

Yeah, man, that's kind of what I was thinking. Like, praise God for a way that he has kind of made for us to be able to connect together in a little bit of an unexpected way this morning. And not only do I want to praise God for that, but I also want to thank the people that are here in the room to make that happen. I kind of did a little quick count. I think that we have 12 volunteers who got out and came today to be able to lead us in worship.

Yeah, I know people are clapping at home. Well, thanking you guys for coming in. We've got six staff members that are here and then we've got Josh Randall that has been out on a Snowplow since like 6:00 this morning, trying to clear. And we really did our best where we just thought it's probably not going to be safe enough for us to be able to have in person. But seriously, praise God that we could come in here and do this online today.

So this year will mark 27 years that I have been a follower of Jesus. And during that time, I have learned a lot about what that means. Like, what does it mean to actually follow Him. I've learned about putting my faith into action. I've learned about trusting him in the midst of disappointment, in the midst of maybe confusing times in my life.

I've learned about how to die to myself and surrender to him. These things that I want, these things that I think that I deserve. And all of that has helped me grow in my relationship with Him. One of the areas where I feel like I still have so much to learn, so many ways that I can grow in is in prayer. And like, when it comes to prayer, I can give you all kinds of theological reasons for why we should pray.

I can break down the doctrine of prayer and what God does when we pray and what it does inside of us, and quote Scripture about why it's important for us to pray and cast all of these things onto the Lord. I can give you several different acronyms that you can use to kind of outline how you should pray. I have read literally dozens of books on prayer. Some of my favorite books are actually on prayer. Books that I go back to regularly are, are about this topic of, of prayer.

I have taught Bible studies on this. I have sermon series that are filed away. I've wrestled through questions about unanswered prayers and struggled with the apparent silence of God that I know maybe some of you have struggled with before. Like, I know a thing or two about prayer and yet sometimes I feel like, I don't know anything at all about prayer. Like, I feel like I know so much and yet I know so little.

And I'm sure that that gives you a whole lot of confidence as I stand up here to teach on prayer this morning. But I guess I just want you to know that, that as I teach and as Matt teaches and as Maggie preaches on this series In Prayer, we're not doing it as people who

have, like, it all figured out. We're not doing it as people saying, like, this is how it's supposed to be done, because this is what I do. We are our fellow sojourners with you wanting to grow in prayer, wanting to grow in our relationship with God. And so we are in this process of learning together.

But I want to. I want to share with you one aspect of prayer that I have learned over the years that has been really valuable to me. It is a prayer that to say. It is my. My.

My favorite prayer is probably not quite the right word. It is. It is probably the most prayed prayer that I say. The prayer that I go to most often. It is a very simple prayer that has been incredibly profound in my life.

And so I just want to teach it to you now. It's simply this, Father, and it's a prayer that maybe you can pray even right now. It's a prayer that many of us have probably prayed in our life. And it's really more of a sigh than it is a prayer. And yet I think that God honors it.

Paul writes this in Romans, chapter 8, verse 26. He says, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. Excuse me. And I think that what this verse is telling us is that God knows exactly what we need before we pray it.

He knows exactly what we need before we can even find the right words to describe what it is. This Holy Spirit is able to take our sighs and our moans and our groans and interpret them to the Father and intercede for us on our behalf. And so this silent sigh of a prayer of just, oh, Father, I think sometimes it is the most faithful and humble and hungry prayer that we could ever pray. And that gives me a lot of hope when I don't know what to pray for. The Spirit of God hears these sighs and these groans and really like.

Like that being the most humble and hungry type of prayer. That's what prayer should be. It's this desperation. It's this crying out for God when we are at a loss of what to do when we are at a loss of even the words to say. Prayer is humble.

In prayer, we acknowledge our need for God. We recognize that we are not in control, that we don't have all of the answers. And so we need God's wisdom to guide us. We need his strength and his grace for. For the journey ahead.

Prayer is humble, but prayer is also hungry. When you're hungry, you have this deep desire for something. There is a craving within you that needs to be filled. Prayer is hungry because it expresses our desire for more of God. Prayer is not just about asking for God to

bless us, to give us prayer.

It's about capturing this inner desire that we have for more of Him. This hunger in prayer creates a greater longing for more of him in our life, more of the One who can truly only satisfy our deepest needs. And so we go to him in prayer, both in humility and in hunger. And today we're talking about this idea of boldly asking God for the things that are on our heart, boldly asking God for the things that are on our heart. The churchy kind of Christianese term for this is petition.

