

Desperation: Do We Need Him?

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DESPERATION: DO WE NEED HIM?

Luke 11:1

Good morning. If you have your Bibles and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Luke 11. Luke 11. There'll be a guide for our time together this morning. It is good to see that our attendance is down this morning. We have 150 of our people in Venezuela and the Ukraine this morning. It's great to see empty seats because men and women are making the gospel and the Glory of Jesus Christ known in all nations. So we praise God for the down attendance this morning. We have a responsibility to pray for our brothers and sisters as they are serving in these different contexts, our students in Ukraine, men and women mainly from Children's Ministry, there are many others that are in Venezuela. But even that responsibility to pray, we ask the question, "Okay, I know I'm supposed to pray, but what do my prayers really do? Are we going to change what God is going to do in Venezuela or Ukraine by my prayers? How does prayer work? Am I going to dictate to God what He should do on this trip by what I'm praying?"

I am convinced that the majority of Christ followers, majority of Christians today see and know, at least accept the need and importance of prayer. We read a lot of books about prayer. You go to the Christian bookstore and there are tons of books on prayer. We talk about prayer. We ask people to pray for us. We ask people how we can be praying for them and yet today, across the board, the Church is anything but a praying Church. So, what does it mean to pray and why should we pray?

I want us to begin this morning to dive in over the next four weeks into Luke 11 and I want us to see Jesus' answer to that question. I want us to see Jesus showing us some things about prayer. Each of these weeks, we're going to focus on one word that I think Jesus is highlighting, that deals with our praying. This morning we're going to look at desperation. Next week "desire," the next week "boldness" and then close out on "confidence". "Desperation," "desire," "boldness" and "confidence," these are words that sadly enough we don't oftentimes associate with prayer and I want us to see how they're the center of what it means to pray. Starting with desperation, this morning.

Most everybody prays when they're desperate. I mean, really desperate, even most atheists or agnostics would admit that when they get into a circumstance where there's no way out, there's at least a desire to pray to a god they may not even believe is there. There are things we do when it comes to praying that are based on desperation.

One of the most famous sports plays in all of history is rooted in prayer. It's what happens at the end of a football game when your team is down and you've got one chance left to go 50 yards. You throw up a what? "A Hail Mary." You throw up a prayer. One of the most famous plays in all of sports history is based on that.

The whole rationale is that you get to a point where you can't accomplish something without divine intervention and so you throw up a prayer. You throw up the "Hail Mary". I think the reason why we bring Mary in at the end of football game is because we're convinced at that

point, you've played the game up until that point, with the best of your resources, your personnel, you tried to implement your game plan. You've got to the end. Now you're out of time, now you're out of opportunity, you have no other options and so you bring Mary in. You throw up a prayer. You throw up a Hail Mary and that's when maybe, just maybe something will happen.

The question I want to ask you this morning, though, is what if our entire Christian life was intended to be lived in complete and total desperation upon a holy God? What if desperation was not supposed to mark the tragic circumstances we face alone? What if desperation was at the center of everything that being a Christian is about? What if leading your marriage and leading your home and leading your job, what if every single thing you do today, as a follower of Jesus Christ, was not possible without divine intervention? I'm convinced that's the case.

I'm convinced that the folks in the New Testament knew that to be true and we need to realize that the core of praying is desperation for God to show up every moment of every day of our Christianity. And so what I want us to do is I want us to read this passage and I want you to think about this word, desperation. Luke 11:1-13,

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished one of his disciples said to him "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who has sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not give him the bread because he is his friend yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you: Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Luke 11:1-13).

Why Pray?

To express the depth of our need before God.

What we're going to do over the next four weeks is we're going to dive into this passage week after week after week. And this morning we'll probably get through one or two verses. But I want us to see this picture of desperation in prayer. I want us to ask the question "Why pray?" And I want to show you in this passage and in the life and ministry of Jesus and the early church, I want to show you three primary reasons for prayer. This is the motivation, the attitude of prayer.

Number one, we pray to express the depth of our need before God. We pray to express the depth of our need before God. Luke talks about prayer more in the life of Jesus and in the early church than any other New Testament writers, especially in the Gospels. You look at Mark and Matthew, they use "pray" or "prayer" 13-17 times. When you get to Luke in Luke and in Acts, which he also wrote, you see "pray" or "praying" mentioned 50 different times. Luke records nine prayers that Jesus prayed, seven of them, he's the only one who records them. Matthew, Mark, John don't record them. So what I want us to do is take a little tour and I want us to see Jesus in prayer throughout the book of Luke. So turn it back to Luke 3. Luke 3. You might underline these different places where we see prayer emphasized in the book of Luke.

