The Power or Prayer

## (1 Corinthians 6:17)

Welcome, all of you, to Christ’s Community Church. I want to talk to you about the power of prayer because prayer is so important. In fact, it is so important that Jesus specifically taught his disciples how to pray and as believers today, we pray because it comes naturally in the context of relational intimacy with God our Father. For many of us we make time to meet with him and pray in the mornings after waking up. We pray before a big test, before submitting a project, when we need strength, before meals or at the end of the day. And yet many of us struggle with prayer because we find ourselves having little to say, or if you’re like me you are easily distracted, and so we feel guilty for how little we actually pray.

My goal this morning is that you would not just understand prayer more, but that you would have a hunger to seek God and spend time talking to him like you never had before. And so, as we begin talking about the power of prayer, in Luke chapter 11 we find that the disciples have been following Jesus for a while now, they have seen him do all kinds of crazy things, like taking five loaves of bread and two fish and feeding five thousand people. Or spitting in the dirt and making a little mud pie with his finger and then taking that finger and putting that mud in a blind man’s eye and restoring his sight. The disciples have seen this and so much more, but never do we find them saying, “Jesus, teach us how to do that spitting in the mud thing, or teach us how you fed all those people.” What we do find them saying is found in Luke chapter 11, verse one, after they had seen Jesus praying.

Luke tells, “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1).

And so, Jesus had been praying and there was something about Jesus’ prayer that made them jump up and say, “Lord, teach us to pray like that.” Now, we don’t know exactly what it is that they saw because the Bible doesn’t tell us, but you can bet that it was intimate, it was relational, and it was passionate. I believe Jesus’ prayer was powerful, it was raw, it was holy and supernatural as heaven came down to earth. And so, whatever it was that they saw as Jesus was praying created a longing and a hunger deep inside of them for that same experience.

The Bible tells us that Jesus did teach them how to pray, but he didn’t say, “Pray in these words,” he said, “This is how you should pray.” In other words, it’s a pattern or a model for how to pray. He said,

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:9-13).

The focus of this pattern for prayer is “Our Father,” in other words, it’s not about us, it’s about “Our Father.” It’s about glorifying his name and accomplishing his will on earth. And so, this prayer begins with God’s interests and not ours, praying about his name, his reputation, his kingdom and his will. As we pray, we put God’s concerns first, we put his glory and praise first, and then we bring our own needs for daily bread, our sin, our obligations, and our Christian walk.

The most important thing to recognize and acknowledge in prayer is that you are communing with God, the creator of the universe, who is holy, gracious, all-powerful and all-knowing. This kind of access to the throne room of heaven is amazing, but even more so, even deeper is what the apostle Paul tells us in first Corinthians chapter 6, verse 17. He says, that as we come to God in faith,

“He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

And so, as we come to “Our Father in Heaven” in prayer, through faith in his Son Jesus Christ, we are united with him, becoming one with him in spirit.

Now, maybe you ask how could something so Holy and so Divine become one with something so lowly and imperfect? And I believe it really has to do with a combination of two things, creation and redemption,

“In the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

As those created in the image of God, we have three different aspects to our being, and once we can grasp this foundational truth it will open up our understanding of how God relates to us, not just in prayer, but also with the anointing. You see, each one of us are body, soul, and spirit, because that is the image of God in us, that is how we were created. That’s why the apostle Paul prays in first Thessalonians, chapter 5,

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

In this passage God gives us a glimpse of the triune nature of our existence.

You see, our unity, our fellowship with God, is based upon creation and redemption. That’s why the apostle Paul prays that God would sanctify you, that you would be set apart, so that your whole spirit, soul and body would be kept blameless. In other words, he’s talking about personal holiness, he’s talking about the whole being, he’s talking about the redemption of your physical body in which you interact with your environment and others through speech, sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. That’s what he says in Romans chapter 8 going a little deeper,

“We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23).

And so, we are one with God in spirit, because of creation and because of redemption. Our body and soul are outer shells of who we are, the soul being the neutral ground of the mind, the will, the emotions and personality. Each of these contributing to how you behave and what you’re going to express through your physical body, which is groaning, waiting for its redemption.

We’ve talked about our unity because of creation and redemption, but there is a deeper part of you referred to as your spirit where you connect with God. Jesus said in John chapter 7, whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,

“From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38, NASU).

And so, as we pray and worship, it’s from the spirit, it’s not out of the body, and it’s not out of the soul. He said, “Out of the innermost being will flow rivers of living water.” In other words, the movement of the Holy Spirit is not just rained down from heaven, it’s a river from within.

