

“Powerful Prayer”, Week 1

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 8/12/18
At Crossroads United Methodist Church,
Waunakee, WI

Scripture :

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere

1 Thessalonians 5:9-24

God didn't intend for us to suffer his wrath but rather to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not smother the Holy Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, Take a close look at everything, *test it*, then cling to what is good. Put away every form of evil. May the God of peace himself make you entirely pure and devoted to God; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept strong and blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes back again. God, who called you to become his child, will do all this for you, just as he promised.

Over the past weeks this summer we've been talking about that unique relationship with God and how communication with God works. The next two weeks will be about powerful prayer.

We looked at scripture that told the story of Martha and Mary. These two women were fortunate to have Jesus visit them in their home. Mary chose to spend every moment she could with Jesus and listening to every word. Martha was concerned about the neatness of the house and the errands that needed to be done. She was angry that Mary was not helping her. She even demanded Jesus, "Lord! Tell Mary to get off her happy hiney and come help me!" But, much to Martha's surprise, Jesus told her that she was fussing way too much and that Mary had chosen what was best. For those of you Marthas, I'm sure you're probably thinking, "Well, Jesus was wrong!"

It brings us to today's church. If Jesus were here in this community of faith, what would he be doing? How would he be doing it? I have my own thoughts on that, and you probably have yours.

This past week a friend of mine in the area called me and asked if I'd be interested in coming over Friday night. He said that he thought it would be fun to do a campfire/ bible study. He said that he was calling some friends and acquaintances and was going to see if we could throw something together.

I was super excited about this possibility! WOW! This never happens to me! And this guy isn't one of those religious lunatics. He's a friend who has helped me on some house projects. Our daughters are friends.

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Friday night came around and one by one people started showing up. I only knew one of them. There was no particular church represented and no specific denomination. Just a bunch of folks who thought sitting by a campfire with friendly folks and hearing some scripture would be nice. It was organic! It was the natural outpouring of someone who has a genuine hunger for Christ beyond Sunday morning and is doing something about it.

I have to admit... it was one of the best times I've had in a long time. The weather was beautiful; I made a couple of new friends, and gained a whole bunch of insight on the book of Philippians. It was palpable that Jesus was in our midst enjoying Smores, praying with us, offering insight and encouragement.

Our scripture says this:

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit when? At all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. Persistent – according to Webster means “continuing firmly or obstinately in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition”

So that means don't stop praying no matter what! When things get bad, when things are good, when you don't feel like it... ALWAYS...

How am I supposed to do that when I'm driving or working or doing something else I need to be paying attention to? There is something called an attitude of prayer. Think about it... You can love your children and think about them always... no matter what. And this is a spiritual relationship, so we have the capacity beyond our knowledge of how to do it. There is no magic formula to this kind of love. Think about persistence. Our Spirit yearns to be with God. I think, honestly, sometimes we get too wrapped up in worrying about how we're supposed to pray that we simply don't just pray. And, as we discussed over the past two weeks, praying doesn't always have to be about words.

I think about my daughter Hannah. There were times when she was little and even a few now, when she just comes and sits next to me because she wants to be with me. It's an incredible feeling to be wanted by your child, not because they need something, but because they love you. This is what God desires our relationship to be.

And, the important thing is that if we want that relationship to grow and deepen, it means we must spend time together, we must be interested in each other. We must be willing to share ourselves. The relationship will be as deep as we are willing to be vulnerable.

Relationships are investments that we nurture.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-24

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God didn't intend for us to suffer his wrath but rather to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Remember, we are praying with persistence... continuing firmly or obstinately in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. But what if things are really bad? How am I supposed to rejoice then? We rejoice because God is in our corner. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Do not smother the Holy Spirit. Here's the deal... the Holy Spirit is going to move. So many prophets throughout the Bible had their life and their plan in place when God called them and the Holy Spirit sent them in a whole different direction. When the Holy Spirit compels you to do something... don't squash it. Often it will not make sense. When we are open to a deep relationship to God, we open ourselves to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And, the Holy Spirit is unpredictable! Do not despise the words of prophets,

Ouch... many of them were sent to tell people things they didn't want to hear. Or to lead them in a different direction that made no sense.

Take a close look at everything, *test it*, and then cling to what is good. Put away every form of evil. Scripture teaches us what good is and what evil is. When we deny the Holy Spirit, that is, when we aren't praying persistently, we open the door for evil to come in.

Powerful prayer begins with the nurture of that relationship with God... in constantly seeing God in everything around you... in recognizing Christ's face in that of your neighbor... in staying close to God, even when there aren't words.

Our scripture ends with this:
May the God of peace himself make you entirely pure and devoted to God; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept strong and blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes back again. God, who called you to become his child, will do all this for you, just as he promised.

Amen