Luke 1 starts with a picture of prayer, but we get to Jesus here in the beginning of his ministry kind of inaugurated by his baptism and listen to what Luke 3:21 says. It says, *"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was" what? "As he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'"* (Luke 3:21-21). Other Gospel writers talk about the baptism of Jesus, but only Luke mentions that it happened as he was praying.

You get to the very next chapter, Luke four. It says, verse one, this is after the baptism of Jesus before he inaugurates his public ministry, it says *"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry"* (Luke 4:1-2). Do you realize what that means? Like one of the biggest under statements in the New Testament. "He was hungry," Luke said. Of course he was hungry because he had been fasting for 40 days. Here he is, praying at the very start, his whole ministry begins with a battle, literally, face to face with the devil, in Luke 4:1-13. And it's focused on him praying and seeking the father in the middle of it.

Go to Luke 5, look with me at verse 15 and 16. Verse 16 is the mention of prayer, but I want you to see the set up. It says, *"The news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses"* (Luke 5:15). Everybody's coming to see Jesus, but it says in verse 16, underline it, *"Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed"* (Luke 5:16).

Next chapter, 6:12, Jesus is about to call the 12 apostles, the 12 disciples to himself. So what does he do before he calls them, before he chooses them, calls them into service? It says in 6:12, *"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them"* (Luke 6:12-13). So he prayed before that.

Look over in Luke 9, look with me in verse 18. This is a conversation that Jesus has with his disciples where he asked them *"Who do people say I am?"* This is a very pivotal moment in their faith journey. Right before that, I want you to see what he was doing. Luke 9:18, *"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?'"* Matthew tells the same story, but Luke emphasizes the fact that he was praying.

Look over in the same chapter, 9:28. It says, this is the picture of the transfiguration *"About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to" do what? "to pray"* (Luke 9:28).

Go to Luke 18. Luke 18. This is a parable that Jesus tells, similar to the one that we're going to look at in couple of weeks in Luke 1. It says in Luke 18:1, "*Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*" A few more. Look in 22:32. This is a theme that Luke is emphasizing over and over again. Luke 22:32, this is when he's talking with Simon Peter before he's about to go to the cross. He says in verse 31, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail*" (Luke 22:31-32). Can you imagine hearing those words? Jesus saying to you, "I'm praying for you." I remind you that he is at the right hand of the Father and interceding for us, even now. That is his whole purpose at the right hand of the Father, praying for us.

Look in 22, look over in verse 40. He goes to the Mount of Olives in verse 39 and it says in verse 40, "*On reaching the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation'*" (Luke 22:40). Same thing down in verse 46, "*'Why are you sleeping?' he asked them. 'Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation'*" (Luke 22:46). It only makes sense that you get one over 23:46, the last breath Jesus takes, you'll never guess what he's doing.

23:46, Luke tells us, "*Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last*" (Luke 23:46). He is praying from start to finish. Now, the question is, why was prayer so important to Jesus? Why did Jesus pray? I mean, let's be honest. Just the thought of Jesus praying is a little odd in and of itself. "David, are you saying that he was talking to himself?" Well, we can get there later on, but let's just suffice to say that obviously prayer was very important to Jesus. Why is that?

Well keep turning. You're in Luke 23. Keep going to the next book. Look at John 5. I want to show you two verses in John that answers that question. Why was Jesus always praying? Why was he praying before he made decisions? Why was he praying in the middle of this or that? Why is he telling others to pray? Look at John 5:19. This is the verse we studied about a month or two ago. It says in verse 19, John 5, "*Jesus gave them this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do (what?) nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does'*" (John 5:19). Same thing in John 14:10, Jesus was talking with his disciples. He's explaining his relationship to the Father. It says in John 14:10, He tells them, "*Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*"

We ask the question, "Why was Jesus always praying?" I think a deeper question is, when you look at Jesus' life and ministry and the Gospel, "What did he do on his own in the Gospels?" And the answer is absolutely nothing. There's not one thing that Jesus did on his own. It was all in dependence on the Father. Everything. "I only do what I see my Father doing because" he said it, "I can do nothing by myself." Now that begs the question, if Jesus Christ, God in the flesh would say, "I could do nothing by myself." Then who are you and I to think there is anything in our Christian life that we could do on our own? There's absolutely nothing.

