

I. The Third Element: “*The Right Ask*” Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor February 10, 2008

- A. Last week we talked about prayer as the means to developing a Christian Life View: *10 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.*
- B. Prayer is aligning our Will and our Way with God’s Will and Way, not vice versa.
- C. Most of us are still trying to change God’s mind about the way things should be on earth.
- D. Jesus teaches us to pray for God’s Kingdom and God’s Will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.
- E. Henry Blackaby states, “When you know God’s Will, you will know God’s will for your life.”
- F. We reverse it. We want to know God’s Will for our life or, worse yet, we want to tell God what we think His will for our life should be. We rarely ask first God just teach me your will.
- G. *Micah 6:8 (NKJV) He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*
- H. *1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 (NKJV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; {4} that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, {5} not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; {6} that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. {7} For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.*
 - 1. It is a little hard for God to reveal His will for our life when we are walking in His Will.
- I. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NKJV) Rejoice always, {17} pray without ceasing, {18} in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
- J. How well you are doing these 3 things: Rejoice (being Joyful), Praying without ceasing (keeping God in your thoughts during the day) and being Thankful in good times and bad. Do those three things and you are in God’s will.
- K. Prayer is more about seeking what God wants for our lives than it is about us telling God what we want for our lives.
- L. *James 4:1-4 (NRSV) Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? {2} You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. {3} You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. {4} Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*
- M. This leads us to the Prayer that Jesus teaches His disciples to pray.
- N. *Matthew 6: 9 'Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. 10 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 'Give us this day our daily bread. 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. <For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.>'*
- O. Though church attendance may be down, and truly professing Christians seem to be in decline, most polls will show that Americans still pray or at least hold out some hope for its effectiveness.
- P. Newsweek and Time will, over a couple year cycle, do articles on Prayer or Faith in the U.S. Several years ago the cover story was “The Mystery of Prayer”
 - 1. Most of the story was pretty much a rehashing of the same type of stuff sorority and fraternity bull sessions have discussed for years
 - 2. And it pretty much degenerated into this is what I think Prayer is.
- Q. We, however, have been taught to pray.

1. We have learned to address God as Father
2. That He is Holy and we are not
3. That our principle goal for praying is to understand what the Kingdom of God is and then where I fit particularly as far as His will
4. Today we come to a transitional point.
 - a. Now the prayer becomes personal
 - b. My needs, my wants, my bread

R. One thing I hope you will take away from the message is: “How to Make the Right Ask of God.”

II. ***The Right Ask 1: Ask in Faith***

- A. I've heard people say I never pray for myself
- B. Nothing wrong praying for yourself, just learn to pray for the right thing.
- C. *Matthew 7:7-11 (NRSV) "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. {8} For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. {9} Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? {10} Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? {11} If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"*
- D. *Luke 11:9-13 (NRSV) "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. {10} For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. {11} Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? {12} Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? {13} If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

III. ***The Right Ask 2: It is Daily***

- A. You are not going to last long in God's Kingdom as a Disciple of Jesus Christ until you get use to this daily approach to life.
- B. Those of us who want to know the picture, the long-range plan, the purpose, will eventually have a hard time with Kingdom living, the type of living Jesus taught, the type of living the Lord's Prayer describes
- C. The word used in Greek is *Επιουσιον* - *Epiouision* The meaning of which is unclear: *for today; for the coming day; necessary for existence.*
- D. It is a word that most versions of the Bible translate as daily.
- E. It is a word not used in Greek literature.
- F. Origen, one of the early Church fathers (Barclay) felt that Matthew had invented the word to match whatever Jesus had said in the language of Aramaic.
- G. The best explanation of the word can be formed from a papyrus fragment found containing the word, which had been a woman's shopping list.
- H. It is a shopping list to go to the market and get provision for just what is needed for the day.
- I. When you go to God as Jesus describes, it's going for those needs that present themselves on a daily basis and nothing more
- J. It is consistent with how God always deals with His people
 1. When Moses led the Hebrew people into the wilderness, Exodus 1:1-21, God gave them manna, Bread from Heaven
 2. There was one condition, gather only enough for the day
 3. Whenever they gathered more than they needed, it would be spoiled by the next morning.