And petition really is at the heart of prayer. It's asking him to move on our behalf. This idea of requesting asking things of God is foundational to what prayer is. In fact, it's probably our most common understanding of prayer. And I think that it's actually hardwired into our DNA as humans.

Like there's something in all of us that wants to cry out to someone at difficult times in our life. It's why they say that there are no atheists in foxholes. When we come to the end of ourselves, there's something in us that wants to cry out for help, cry out for comfort, cry out for someone to come to our rescue, someone to come to our defense. And yet I've talked to so many people over the years and I felt some of these things, my, myself, that who struggle with. With asking anything from God.

They struggle with asking anything from God, bringing their request to him, because they have all of these doubts and all of these insecurities in their mind. And so here are some of the things that people have said to me that I've thought myself. And I'm curious if any of them sound familiar to you. They say things like, well, God has bigger things to worry about than my little problems. Have you ever felt that if I pray about that, then God might think that I don't trust him for it?

I've had people Tell me. I don't want to be selfish in my prayers. And so I don't ask for anything for myself. I just always ask for other people. I've had people tell me that they don't feel like they deserve anything from God after the things that they've done in their life.

People feel like God already knows what I need and so why even ask? Why bother him with it? He already knows what I need. And this one that I appreciate it whenever somebody says it because I felt it in my life as well. What if I pray and nothing happens?

What if I pray and sincerely am asking God for something for myself or for someone else and nothing happens? Sometimes it's just easier to not expect anything from God so that I won't be disappointed. Like, do any of those sound familiar in your life? They. They sound familiar in my life.

There are times where people have shared one of these reasons why they don't ask God for something. And I'm like, yeah, I get it. I've been there too. And these feelings can oftentimes keep us from praying these bold, faith filled prayers. But when I step back from the emotion of these prayers, I realize that, that none of them or these, these doubts, I realize that none of them are, are rooted in Scripture.

In fact, here's what scripture says. I just want to want to go through these quickly. Romans 12:12. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Ephesians 6:18.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. Colossians 4:2. Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. First Peter 5:7. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

And then finally first Thessalonians 5:17. Pray continually, even when Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray. Asking God for things was part of it. He says, pray, give us today our daily bread. Forgive us of our sins.

Lead us not into temptation. These are requests that Jesus is inviting us and teaching us to pray over and over. Scripture invites us to pray big, bold, faith filled prayers. God is not bothered when we ask things of Him. Which is the point I think Jesus wants to make in our text today.

This is how Luke sets it up. Luke chapter 18, verse 1 says, One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. They should always pray and never give up. Let's look at the story that Jesus tells. Find it in Luke chapter 18, verse 1 through 8.

He said, In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God or cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, grant me justice against my adversary. And for some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, even though I do not fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bogging, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually come and attack me. And the Lord said, listen to what the unjust judge says.

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? All right, so what is going on in this, the story that Jesus tells?

Well, we, we see clearly there are two main characters. You have a judge and you have a widow. The, the widow has been wronged by somebody. We don't know, you know, what happened, but obviously somebody did her wrong. And so she is trying to seek justice.

And so she, she takes as a widow the route that she's supposed to take. She go, judge who? The judge is supposed to uphold God's law. The judge is supposed to care for the people that God cares about, including the, the orphans and the widows and the immigrants. And yet this judge doesn't care about those things that God cares about.

He does not love God or love others. And so he just keeps denying this woman and denying her. She's going to this judge, asking him to do something about the situation, but this judge isn't a very good guy. And so he keeps refusing to list to her or do anything about it. And so he just keeps kind of pushing her off and pushing her off.

But she doesn't give up. She is persistent. In fact, in my Bible, the title of this section is called the Parable of the Persistent Widow. She keeps going, she keeps hounding the judge until he finally gives in. And notice in verse five, he doesn't do it because it's the right thing to do.

He does it because he's getting a. Annoyed by this woman who keeps coming and wearing him out. And he's afraid that she's going to actually come and attack him, which that end part of verse five literally means he's afraid that she is going to come and give him a black eye. Like that's the Greek phrase that's used here. And so this is the story that Jesus tells us to teach us that we should always pray and never give up.