And I'm convinced that's why the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to teach them to pray. I mean, these guys knew all about prayer. They grew up good Jewish guys. They knew to pray in the synagogue and on the Sabbath and they knew to pray in this circumstance and that circumstance and they knew how to follow this religious ritual. But they saw in Jesus, something very different. They saw him and this is not just a religious responsibility that he had. This was something that literally nourished him. This is something he hungered for. It was a necessity for him that his life was dependent on. And

so he came out and they said, "Lord teach us to pray like you're praying." Not that they didn't know how to pray the religious exercise way, they didn't know how to pray for real. And though they're pretty slow bunch of guys in the Gospels, by the time we get to the book of Acts, they've got it and learned the secret of dependence on God.

Keep going to the next book. Look at Acts 1. Now I want you to see it wasn't just Jesus that was emphasized as praying all the time. Listen to the early church. Acts 1:14. We're taking a tour here. It says, this is the very beginning. Before the Holy Spirit even comes down, it says, verse 14, "*They all joined together constantly in* what? "*Prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers*" (Acts 1:14). Then you get to 4:24, they've been persecuted by the Sanhedrin, and brought before the Sanhedrin. It says, they got together and went back to their people and it says in verse 24, "*When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God,*" and they begin to pray (Acts 4:24).

And you get over to 31, it says "*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly*" (Acts 4:31). God may it be so in your church today. Look over in 9:40. We've got somebody here who has passed away. She's died. Her name's Tabitha. So what happens? Verse 40. It says, "*Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and*" did what? He prayed, and "*turning toward the dead woman, he said, 'Tabitha, get up.'*" She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up" (Acts 9:40).

Look in 12:5. It's the passage we studied last fall, 12. Peter is in prison facing almost eminent death and it says in verse 5, "*Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him*" (Acts 12:5). The church was praying for him in prison. Look in 13:2. This is the church at Antioch, ready to make the gospel known in all nations. How did they start making the gospel known in all nations? They start by praying. It says, "*While they were worshiping the Lord*" verse 2, "*and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'*" So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3).

Next chapter, 14:23. They need elders, leaders in the different churches that are being started and so what did they do? It says in 14:23, "*Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*" Two chapters over, 16. Look at 16:25. Paul and Silas find themselves in prison. Things aren't going well. Things haven't quite worked out the way they were supposed to and it says in 16:25, "*About midnight Paul and Silas*" what do you do when you're in prison? You pray. They "*were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them*" (Acts 16:25).

You see the theme? Go to the very last chapter, 28. Look with me at 28:8. Paul is in prison and he's shipwrecked. Things aren't working out quite the way Paul had planned, so listen to what happened. In verse 7, we'll start there to get the set up. "*There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured*" (Acts 28:7-9).

Things are happening as the people of God are praying throughout the book of Acts. Here's the fundamental root conviction of prayer. Our conviction is that we can do nothing without God. That is why we pray because we are desperate for him and we can do nothing without

him and the early church knew this. What I'm concerned is, is that what was fundamental for the early church has gradually become supplemental in the contemporary church.

In the book of Acts, they did not pray before meetings or after meetings. They didn't pray during meetings. They didn't pray at the beginning of meetings or at the end of meetings to close them out. Prayer was the very purpose of their meeting together.

It was fundamental for them. They knew this. Is prayer in your life fundamental or supplemental? Is prayer at The Church at Brook Hills in our faith family, is it fundamental or is it supplemental? Is it an added thing that we do over here or is it something that we are constantly doing because we are cognizant of our dependence on him? The conviction we have in prayer is that we can do nothing without Him and that leads to our confession in prayer, which is what the disciples said in Luke 11:1, "Lord teach us to pray."

Some of us might think, "I don't need to learn to pray. Prayer is just talking to God." Well, you're wrong. We need to learn to pray. And here's why. Because if we can do nothing without God, then that means we cannot pray without Him, which is why the disciples came to him. And you don't ever see them in the Gospels asking Jesus to teach them to witness. You don't ever see them asking him to teach them how to perform miracles. You don't say, "Teach us to teach like you do." All you see is them saying, "Teach us to pray" because this is the core upon which our Christianity is dependent us coming to God in complete and total dependence on Him. We pray to express the depth of our need before God.

To explore the mystery of intimacy with God.