- 4. Every morning, God replenished the supply.
- K. As you learn to pray, you must ultimately know that God is most concerned with your needs for the day, nothing beyond that.
- L. Praying for Daily Bread puts you in a position where you have to trust.
- M. *Proverbs 3:5 (NRSV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. Proverbs 3:6-7 (NRSV) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. {7} Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

IV. ***The Right Ask 3: Our Survival Depends on Bread***

- A. Praying for daily bread seems pretty basic, when we have a war going on in Iraq, when children are dying in epidemic proportion from the Aids virus, when prejudice and genocide still are the ruling factors in many 3rd world countries
- B. Praying for daily bread seems so simple, so basic.
- C. Have you ever pondered the ingredients of bread?
- D. Do you ever wonder who made the first the loaf?
- E. There is an awful lot that goes into bread
- F. In The Complete Idiot's Guide to Prayer: the journey of food from planting to dinner table is a complex process that requires the efforts, skills, and faithfulness of countless people. Every time we eat, we receive a gift that comes to us through man hands. It is not merely our efforts that secure our daily bread. This is not the type of thing we ought to take for granted....
- G. It states further: Christian prayer is not about ethereal spirituality; it is no mere consciousness-raising into airy transcendence. Prayer is about survival. This petition is a stark reminder of how close we are to not being, of how fragile our world really is, of how little it takes to disrupt everything we take for granted, of how vulnerable we really are. In other words, this is a prayer about dependence, utter dependence upon God for everything.
- H. It is good to note that Jesus teaches us to pray Our Father, Our daily bread, not just for me personally, but prayer for others is good
- I. But we have learned already that what we are ultimately praying for is God's Kingdom, and God's Will

V. ***The Right Ask 4: The Bread of Life***

- A. *Matthew 4:4 (NRSV) But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*
- B. I love bread and I think I could live on it alone. I have never met a carbohydrate I didn't like.
- C. Whole grain is best. I love it. I try to eat bread that has the highest fiber content. If you do weight watchers, the number of points that a slice of bread has is lower the more fiber it has. That makes absolutely no sense to those of you who don't have to worry about your weight or have never done Weigh Watchers.
- D. One of the problems in prayer is that we often settle for bread that really doesn't satisfy our appetite.
- E. *. John 6: 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*
- F. Jesus is the Bread of Life
- G. Matthew records these words of Jesus in the 5th chapter v. 6 *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*
- H. A few verses past the Lord's Prayer, *Matt 6: 33 and 34 Jesus says, 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

- I. When we get on the same wavelength as Jesus, what becomes important is not so much what we pray for as it is for whom we pray.
- J. As we seek daily bread, we come to find out that it is our relationship with Jesus that is most important,
- K. We begin to pray, not so much for our daily shopping list, but for daily confidence, that Jesus' Kingdom is coming, that His righteousness be displayed in our lives, that our worries about what happens tomorrow are all wrapped up in the love of Jesus.
- L. Is there any doubt why Jesus would chose bread as one of the ways we would remember Him?
- M. Actually, the symbols of bread and wine are the greatest reminder of what life looks like in the Kingdom of God.
- N. When we are reminded of what Jesus Christ has done for us, our worries about tomorrow are put into perspective.
- O. Daily life with a God who is present in such an ordinary thing as bread.
- P. Daily life with a God who sent His only son to be broken in order for us to know of His great love for us.
- Q. Who shed his own blood, that we might start each new day as a New Creature in Jesus Christ.
- R. (Ushers and Worship Leaders Come)
- S. What is keeping you from enjoying a relationship with your Holy Heavenly Father?
- T. What keeps you from entering the Kingdom of God?
- U. What stands in the way of you being in God's will?
- V. What is it beyond today, this very moment, that we can control or even plan for?
- W. Nothing. The bread and the cup are here today.
- X. You don't have to be a member here.
- Y. You don't have to a Methodist.
- Z. You don't have to be perfect.
- AA. You just have to be hungry.

VI. Prayer