

Intro: For the last nine weeks we've been teaching through the Lord's Prayer. And if you were to take all nine weeks and boil our teaching down into one phrase this is what you would be left with: *We need God.* Every minute, every hour, every day, we need Him, and we shall never grow out of our need for Him. We pray because we were made for connection with Him, we pray because He loves us, we pray because He holds the world, and our lives, in His hands.

I trust over these weeks, you've learned a little more about prayer, but more importantly, I've been praying that prayer would become of the fabric of your living: as we walk through our school, as we spend time with our friends, as we make big and small decisions, at work, at rest, at play...we can live a prayed life.

We've been teaching about prayer this Fall as a part of our overall strategy as a church. Every year our elders and staff take a few months to assess where we're at a church and ask the Lord where He wants us to grow. And one of the things God has laid on our hearts as a leadership team is for prayer to take root in our hearts, both corporately and individually. We need God...every minute, every hour, every day, and we believe God is asking us to cultivate an active dependence on Him.

And if you're wondering *why*, I believe this is part of the answer. Often when I pray for our church, I have a sense that there is one word on God's heart for us...it's the word "*more*." Not necessarily more activity or more programs, but more fire.

Maybe you remember the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. He called for the people of Israel to gather and to make up their minds: Who were they going to follow? The God of Israel or idols made of wood and stone? And there on the mountain, Elijah devised a contests of sorts: two separate altars were built, both supplied with wood and a sacrifice. First, the prophets of Baal would have a chance to call out to their god, and then it would be Elijah's turn...and whichever God/god answered with fire would be declared God.

Those prophets of Baal got to work...they began to call out to Baal, shouting from morning till noon, but there was no response. Then they began to pick up the intensity, they began to dance around the altar, but still nothing. So as they danced, they slashed themselves with spears and swords so that their blood flowed, and all the while the cried out to Baal...but the heavens were silent.

And then Elijah took his turn, praying simply, "*Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.*" Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil."¹

It is very easy in any church to get busy with activities. There are no end to new ideas, or programs. We don't need more activity; we need the fire of God to fall.

In prayer and worship, we call down the fire of God's presence to come and consume us...we're the sacrifice! It starts with a dependence on God, it starts with listening for His voice, it starts with an anticipation and expectation that God has more in store for

¹ 1 Kings 18:37-38, NIV.

us: more of His love, more of His healing, more of His holiness, more of His anointing to preach the gospel and serve the needs of others...

I have a vision for our community...of being the kind of church where people are regularly being healed, where people are being saved, where forgiveness is being lived out in our midst, where broken relationships are being reconciled, where our lives look so much like Jesus that it's hard to tell where His life ends and our life begins...

Lord we need the fire of Your presence! This is why we pray...we orient ourselves to Him and we say "*Jesus, we are not able but You are more than able. Come and consume us. Come and transform us. Lead us and we will follow.*"

Although this is our last Sunday focussed on the Lord's Prayer, we're going to keep coming back to prayer through this year. In January, we've set aside a week on our church calendar to dive deeper into the subject and Sunder Krishnan, a friend of mine from Toronto is going to come and teach us.

We're also planning to invite the entire church into a special 40 day season of prayer...we're going to set up a dedicated prayer room and do some other fun things as well. So let me encourage you to keep at it...to continue praying, to continue depending on God, to continue

listening...we need the fire of His presence to become the people He intends us to be.

Pray

Please remain standing and join me in praying the Lord's Prayer out loud: "*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.** For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*"

Eugene Peterson writes the following, "This is the last petition in the prayer. We've done all this praying and yet we find ourselves in trouble. After all this praying we don't find ourselves strong, flexing our moral muscles, ready to go out and tackle everything...we haven't acquired a superior spirituality...we are in a battle that threatens to overcome us."²

This morning, I want to spend the majority of my time applying this final petition to our lives, but I want to begin with a brief explanation of what Jesus is teaching us to pray.

1. Let's start with the first half of the petition: **Lead us not into temptation.** This phrase has caused considerable confusion for some

² Eugene Peterson, *Jesus and Prayer Lectures*, mp3 #G.

people. Darrell Johnson asks, “*Would the God we meet in Jesus ever intentionally lead us into temptation?*”³

The word translated “temptation” comes from the Greek word “peirasmos” and this word can have two different meanings; it can mean either “test” or “temptation”. Johnson writes, “A test is something meant to prove a person’s character and, in the process, improve it. A temptation is meant to entice a person to sin, to bring a person down in some way.”⁴

James 1:13-14 says, “*And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.*” Since God does not tempt us to do evil, and the word translated “temptation” can mean either temptation or testing, Jesus is teaching us to pray for protection in the midst of testing, lest the test be twisted into temptation.

Johnson writes, “There are events or experiences in life through which the Father intends to prove and improve our character and faith, but the evil one sneaks in and intends to destroy our character and faith.”⁵

A number of years ago I was taking a class on prayer with Eugene Peterson and one of the students asked him the following question:

³ Darrell Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change The World*, 92.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Darrell Johnson, 93.

⁶ C.f. Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 14:32-42; see also Deuteronomy 8:1-4, and James 1:2-4, 12-15.