Second reason why we pray. Not just to express the depth of our need before Him, but second, to explore the mystery of intimacy with God. Here's where it gets really good. To explore the mystery of intimacy with God. He tells them, "Guys, you see me going inside to these places and spending these times in concentrated prayer. You want to know how to pray. You begin praying by saying 'Father.'" And we're going to get to that more later on next week, but I want you to see, for our purpose this morning, to see the intimacy that Christ is talking about in prayer that he's talking about here in Luke 11, and other places. And I want us to begin to think about this intimacy in line of how we most often look at prayer.

If you're like me, most of us grow up thinking about prayer and seeing prayer as asking for things. And we learn to pray saying, "God, help me with this. God, give me this. God, bless me with this. God, protect me." Or we pray for others and so we pray the same thing. "God help them. God, protect them. God bless them." And, "God keep them and be with them." As if that was a question, but we say it anyway. "God, be with me."

We pray these things and that's how we learn about prayer. Heather and I have even struggled with this a little bit now, with Caleb. I mean, he's 14 months old and so his knowledge, his theology of prayer is not quite there, yet, but even when we sit down for a meal and we want to show him the importance of thanking God for what He has provided for us, and so we have him cross his hands. And so, we cross our hands every night, that's nowhere in Scripture but we just do it to say "Okay. There's something different about what's going on right here." The only problem is now, Caleb has no clue about prayer but he does know that when he crosses his hands that he gets food. And so whenever he's hungry, he'll come and cross his hands, and so obviously his theology of prayer needs to be developed, but I'm wondering if that's where many of our theologies of prayer are. If we do this or bow our heads when we want something, when we need something. And to be honest, if we were just honest with each other this morning, this is probably one reason why a lot of us don't pray a lot, maybe you've stopped praying altogether because if prayer

is asking for what you want and you don't get it every time, then what's the difference in praying?

It becomes this thing where your whole goal is to make sure to put the right amount of change in the machine in order to get what you want to get out and want to find the right code or combination, and all of a sudden prayer becomes this thing. We're not sure if it's actually going to work or not. We try it. I remember growing up as a kid. I remember we had a close family friend who had had a blood transfusion and through that had contracted AIDS. And I remember every single night in my bed, I can remember praying that God would bring about a cure for AIDS. As a little kid, just praying, "God bring about a cure for AIDS so that Mr. Mike can be healed." It didn't happen.

So what does that mean about prayer? How do you deal with that in a prayer? I'm guessing some of you have been there before. Maybe you're there right now. We start thinking, "Alright, well if I'm going to do this thing, then what is the right code or combination to get what I want?" The question I want to ask is what if that's not the purpose of prayer to begin with? What if maybe what we've seen modeled and how we've learned prayer really misses out on the entire purpose of prayer. Not that asking for what we want, and bringing our needs before God is not a part of prayer, I think. It is all over Scripture.

But what if it's just this closet over here, so to speak, and there's an entire house of prayer and we spend all our time in the laundry room over here of prayer, giving our list to God? And we wonder why we have all these struggles with why we should pray and all these difficult questions that we can come up with to think about prayer. But we've kept ourselves cornered out from the rest of this house that's called prayer. What if prayer was intended to be much more than that? What if prayer wasn't just asking for Him to bless me or keep me or protect or help me? What if there's a depth of prayer that's much farther beyond that?

Do you remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount when he shared the Lord's Prayer there? When he said, "When you pray, don't keep on babbling like pagans for they think they're heard because of their many words. Do not be like them." Listen to what he said. He said, "Because your Father in heaven -." What? "He knows what you need before you ask Him." The Father in heaven knows what you need before you even ask Him.

Now for some of us, it's just time to throw up our hands. Well then what is the point? If He already knows everything, what is the point? And if that is the question we're asking, then I think we're on the verge of breaking through into what prayer is really all about.

What if the Father in heaven is not sitting there with a clipboard and a note pad asking you to slow down because he's has to write down everything we're asking for? "Alright, I want to make sure I get this." What if he already knows everything that you need? And that maybe there's an intimacy that he's designed for prayer that supersedes even what we want and what we need? What if that's the reason he told you "Go in your room and close the door and pray to me and start by saying 'Father, hallowed be your name?'" What if there's a mystery that God intends to take place in this thing called prayer that we will miss with our list of things?