And so what is he saying is Jesus saying that we are the widow and that God is the judge. And so we just need to hound God and keep bugging him and wear him out until he finally gives us what we want. I don't think that's what he's trying to say. Sometimes Jesus tells stories to describe what God is like by comparing him to one of the characters in the story. And so sometimes he will tell a story and we'll be able to draw conclusions about, like this is what God is like.

We see it very clearly In Luke chapter 15, just a few chapters before this the prodigal son story. The Son runs off and he squanders the Father's wealth. He lives wild, living. And he basically said, father, you're dead to me. And yet the Father stayed, waiting, watching.

And when he saw the son on the horizon, he ran to him and showered him with grace and love and mercy and welcome back into the the family. And so Jesus tells that story to tell us what God is like. He's comparing the Father to our Father. But sometimes Jesus tells a story and he uses it to contrast what God is like. And so it's like he's

saying, if this person did the wrong thing, how much more is God going to do the right thing?

And so I think the point of this parable is, is, is this, if a poor widow got what she deserved from an unjust judge, how much more will God's children receive what is good and right from their heavenly Father? How much more will God do the right thing for us when we come and present our request to Him? The widow in this story was a stranger to the judge, but we are children of God. The widow was alone and she had no one to come to her defense. But we have the Holy Spirit, who is our advocate even to the point of interpreting our groans to the Father when we cry out to him, interceding on our behalf.

The widow pled with the judge out of her poverty. But we have been given all riches of God to meet our every need. And so if this poor widow got what she deserved from an unjust judge, how much more will God's children receive what is good and right from their loving Heavenly Father? So Jesus tells the story knowing that one, we need to hear this message, and two, he tells a story knowing that his time on earth is running out. He will soon be crucified, resurrected.

He will ascend back into heaven. He will send the Holy Spirit to guide us and to be with us. He knows that we're going to be living in this time between his ascension and his return, his, his first coming and his and his second coming. And in these last days with the disciples, Jesus spends a lot of time teaching them and I think teaching us how to live in this time in between, how to live while we wait for his return. And several times in these last moments and days and weeks of Jesus life, he's telling them and us that it's not going to be easy.

And John, he says, in this world you will have trouble. Jesus shoots us straight that it's not going to be easy, that things are not always going to go our way. We are going to experience injustice and persecution. We are going to face challenges, but don't give up and don't give in. And I think Jesus uses this story to tell us that the only way we are going to persevere in faith, faith is if we persevere in prayer.

It is easy to lose heart when you experience injustice. It's easy to get discouraged by the unjust judges in our world who wield their power to cause so much pain in people's lives. It can sometimes get really hard for us to hold onto our faith when life seems unfair. And in this story, Jesus is encouraging us to keep seeking the Father in prayer. Don't give up.

He is good, he is just, he is righteous. God listens when his people pray. And at just the right time, he will come to our defense. He will move on our behalf. Jesus is telling us, maybe Jesus is telling you today, don't lose, lose heart.

Don't be discouraged. Persevere in faith as you persevere in prayer. And so bold faith filled prayer is not just about persistence. It is also about trust. It's about having confidence in who God is and that he will do what he said that he will do.

He listens to us, he cares for us and he will respond when we bring our request to Him. And so what do you need to bring to the Lord today?

If you were here, we would be pulling out our cards for the week.

And on the back of the card this week is four little prayer prompts that I want to go through with you as we kind of wrap up the first prayer pump is this, what do I long for God to do? And in this time, as we think about what do we long for God to do? This is a chance for us to ask him to provide something, to change something. If there's a dream or a goal that we are pursuing, how can we invite God into that? Do your desires align with, with God's and, and, and Are you able to trust him in the outcome?

What do you long for God to do? Second question. What is weighing me down? What is keeping you up at night? What is draining your energy?

Your. Your joy, your peace? Where do you feel stressed and. And overwhelmed? Is there an area in your life where you need wisdom to trust God?

What is weighing you down? Third question. What is God revealing to me? Do you sense that God wants you to do something new in your life? Is he stirring something up inside of you?

Maybe he wants you to lean into a deeper trust in him as you walk through and navigate this unknown season of your life? What is God revealing to you? And then lastly, what does God want me to start, stop, or see through? Is there a step of faith that he is calling you to take? A new spiritual discipline that he wants you to put into practice?

A new habit that he wants you to start? Or an old habit that he wants you to break? A situation that he wants you to persevere through, even if it's hard?