Therefore, as a believer, once we’ve received the deposit of the Holy Spirit, it’s not something that I have to receive, it’s something that I must release. That’s why the Bible says to pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus, but then it says,

“Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

This is important to understand because we often pray, “God, fill me with the Holy Spirit,” but we insist on being full of ourselves, full of our own ambitions and our own selfish intentions instead of yielding those areas of our lives to God. And so, what begins to happen as we begin to stifle the flow of the Holy Spirit, not because we don’t have him, but because he doesn’t have us. That’s why Jesus told the woman at the well in John chapter 4,

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

And so, we can’t effectively pray, worship, and serve from our flesh, from our physical body, because God’s Spirit is released from within. All true worship is in spirit and in truth, so it’s the Holy Spirit that takes the Word and brings forth revelation, and our worship is a response to that revelation. Anything more is merely a performance; trying to work up in the flesh what can only be accomplished in the spirit.

Now, I’m not talking about jumping, dancing, shouting, and clapping in worship. What I’m talking about is Christians who’ve become tired because they’re fighting from the flesh rather than resting in the Spirit. When that happens, we become discouraged, and we don’t pray and fight for holiness like we should, because we were trying to persevere in the flesh, the tent, or the outer shell of our physical body. But that doesn’t mean that we haven’t been called to persevere, that there isn’t work that we have to do, and that’s why Jesus said to “ask, seek, and knock.” That’s why he taught his disciples to pray and not give up.

The problem is that I think many believers imagine God looking out over the threshold of heaven just waiting for something more, waiting for the correct response, waiting for mountain moving faith, waiting for that real dynamic prayer, because we misunderstand what persistent prayer is. It’s not you trying to persuade God. In fact, I was thinking about Moses pleading with God, urging him to change his mind, and what I realized is that it was God’s will that he would show mercy to Israel in the first place. And so, God was just waiting for someone with faith like Moses to pray:

“Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

And so, God is not looking down from heaven waiting for someone to fast and pray a little longer, or maybe just shout a little louder, because our persistence in prayer doesn’t change God’s will, persistent prayer puts you in God’s will as you wait and trust him. As we persevere in prayer it gets us ready to be able to receive God’s will on earth.

I’m telling you all this because I’m trying to get you to understand the power of prayer. You see, there’s a difference between those who pray from the flesh, praying out of emotion, praying from their ego, praying for those material things that they crave and desire. Because God is not moved by our emotions, he’s moved by our faith, and so we need to understand the vast contrast between praying in the Holy Spirit and praying in the flesh.

In other words, all kinds of people can pray, anyone can pray, even atheists pray when they get in trouble, but as followers of Christ the Bible says,

“You, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20).

Because powerful and effective prayer is when you’re praying in the Holy Spirit. It’s praying in the Spirit that is our privilege as believers, because the Bible tells us in first Corinthians chapter 6,

“He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

And so, other faiths approach prayer as a means of connecting with God, but the Bible tells us that he who is united with Jesus Christ is already one with him in spirit. That’s the beautiful thing about praying in the Holy Spirit, you’re not praying to connect with God, you’re praying from your connection with God, because you are already one with him in spirit.

In the same way, you don’t worship to connect with God, you worship out of that connection. And so, I am already one with God in my spirit, there is this ongoing fellowship with God, this communion with God that is occurring 24/7 on a daily basis in my spirit. And this is the privilege of all believers, we can know the things of God, because in my spirit I am one with him, in my spirit I am already holy, and in my spirit I know all things. That’s what the Bible says in first John chapter 2, verse 27,

“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him” (1 John 2:27).

And so, according to the Word of God, I have received the anointing and I don’t need anyone to teach me that I am saved. We know that because the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 8,

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children” (Romans 8:16).

And so, it’s not that I don’t need someone to teach me the Word of God, otherwise God would not have given us as Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11 says, “some to be pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). But God gave us the anointing of the Holy Spirit to stir us deep inside, so that we can know, so that we can understand the Word, and so that we can worship in spirit and in truth. The power of prayer and this inner knowing comes from the anointing that we have received from Jesus. That is the work of the Holy Spirit within us, energizing my spiritual life, because I am one with him in spirit.

In fact, even now as I am talking something is stirring, something is clicking in your mind, because revelation from God is not receiving new knowledge, it’s understanding what you already know in your spirit. You see, the truth is already in you and that’s why we must surrender to the Holy Spirit, so that what you already know in our spirit is manifested in our understanding. It’s spirit to Spirit, my spirit talking to God’s Spirit, and God’s Spirit talking to my spirit. And that’s why the apostle Paul said,

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26).

This verse is often misunderstood because it’s so amazing, but the Bible tells us in first Corinthians chapter 6, verse 17, that he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. And so, the spirit and I are one, and Romans chapter 8 tells me that the Holy Spirit intercedes, meaning that the Holy Spirit prays prayers over me when I don’t know what to pray.