I want to remind you this morning. We are not desperate for something. We're desperate for someone. We're desperate for someone not for something. This is key in prayer. What if God has fashioned and designed this whole thing called prayer for you, ultimately, to enjoy Him and to enjoy being with Him and to feast on His goodness and His grace and His mercy, personally in a way that nothing else in all Christianity can even begin to compare with?

What if there is something mysterious that happens when you go in a room and you close the door and you pray and you spend this time in intimacy with the Father? What if there's something that happens in those moments that can't be matched by anything else that we do in our lives? What if the purpose of prayer is at least in part, fundamentally to explore the mystery of intimacy with God?

I want to remind you this morning all across this room that the most important thing in the world is not your job and it's not your finances and it's not your football team and it's not your family and it's not your husband, it's not your wife and it's not your kids. It's not you potential, hoped for, husband or wife. The most important thing in the world is your personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the most important thing in the world because, ladies and gentlemen, everything in our lives flows from this one thing. Everything flows from it.

What this means is Jesus showing us why he was constantly going aside to be with the Father because there was an intimacy with the Father that happened when he was alone with the Father in prayer that would affect every single thing he did. In fact, I think Jesus even teaches us in order to develop, nurture that kind of intimacy, I think he teaches us to set a time where we're aside with the Father.

Now I know that the first thing that many of think or say at this point is, "Well I pray all the time and I pray without ceasing." It says that somewhere in the Bible, doesn't it? Pray without ceasing, so that's what I do. I pray without ceasing when I'm putting on my makeup and driving to work. That's when I pray. And when I'm doing this or that that's when I pray. I'm a student. When I'm driving to school, I pray, "God, don't let there be a pop quiz. Don't let there be a pop quiz." And I can pray when I'm driving home, and I'm late for my curfew. "God, don't let mom and dad be up. God, don't let mom and dad be up. I pray all the time. I don't need to set aside a concentrated time."

Well, it sounds good, but I tried that in my marriage and it didn't work. Heather and I, we're together all the time. We talk all the time as we're running to here and there, as we're going to this place to do ministry and that place to do ministry. We're always talking. Well, there's something about intimacy that just doesn't happen when you're constantly going here and there and everywhere. I think that's why we see Jesus setting aside time where he was alone with the Father, not only setting a time, but going to a place, go to a place.

Now again, there's a tendency here say "I can pray anywhere I am." Does it say that somewhere in the Bible, too? You can pray anywhere? Well, no question, the Holy Spirit of God lives inside of us and we can pray anywhere, but Jesus did talk about there being a right place and a wrong place to pray. He did say, "Do not be like the hypocrites who they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners. They've received their reward in full." He says "When you pray -." This is what he told them. He said - this is Jesus, not me, this is Jesus. "When you pray, go into a room, shut the door and pray to your Father who's unseen," which is really comforting that Jesus knows that this is kind of a weird thing. "Praying to the Father who's unseen and the Father who sees what is done in secret. He will reward you."

Now some of you are thinking. "Well that's the secret? Alright. I'm going in the room. I'm closing the door. Now I'm going to get what I want." No, no, maybe. Maybe there's a reward that's greater than getting what we want and there's a reward that's greater than getting what we need. Maybe there's a reward in just being in a room alone with where God can encounter us with an intimacy that's just between you and Him. Maybe there's a beauty and a mystery to what happens when we fall on our faces alone behind closed doors where

nobody else can see us and we can experience a reward from Him that is unmatched by anything this world could ever give us.

Maybe that's what Jesus is saying when he says, "I go to solitary places and I spend these times." That's the whole context of this. One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. This is what he would do. He would go off. You look in Mark 1, he had a very busy day and he says he got up the next morning and he went on a mountainside by himself to pray. And Peter comes in and he's like "Where are you? Don't you realize there's all these things going on?" It's almost like Peter is saying, "You don't have your cell phone, your pager or anything on you. You're just over here praying. We need you over here."

But maybe there's something that happens in that time at that place that God has designed for us to experience intimacy with Him. And so I encourage you to pray everywhere. Pray all the time, but set aside a place and a time to go in your room, close the door and pray to your Father who's unseen. I am convinced that that one practice will revolutionize your life, not just your prayer life. I think it will revolutionize your life because there is a reward that is waiting from your Father in that room, that can't be found anywhere else. Intimacy with Him. We pray to explore the mystery of intimacy with God.

To experience the power of being used by God.

Third purpose, we pray to express the depth of our needs for Him and explore the mystery of this intimacy with Him and third, to experience the power of being used by God. The power of being used by God.