So what do you long for God to do? What is weighing you down? What is God revealing to you? And what does God want you to start, stop, or see through? We want to give just a couple of moments right now to just sit in this moment and maybe you just can pause and reflect about all four of those.

Or maybe there's one that you just need to spend. Spend some time praying through. We're going to dim the lights and kind of just take

this moment to pause and to pray through these things. Now, one final thought as we wrap up today. I've had people ask me over the years, like, why does it seem like when I pray, God doesn't answer?

Why does it pray? It seem like when I pray that God just is making me wait. I've asked and I've pleaded. I've been knocking at the door I've been requesting for years. It just seems like he's not doing anything.

And the truth is, I've wondered that myself and I don't have the answer. Like, I wish that I did. I wish I could just say, here, let me pull back the curtain and show you and tell you everything that God's doing. The silence of God when we are seeking him and when we are asking him to move in one of those four areas in our life, when we're struggling with a decision when, when. When our health or the health of someone that we love is failing.

God's silence in those moments is. Is one of the most confusing and frustrating things that, that we can go through. And I know it can sometimes feel like he care that he's not listening, that he's not doing anything.

I was waiting to catch a flight home from Denver, Colorado one time and our flight kept getting delayed. We had already boarded the plane, but we were just kind of sitting there, not moving, still at the gate, waiting and waiting. And the frustration level, if you've ever been in a situation like that on a plane, the frustration level starts to rise. People start to ask questions. You can only keep kids calm for so long.

We can only keep ourselves calm for so long. We're kind of wondering what's going on. And I was sitting on a window seat and I remember looking out the window and I noticed people kind of going around the plane. There were different carts that were going around and, and different technicians that were kind of climbing up ladders. And I realized in that moment that they were obviously doing something to the plane.

I didn't know what it was, but I found myself being really grateful for the delay because I'd rather wait just a little bit longer on the ground than get 30,000ft up in the air and realize that something is going wrong. I realized that day that delays don't always mean inactivity. Sometimes, sometimes delays mean preparation. And sometimes we pray and it seems like nothing is happening. But we don't always have a window seat into the spiritual realm that God lives and exists in.

A delay in response doesn't mean that God isn't working or moving in ways that we can't see. It could be that he is preparing us. It could be that he is preparing others. And so I am. I'm learning to trust that when I pray and it seems like God isn't moving, the delay isn't



necessarily inactivity on God's part.

It's preparation. And I don't know what for and I don't know how long it'll take. But I do know that I can trust Him. I do know that he hears me when I cry out to him. I can present my request to Him.

And he moves at just the right time and in just the right way. And it might not be my time and it might not be my way.

And maybe for you today you are in a season of waiting and wanting. I just want to encourage you. Don't give up. Persevere in faith by persevering in prayer. Keep seeking, keep asking, keep praying.

Bold faith filled prayers. And maybe for you, the boldest prayer that you could pray today is a prayer of surrender. Surrendering this, this, this thing that you keep desiring and praying for, or maybe even just surrendering your life over to Jesus, giving your life to him and trusting him with it. And if you've never made that decision today, today's the day you can let us know. Reach out online.

Someone's there that would love to help lead you in that next step. Jesus made a way for us to boldly come to the Father, not just in prayer, but for forgiveness, for a new life and a fresh start. And he wants to give that to you. And so reach out to him and to us and we'll help you take that next step. And at some point today, this is usually our response time in our worship gatherings.

At some point today, just want to encourage you to find something that you can use to remember his death, burial and resurrection. Something to share communion individually or if you're with your family or some friends today, remember and celebrate that we are children of God, that we have access to him and that we receive his riches to meet our every need. We have all of this because Jesus gave Himself for us. So Jesus, thank you, thank you for the gift of your presence, your grace, your tenderness and love. Thank you for teaching us how to pray, teaching us that it is okay to ask things from the Father, and teaching us that it is okay to pray bold prayers, persistent prayers to always pray and never give up.

I thank you God, that you are not like that unjust judge, but that when we come to you as your children, you, our Heavenly Father loves us and you move into action. And it might not be when we want it and we might not be able to see it in the moment, but God, give us trust in you. Give us trust in your goodness that you are working all things out for the good of those who love you and who have been called according to your purposes. And so Lord Jesus, may we persevere in faith as we persevere in prayer. I pray this in Jesus name, Amen.