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January 22nd, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 6: 7-13

Sermon Title: The Spirituality of Jesus and the Lord's Prayer

Prayer...

Introduction:

The Spirituality of Jesus and the Lord's Prayer...

- Three Weeks on the Lord's Prayer
- Two weeks reflecting on two different stories of Jesus that highlight his spirituality.

What is spirituality and what do I mean by the Spirituality of Jesus?

Christina Puchalski, MD, Director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, says that "spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred."

Other definitions of spirituality highlight that the sacred is another name for God. So experiencing the sacred is experiencing God in many ways.

Today, I wish to look at the Spirituality of Jesus by exploring two of his ideas from the Lord's Prayer. I want to look at the personal relationship he has with his Father and his prayer that the kingdom of God would come to earth.

Our passage starts with the disciples asking Jesus how to pray. Jesus seems to suggest that prayer can be simple. It does not need many words. For Jesus, prayer is about a heart experience with God.

Do you ever pray and feel like you just fill up space with words? Jesus invites us to focus our prayers on a tangible God, a knowable God.

The prayer starts...

1. Our Father Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name or the interpretation for the new NRSV translation is, “may your name be revered as holy.

- Note that for Jesus God is his parent, his Father. In Jewish culture, the Father is Abba, a personal Daddy. I remember visiting a rabbi friend named Yitzok Adlerstein. He offered us a wonderful Shabbat meal with great food and wine. At the end of the evening his wife, came over and gently called him Abba- honoring him as the Father of his family of I believe eight kids. I like the personal nature of Jesus in his prayer. He relates to God as a parent. Personally, I sometime image God also as a Mother. In our family, we teach our girls to pray to God as Our Mother or Our Father because it symbolizes that God can be reflected in both female and male images.
- The portion of the prayer that includes Hallowed be thy name, reminds us that although God is relational and

approachable like a loving parent is with a child, God is also Holy. As we focus on God we should show reverence, respect, and appreciation. A more modern way of saying what I mean is that we can approach God with dignity. We want to honor God with our prayer. Showing him honor or worship is different than keeping him at a distance. Showing God dignity or respect does not mean we pull back from God. Prayer is intimate and close like a warm hug, but there is a holiness and beauty to prayer as we enjoy the holiness of God. There is a purity to our relationship with God by just being near her or him.

2. Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done.

- This is a powerful portion of the Lord's Prayer because here Jesus shows his priority. Many Biblical Scholars believe that at the heart of Jesus' teaching is his emphasis on the

kingdom of God. In the days of Jesus there were Kings and rulers. This was before democratic governments ruled by representatives. In the days of Jesus, The King or Emperor was in charge and had a plan for the kingdom. Jesus uses this cultural idea of kingdoms to highlight that God's kingdom is what we should focus on. Jesus's goal and prayer is that the kingdom of heaven, where God rules, will come to earth.

- What does the kingdom of God mean? The kingdom of God refers to the fulfillment of God's will on earth. I heard a speaker once say that the kingdom of God is God's way of doing things.
- For example the kingdom of God is similar to the image of the Beloved Community taught by Martin Luther King Jr. A world that is nonviolent and loving, where we provide support for those who are houseless, provide education for

all, and put an end to racism and other forms of discrimination.

- This last week I saw the kingdom of God on earth come to earth in many ways, but I will mention two.

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration- George Fox and

Newberg High School black students led the celebration and they embodied a spirit of love and unity while calling for justice and peace in Newberg. Gave us all great hope!

2. Nurture Newberg meeting with close to 10 people from

our community. Nurture Newberg is a grassroots effort started by Denise Bacon, our former City Councilor who passed away recently. Denise started Nurture Newberg in

partnership with Tony Biglan, a Senior Scientist at the

Oregon Research institute who studies human behavior

and who wrote the book The Nurture Effect. Tony Biglan

also started an organization called **Values to Action** to

help communities develop a shared vision and to

create a social movement that enables people to take effective action to urge that every sector of society— business, healthcare, education, criminal justice, media, and politics— functions for the benefit of everyone.

3. Nurture Newberg is an effort to bring kindness and compassion and unity among other value to Newberg as we vision for our hopes for our town in the present and future. We started to dream about events we could do to bring people together and end the polarization that has plagued our town. The goal will also be to bring equity, healing, and wholeness to our community.

How is God guiding you to pray for the kingdom of God to come to earth? Maybe you are praying for the world. I just learned this week from our Mission partner Caroline Kurtz that Ethiopia is hoping to end its two year Civil War. We can

pray for peace in the world and in our community. We can pray for peace in the Ukraine. We can join Lish Mannerter and Jen Henry who have a special heart for prisoners. We can pray for prisoners and their families. What other needs should we pray for the kingdom of God to come to earth?

Prayer leads to Action

- I want to remind us that praying for the kingdom of God to come was at the heart of the spirituality of Jesus, but his prayer was like the fuel that led to his movement of mission. Prayer gave him the strength he needed to heal the sick and work for justice and peace. Prayer is beautiful by itself because it helps us cultivate relationship with God, but the Lord's Prayer of Jesus invites our spirituality to lead to actions of service and compassion. As a church in this new year, I know our prayers for the Kingdom of God will lead to additional action in the community. If you have

ideas on what that might look like this year, please share your ideas with one another and with me and our elders and deacons.

In a little while we will offer our praises and prayer requests as a community, we will finish our time of prayer with the Lord's Prayer. Our prayers will also be a reflection of our desire to see the kingdom of God come to earth.

A final thought, Let us remember today that the Spirituality of Jesus begins with his relationship with God, his Abba Father, his parent in Heaven. There is a temptation even in the Spirituality movement to develop a personal spirituality that leaves God out of the picture. It becomes more of a personal journey of self-growth and the idea of a personal God becomes a subjective process. In some ways I like the freedom of this new form of spirituality that allows for some freedom in how we explore our experience of being human and how we explore the concept of God, but for me personally I still find my spirituality

connected to a personal image of God as both Mother and Father. I also enjoy relating to God through Jesus the Son and I love the Holy Spirit, who I call Sophia or Lady Wisdom.

I hope as we continue to explore the Spirituality of Jesus that you will feel God's love enfold you and guide you. May the kingdom of God be known on this earth both as we experience intimacy with God and as we show God's love to one another, our families, community, and the larger world.

Please pray with me...

Matthew 6:7-13

7 “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 “Pray, then, in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be revered as holy.

10 May your kingdom come.

May your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread.[a]

12 And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And do not bring us to the time of trial,[b]

but rescue us from the evil one.[c]