Now we're going to dive into this more in the weeks to come, but suffice to say at this point, that there's a very common question that people would ask that deals with this whole picture of Jesus praying, and we talked a little earlier about this does this mean he's talking to himself or how does this work? He's talking to his Father, who is sovereign over everything in the world. And some would say that if you have a strong view of God and His sovereignty that just squelches prayer. And the argument goes something like this, the thought line is, "Well, if God knows everything and God's in control of everything and God has an ultimate plan and design that is going to be accomplished, then what is the point of me praying?" We're going to dive into that in the next couple of weeks, but I want us to decide to say at this point the response to that thought line, which is very reasonable, don't miss it, that God's sovereignty, also means that He in all of His sovereignty has ordained, has set in place in this divine plan, He has set in place prayer to be a means, maybe even the means through which He shows His power and His glory most clearly to His people.

That if God is in control of everything, He's also in control of setting up this thing called prayer in our lives and He's designed it so that you and I would be a part of what He's doing in this whole plan, through this means called prayer. I think this is the way God has designed it.

The design of prayer is two fold. One, we get to help. The overarching message of Luke 11:1-13 is that we have a Father in heaven who is ready to help us, who is ready to give to us just like a father desires to give to an earthly child even more so, a Father in heaven wants to give to us, but He's designed it so that we get to help in such a way that He gets the glory.

This is why Jesus prayed like he did all throughout these passages in Luke. Then you get to other places. Remember John, 11? Lazarus has died; he's in a tomb and Jesus comes there? He had a whole crowd of people, what is he going to do? He really messed up and got here late. And he gets there and before he called Lazarus out of that tomb, what does he say? He

prays and he says, "Father I'm praying. I already know you're listening to me, but I'm praying so these people around you will believe that you've sent me." Believe that you have the power to do this. And then he calls out Lazarus and he comes out.

It's why Jesus, before he took five loaves and two fish and fed over 5,000 people, why He lifted up His hands and He prayed because He wanted the people to see that we get the help in such a way that only He gets the glory. We have the privileged of showing to this world, not that we do things, not that we go to Venezuela and we go to the Ukraine and we go to Honduras because we like to do things. We go there and we ask God to give us everything we need and we ask Him to do it in such a way that only He gets the glory. And we're walking with Him and we're fulfilling this mission with Him and He's providing us with everything we need. That's why we must be a praying church because I want us to show the world that only God could do what He's doing with The Church at Brook Hills. I want people to see a people who are completely dependent on God so that we get the help and He gets all the glory. That's why He's designed prayer to be what it is.

Now, it's at this point I want us to take a step back and realize two things. Number one, the power of prayer is useless. The power of prayer is useless. Some of you are not sure what I mean by that. Power of prayer is useless. One of my biggest concerns is that we would walk away from this morning, that you would walk away from this morning, from this series, committed to pray more and that the end goal would be for you to pray. Be more structured, be more organized in your prayers that you would be known as a man of prayer or a woman of prayer. Because if that is our end goal, then we are no different than the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, or millions of other Christians who have yet to truly, authentically connect with the living God of the universe.

We live in a world where everybody prays, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, even Congress prays. There is no power in prayer. If that is our goal, just to pray, then we will end up creating Christianity to be just like every other religion in the world. However, the power of people who connect with the living God Almighty of the universe that power is unstoppable. The power of prayer is useless. The power of people who connect with the living God is unstoppable. Prayer is a means by which we encounter, we connect to the living God of the universe and it's at that point that we will see prevailing, powerful, victorious prayer. It's through God supplying it. It's God's power, not our power in prayer. It's God's power poured out on His people through stressing the depth of their need before Him, exploring the mystery of intimacy with God, experiencing the power being used by God.

Do you remember this back in 1 King 18? Elijah and the prophets of Baal, do you remember that whole story? Elijah confronts these 450 plus prophets of Baal. He said, "You guys build an altar and you pray to your god and you see if he brings down fire, then I'll pray to my God and we'll see if He brings down fire and we'll see who the real God is." And he calls them out and he talks trash to these guys. He just confronts them face on. They build this thing and for hours, all day long, they cut themselves, they slash themselves. They're praying over and over again. They're yelling louder and Elijah is on the side and he's taunting them, "Maybe you should shout louder. Maybe your god is asleep or he's traveling. You know, gods have to travel out of town sometimes. Maybe he's busy." And the beauty of 1 Kings 18 is that phrase, and its most common root is literally a phrase that means in the Old Testament, "Maybe he's on the john." Okay? That's what it means. It's just what it means. "Maybe, you know, gods have to use the restroom and maybe that's where he is. Maybe that's why he's not answering."

