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Being the Hands of Jesus Through Our Prayers

MARK 1:32-35

Introduction

1. Have you ever stopped to consider the power and effectiveness of your prayers.
2. Great things happen in this world because God's people pray.
3. This past week, we had what many of our staff called our best week ever.
4. I attribute much of that to the prayers prayed on our behalf by Christians from a host of congregations, this one included.
5. Imagine what can happen if all of us as Christians were devoted to prayer.
6. In Colossians 4:2, Paul wrote, "Devote yourselves to prayer."
7. Today, let's look at Jesus' devotion to prayer, and what we may learn from it.

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I. Giving Priority To Our Prayer Lives

A. TIME WITH HIS FATHER WAS IMPORTANT TO JESUS

1. Mark tells us about a time, in Capernaum, when Jesus went to the home of Peter and Andrew (Mark 1:29).
 - a. There He healed Peter's mother-in-law, who was sick in bed with a fever (vv. 30-31).
 - b. That evening, people began bringing to Him "all who were ill and . . . demon-possessed" (v. 32).
 - c. Mark says, "the whole city had gathered at the door" (v. 33).
 - d. Jesus healed them.

- e. In Mark 1:35, we find these words, “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.”
2. Luke, in Luke 4:42, references this same occasion.
 - a. He, too, tells us that Jesus went to a secluded place, but He adds something more.
 - b. “. . . the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away” (v. 42).
3. In the next chapter of Luke’s gospel, he tells us in 5:15 that, “large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.”
4. He then adds this statement, “But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:16).
 - ❑ Is our time with God as important in our lives? Do we seek out time to pray to Him?

Slide 3**B. JESUS PRAYED DURING IMPORTANT EVENTS IN HIS LIFE**

1. Following His baptism (Luke 3:21)

“Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,” (Luke 3:21, NASB95)
2. Prior to choosing the twelve men who would become His disciples (Luke 6:12).

“It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.” (Luke 6:12, NASB95)
3. On the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28)

“Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.” (Luke 9:28, NASB95)

- ❑ Do we pray about those things we consider important in our own lives (i.e., choice of friends, education, spouse, career path, house, our influence in the lives of others)?

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II. Engaging Ourselves In Purposeful Praying

A. "PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU" (LUKE 6:28)

1. This word which, in the NASB, has been translated as "mistreat" is translated by the NKJV as "spitefully use" and by the ESV as "abuse."
2. Jesus said we are to pray for those who treat us in such a way.

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B. PRAY FOR STRENGTH TO ESCAPE SATAN'S SCHEMES (LUKE 21:34-36)

"But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36, NASB95)

1. In the verses which precede this verse, Jesus has been speaking about two things — the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and His own second coming.
2. Prior to this, in verse 34, Jesus said, "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap."
 - a. "Dissipation" is a reference to the "bad things people do when they are very drunk."
 - b. Here, Jesus said, "be on your guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down" with these things and with "the worries of life."
3. Instead, we are to pray for "strength to escape all these things that are about to take place."

4. In Ephesians 6:11-17, Paul warns us to put on “the full armor of God,” so that we will be able “to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (v. 11).
5. In verse 18, he adds, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”
 - a. “With all prayer and petition” — there is to be a thoroughness and intensity in our prayers
 - b. “Pray at all times” — our prayers are to be continual
“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - c. “Pray in the Spirit”
 - 1) Through the power and sphere of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) When we “do not know how to pray as we should” (Romans 8:26), the Spirit “intercedes for [us] the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:34).
 - d. “Be on the alert” — like a good soldier, we are not to be caught off guard
 - e. “With all perseverance and petition for all the saints”
 - 1) Our requests to God are to be for all the saints. Why?
 - 2) Because of Satan’s continual spiritual warfare against Christ and His church.
6. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told Peter that Satan had demanded permission to “sift [him] like wheat” (Luke 22:31).
7. Jesus, however, encouraged Peter by telling him, “I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail . . .” (v. 32).
 - ❑ It is a frightening thing to know that Satan can have such power over our lives. However, it strengthens our hearts to know that our prayers

for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and their prayers for us can prevent him from doing that to us. Are you praying for those you know? If not, you are neglecting one of the greatest weapons which God has place in our arsenal.

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C. PRAY FOR THE GOSPEL TO ACCOMPLISH ITS WORK

1. Paul asked the Christians at Ephesus to pray for two things:
 - a. That when he opened his mouth, God would give him the message to speak — “that words may be given to me in opening my mouth” (Ephesians 6:19, ESV).
 - b. That he would be given the “boldness” necessary to make the gospel known.
2. He asked the Christians at Colosse to pray that God would open for him and those with him “a door for the word” (Colossians 4:3).
3. He asked the Christians in Thessalonica to pray for them that “the word of the Lord [would] spread rapidly and be glorified” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

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III. The Person To Whom We Direct Our Prayers

A. OUR FATHER

1. You and I pray to the one true God who Jesus said we may call, “our Father” (Matthew 6:8).
2. We declare His name to be “hallowed” (Matthew 6:8) or holy and ask that His “kingdom come” and His “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).
3. Jesus said that if you or I ask the Father for anything in His name, it will be given to us (John 16:23).

4. Not only did Jesus teach us to address the first person of the godhead as "Father," He did so Himself.
 - a. At the beginning of His prayer in Matthew 11:25, Jesus prayed, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth . . ."
 - b. Twice, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He addressed God as "My Father" (Matthew 26:39, 42).
5. As He died on the cross, He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).
6. John's gospel, however, is different.
7. The words pray, prayer or praying are not found in his gospel.
8. Instead, John shows us, time after time, Jesus praying to His Father:
 - a. In John 11:41, prior to raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank You that you have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me . . ."
 - b. In John 12:28, tells about His coming death, He stops to pray these words, "Father, glorify Your name."
 - c. Six times in the prayer which He prays with His disciples before going to the Garden of Gethsemane He speaks to His Father:
 - 1) "Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You" (John 17:1).
 - 2) "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).
 - 3) "Holy Father, keep them in Your name" (John 17:11).
 - 4) "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21).

- 5) “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given to Me, may be where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me . . .” (John 17:24).
- 6) “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me” (John 17:25).

7b**B. OUR ACCESS TO HIM HAS BEEN GRANTED BY JESUS**

1. In Ephesians 2:18, Paul said that you and I “through [Jesus Christ] . . . have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”
2. Because Jesus grants us such unprecedented access, we are encouraged in Hebrews 4:16 to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
 - a. “Throne of grace”
 - 1) Sovereignty
 - a) God Almighty (Genesis 17:1)
 - b) “I am the Lord, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:5).
 - 2) Benevolence (Grace)
 - a) At His throne we find grace
 - b) What we need, not what we deserve.
 - b. “So that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”
 - 1) When we as Christians are suffering because of Satan’s attacks in our lives.
 - 2) When his constant harassment has beaten us down, we are encouraged to boldly come before God’s throne in prayer to find what we need.

Conclusion

1. Are you enjoying the blessings which God brings to you through prayer?
2. Are you being the "Hands of Jesus" by praying for those of us in His church and those outside of His kingdom?
3. If so, then many of our blessings and those which others experience are the result of your prayers.
4. If not, you are failing to utilize the power which God brings to bear in this world because of the saints prayers.
5. Will you not begin today to lift up your voice in prayer to our Father in Heaven.
6. If you are not a Christian today, please know that there are those who are praying for you. Your soul is precious to God. Your eternal salvation is at stake.
7. Please don't delay.