“*Can we pray to be spared from trials?*” Peterson answered, “Of course you can...but it’s not going to do you any good.” Testing is a part of life, it is a part of our growth and development. Jesus isn’t suggesting that we pray in order to avoid any and every test. **Remember**, as disciples, we are called to follow in our Master’s footsteps, and Jesus was not spared from testing.⁶

Instead, Jesus teaches us to pray: *Father, protect us in the time of testing. As You refine us keep us from falling...keep us from falling into sin, keep us from falling away from You.*

2. Now lets move on to talk about **the nature of testing and temptation**. As a rule, I’m wary about oversimplifying because life tends to be a little more messy and complex than the nice pithy statements that get thrown around.

But this morning I do want to suggests that there is one basic test that each of face, every day of our lives. It is this foundational test that the Father uses to prove and improve our character, and the evil one attempts to subvert this foundational test and make it into a temptation. The test is found in the following question: *Who are you living for?* Are we living to please God? Are we living to please ourselves? To satisfy our desires? Are we living for the approval of others? *Who are we living for?*

When it's late at night, you're feeling tired and alone, and you turn on your computer, with thousands of pornographic images just a click away, perhaps without knowing it, you're in the middle of a test that can quickly become a temptation to fall away from God. And the question in that moment is: *Who will you live for?*

When you sit down and write out your goals for the year, the things you want to accomplish, the places you want to go, the things you want to prioritize...what you may not realize is that you are in the middle of a test that can quickly be twisted into a temptation to drift away from God: *Who will we live for?* Big or small, in seemingly "innocent" things, and in more overtly sinful things...much of life is a test.

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*" The temptation we often face is not to blatant sin or evil, it's a temptation to take good things (like our spouse, our kids, our work, our passions), and to turn them into gods to be worshipped. The greatest temptations are those that we are blind to...often, it is the temptation to some sort of compromise...to love Him some of our heart, some of our soul, and some of our mind.

Jesus teaches us to pray for strength and protection during the time of testing, lest it be twisted into a temptation that will draw us away from God. Jesus also teaches us to pray **deliver us from the evil one**.

3. I want to conclude this morning by talking about how to resist the evil one and to experience the deliverance of God. And I believe the words Jesus spoke during a time of His own testing provide the answer for our own standing and resisting.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray...He ended up praying and they ended up sleeping. He came back to wake them up a few times, to call them to pray...He saw what was coming and they were unaware. And at one point He said to them, "**Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.**"⁷

a) Let's look at the first word, **watch**. Jesus is saying, "*Wake up! Keep your eyes open! Look around you!*" And there is no better advice for us, living in our own day and time, because we too have fallen asleep.

Martin Luther once wrote, "We are beset before and behind by temptations and cannot throw them off." Luther lived with a medieval worldview that believed there was a spiritual realm just out of sight, with an evil one who was always clutching, grabbing, and trying to destroy. In the West we like to think we're more sophisticated than that, but I would suggest it's not sophistication, it's naivete, it's sleepiness, it's spiritual blindness.

1 Peter 5:8, "*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*"

⁷ Mark 14:38.

Ephesians 6:12 says, “*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*”

Helmut Thielicke writes, “Just because we do not see a thing or have forgotten how to see it does not mean that it no longer exists.”⁸ We are in a battle against a very real enemy...and often a test becomes a temptation simply because we are caught unaware. We need to wake up, we need to watch, we need to be prepared because there is an evil one to resist.

b) The second word Jesus speaks is the word “**pray**”.

Why do you think Jesus teaches us to pray for deliverance from the evil one? Because we need to be delivered! Because we are not strong enough to resist, or deliver ourselves.

In the high priestly prayer, John 17:11, 15, Jesus prays the following: “*I will remain in the world no longer, but they [my disciples] are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **protect them by the power of your name**—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that **you protect them from the evil one.***”

At the Last Supper, Jesus said to Peter, “*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that*

your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”⁹

When we pray for deliverance, we are ushered into communion with the Trinity: the Father protecting us, the Son representing us before the Father, the Holy Spirit applying the strength of Jesus to us, and praying for our protection.

My dear brothers and sisters, the life we are invited into is a supernatural life...a life that cannot be lived on the plane of the natural. We need the power of God to stand during the time of testing. We need the strength of Jesus to deliver us from the evil one. At the cross we’ve been forgiven and freed from the power of sin, death and the devil...and we need to stand firmly in the shadow of the cross and refuse to be moved.

That night in the Garden, before He was arrested, Jesus was undergoing His own time of testing. We’re told that it was so intense that He was sweating drops of blood. Some of you today find yourself in the middle of a test, and the as the unseen battle rages all around you, it feels as though you are sweating, bleeding. Take courage friends, help is only a prayer away.

We’re told, in Luke 22:43, that at during Jesus’ sweating “*An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him.*” When we pray for deliverance we invoke the presence of Jesus, the Stronger One. He strengthens our will and gives us the ability to choose...and there

⁸ Helmut Thielicke, *Our Father In Heaven*, 119.

⁹ Luke 22:31-32.

is still a battle in the choosing, but we can and must choose to live for Him.

When we abide in Jesus, when we put our faith in His rescue instead of our own power, then we are given the strength to stand and resist. James 4:7 says, *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* “We can never put too much trust in Jesus and we can never put too little trust in ourselves.”¹⁰

I know some of you are weary in the test you are facing...I want to remind you that Jesus is stronger than your situation...and He is stronger than the enemy of your soul.

Conclusion

Guided prayer through The Lord's Prayer, line by line.

¹⁰ Thielicke, 129.