This is important as it comes to the topic of the power of prayer, and so let me take it even deeper. First Corinthians chapter 14, verse two tells me, that when I speak in tongues nobody understands me because,

“Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit” (1 Corinthians 14:2).

And so, the Bible says that when I’m praying in tongues, when I’m praying in the spirit, I am collaborating with God. In other words, I am speaking to him and he is speaking mysteries to me, there is this impartation of spiritual things, and that’s why in that same chapter, in verse four, the apostle Paul says,

“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself…” (1 Corinthians 14:4).

In other words, when the Bible says that the Holy Spirit prays for you with groanings that words cannot express, it’s communicating an urgency deep within that is so profound that it will transform who you are; because the one who knows you better than anyone else is praying for you with more love, more passion, more concern than a parent can even pray for their own child. And so, it’s these groanings that express the intensity of this prayer, with tears streaming down his face the Spirit grunts with a deep yearning as he prays for you.

The Bible says that not only does the Holy Spirit intercede for us with groanings that words cannot express, but he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:26-27). In other words, the Holy Spirit is praying, he is interceding, to move you into the will of God. His prayer is to incline you, persuade you, move you to surrender yourself completely to his will. And so, he wants you to give yourself to him as he’s praying according to God’s will so that he may impart greater gifts and revelation using your mouth and your body.

There is a unity of spirit and purpose, because we’re not two spirits, it’s not your spirit and the Holy Spirit, it’s one spirit as the Bible tells us in first Corinthians chapter 6,

“He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

And so, as the Holy Spirit prays for me, and my spirit agrees with what the Holy Spirit prays, we are praying the same thing in accordance with God’s will. In the same way, when I pray in the spirit, I am praying what the Holy Spirit is praying. That’s what the Bible tells me in first Corinthians chapter 14, when I pray in tongues, I’m not praying, but my spirit is praying. And so, the power of prayer is when you pray in the Spirit, when you pray in tongues, because you’re praying with the language of heaven.

That’s why we want to surrender to the Holy Spirit, because so often we are consumed with ourselves, and our prayers are all about ourselves. But when we pray in the power of the Holy Spirit our words are void of our own understanding and our own intentions, because the Holy Spirit is praying for you and through you, and you are praying simple God centered prayers. That heavenly language, the groanings that come from the spirit, that river coming from deep within, the groanings that move us toward the will of God is flowing out moving through your soul and your body as it comes out with your voice.

This beautiful prayer language that God has given to us is the manifestation of the power of prayer. When Peter stood up before the crowd on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, he said,

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off…” (Acts 2:38-39).

This is the power of prayer, the gift of the Holy Spirit, it’s for all generations and for all who believe. This is the promise of the Father for all believers, and that’s why Jesus said to wait on it. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normative experience of the first century church and that’s why Paul said,

“I would like every one of you to speak in tongues” (1 Corinthians 14:5).

And so, the gift of tongues is for every believer as they surrender to the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not some dramatic outward transformation. The Bible describes the Spirit of God descending like a dove, quietly and gently, but it’s what happens on the inside that is most important. True spiritual breakthrough comes from these small internal shifts as you align your will with God’s will in a simple moment of surrender. You see, at salvation you surrender your will to God, but you will spend the rest of your life surrendering everything else to him, because there are areas, things hidden in us that have to be surrendered in a process called sanctification.

The power of prayer comes through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The moment that we yield our body and will to him, surrendering to him, giving ourselves to him, the Spirit rises up, filling us from the inside out so that we become immersed in who he is. We become one with him, able to pray in agreement with him, praying according to the will of God, and in the power of the Spirit. The manifestation of this gift is not just meaningless words, it’s praying in agreement with and according to the will of God.

In a moment, I want to pray for those of you who want to receive this gift, but what we want to do first is take a moment to surrender to him. The apostle Paul describes us as living sacrifices, he said offer yourselves as living sacrifices, and so this is something that we need to do every morning, because living sacrifices keep getting down off the altar. And so, as living sacrifices we offer ourselves once again, coming boldly to his throne of grace, knowing that he will welcome you back, and he will never reject you.

And so, with hands lifted and eyes closed, I want you to begin to pray in the Holy Spirit if you do. All of you, seek the Lord with me, seek his presence, and surrender to him. This is a holy moment, just surrender everything and from the depths of your Spirit cry out. Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to him right now. Just surrender everything to him, lay it all down, tell him Jesus I am yours.

As the worship team begins playing, if you are believing for the gift of tongues and you have never prayed in tongues before would you come up here right now. Come to the altar if you want powerful prayers and ask for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I believe God is preparing to do something miraculous today.

In fact, Jesus said, “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 11:13).

Ask him to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, it is the promise of the Father, and so you receive it by faith. Surrender to the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of tongues, receive your prayer language, receive the gifts of the Spirit and begin to praise him.

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