

“The Weapon of Prayer – Part 1”
Luke 22:7-34 * March 20, 2008

Reflection 1: Prayer is Communing With God, Listening For His Voice

1. What about Jesus’ instructions to Peter and John might have sounded odd?

The bit about finding a man carrying a jar, then following him to a house, then asking the owner where his guestroom is, then finding it fully furnished, ready to go, as if it had all been arranged in advance. (And this same sort of thing happened earlier with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.)

2. What can we reasonably assume had happened with these other people?

The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly, but I think we can make a reasonable assumption that either Jesus had prearranged this himself outside of his disciples knowing about it, or God through his Spirit or through an angel or through a vision had given instructions to each of these people that he wanted to use them. “I want to use your donkey. I want to use your house.” Because none of them are surprised when the disciples show up. They’ve been briefed in advance and they’re ready to be used.

3. What are the lessons here for us?

a. Before your day **begins**, commit your **plans** to God.

The morning may not be your major prayer time in the day – maybe for you that comes later – but you need to still pray in the morning. Take that to-do list of yours, present it before God and say, “Lord, this is the stuff on my plate today. These are the people I’m planning on seeing. These are the projects I’m going to tackle. Please help me to use my time today in a way that honors you. Direct my steps. Bless my conversations. Help me to see others through your eyes today.

b. During your major time of prayer in the day, make sure much of it is spent **listening**.

4. If I want to play “The Tune” in my life, what must I do?

Don’t you do all the talking. Quiet your heart. Still your mind. “Be still and know that I am God” the Bible says. Open up your Bible and open up your heart, and begin to listen. Meditate on the Scriptures you’ve been reading that day. God speaks in a still, small voice the Bible says, so you’ll have to turn down the noise, and keep your mind from racing.

5. If I learn to listen, what sort of things might I expect to hear from God?

If you’re truly listening to his voice, he will talk to you a lot about your sin. Not in a condemning way. If you ever hear a voice in your head that accuses you of being worthless, and idiotic and without value or use to anyone I assure you – that is not God. Even in his rebukes, God speaks as a loving Father to us, and even though there is sternness at times in his voice, there is always gentleness too, and another thing that that surprised me too when I first started to listen to God’s voice was how often he told me, “I love you, son.”

Reflection 2: Prayer Is Battling With God, Interceding For Others.

1. In Ezekiel 22:30, what is God looking for?

In Ezekiel 22:30, God says, “I looked for a man...whom would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.” Intercessors are people who ‘stand in the gap’ before God on behalf of people and situations, who ‘build up walls’ of protection and blessing and favor around them.

2. Whom did Satan want to “sift like wheat”?

Satan wants to ‘sift’ the disciples like wheat. The word ‘you’ in verse 31 is plural. It refers to all of them. Satan wants to test them and break them and destroy them. “But I have prayed for you, Simon”, now the word in verse 32 is singular, referring to Peter. Peter is the one Jesus has chosen in this situation to stand in the gap and build up the wall. “I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

3. Who was Jesus praying for in this exchange? Did his prayers matter?

Peter failed the immediate test – he denied his Lord, but he did not fail the ultimate test of his allegiance to Christ, for he returned, he didn’t stay defeated, no doubt because of Jesus’ prayer. “And when you have turned back, Peter,” Jesus says, “strengthen your brothers.”

4. Does the same spiritual realm surround us today? Do our prayers matter?

The same spiritual realm surrounds us today, my friends, and Satan is still fighting God at every turn, resisting the spread of the gospel, trying to bring down the church, destroy its leaders, sift its people, just as before. Though the gospel has spread to the four corners of the earth, though the glory of God is filling the earth, though the gates of hell have not prevailed against us, Satan has not surrendered yet. And the moment we take our eyes off of Jesus, is the moment Satan starts trying to reclaim lost ground. New England used to be a land of revivals and great awakenings, a place where the Spirit of God was in full operation. Now – it’s a spiritual wasteland. We don’t have to settle for this friends. You and I are called as Christ’s disciples to join the battle. It’s our turn to fight. It’s our turn to intercede.

5. When Paul lists our spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, where is prayer?

It’s interesting to note that when Paul lists all the spiritual armor in Ephesians 6, not one of the pieces of armor is prayer. We got the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the Sword of the Spirit – you say where’s prayer? It comes at the end of the whole list. Eph. 6:18 – “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” You see prayer is not a piece of armor or a spiritual weapon, it is the way in which we use our armor. It is the way in which we use our weapon. When I take the Sword of the Spirit in my hands, I do so with prayer. When I share the gospel of peace with others, I do so with prayer. When I lift high my shield of faith, I do so with prayer. Prayer undergirds it all. And without prayer, I can’t use any of these weaponry.