And so they call out over and over again and it's not happening. Elijah steps up and he doesn't pray all day. All he says is "God, I know that you hear me and I know that you want

to show your power and so I pray that you would do it." And all of a sudden, although that altar is filled with water all around it, fire comes down from heaven and everyone falls on his or her face saying, "The Lord is among you. The living God is among you." God deliver us from empty prayers that are done because they're our religious duty, because that will not separate us from any other religion in the world.

However, I'm convinced that with our world where the religions of the world are meeting together and nations are intersecting together, that God designed to show the prayers of these people to be the means by which He shows His unstoppable power in such a way that when we pray God acts and people say, "The living God is among you."

I'm sick and tired of Christianity being a routine of religious exercises including prayer that seems formless and leaves us asking, "What is the point, anyway?" God, make us a people who express the depths of our need before Him. And take the time. Go to the place where we all, corporately and individually can explore the mystery of intimacy with Him. And ultimately, we are a people that experience the power of being used by Him as we fall on our faces before Him.

David Younggi Cho, the pastor in Seoul, South Korea, talks about how his church prays. "At our church and other churches in South Korea," he says that "prayer time begins at 5:00 A.M. in the morning. We pray for one or two hours. That's every day of the week. After our prayer time, I begin the normal routines of our day. Since the most important thing in our lives is prayer, we have learned to retire early to bed. On Fridays we spend the entire night in prayer. We get together at 10:30 and pray until about 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning so they'd have an hour to get to the next place where they pray on Saturday morning. On Sundays we pray before each service. We pray during each service. The sound of thousands of Korean believers praying together reminds me of a thunderous roar of a mighty waterfall."

They have a place called Prayer Mountain, which is literally a city of prayer that's become so large and attracted so many that they have an auditorium that seats 10,000 there. Every day during the week there are nearly 3,000 or 4,000 people there that are fasting and praying. On the weekends they have 10,000, at times as many as 20,000 who will come to Prayer Mountain. David Younggi Cho pastors a church of 850,000 members. That God would grant us the grace to trust that He wants to do in and through The Church at Brook Hills things that today, we could never fathom. And that He would grant us the grace to be a people who are so desperate for Him that we fall on our faces and say need you God, we want to know you intimately and we want to experience the power of being useful.

Obviously, this morning, I got up earlier to preach than I normally do. Many times we look at music as kind of setting the stage for the Word. Well the Word has now set the stage for our response this morning. Some folks are going to come up and lead us in songs, in songs of prayer. What I want us to do is something different than we've done in a long time and over the next few minutes, I want to invite not one person in this room to be a spectator. Even if you're not a Christ follower, I want to invite you in the next few minutes to see the body of Christ's church pray so to actively observe that. And then for all of us who have a relationship with Christ I want us to pray.

And I'm not going to tell you necessarily exactly what to pray for, I want you to pray in desperation. Lord teach us to pray and let Him guide us through that. And what I'm going to do is when we begin the music in just a second, I'm going to just open up the front here for people all across the room. As you feel led, whether it's in this first song, second song, third song, anytime during the next few minutes for you to come down here and to pray. There are places on the side that are available for you just to go to the side and pray, if you'd like.

If you'd like to get on your knees right there at your seat if you're physically able to do that. If you'd like to stand. If you'd like to stay seated. If you'd like to sing along. If you'd like to pray. If you'd like to pray out loud or you like to pray in silence, that may make us a little awkward, but I want us to pray all over this room. I want us to pray as a faith family like we are desperate for Him. I want us to throw up a prayer like we can do nothing without divine intervention. And I'm going to trust that the Holy Spirit, God will guide us in our prayers.

Dear God, we pray for the privilege of being in your presence. And we pray that you would make us a people who connect with you in a way that's unstoppable. God I pray that across this room you would teach us to pray and over the next few minutes that you would grant us grace to express complete and total desperation for you. In Jesus' name we pray. So you continue in prayer, this altar is open. Feel free to go anywhere in the room you would like. You feel free to pray with the people around you. You just pray as the Spirit of God leads you. No spectators. We're all participating in this picture of desperate prayer.

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