*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 2 - 7

“How Jesus Prayed”

**Monday, January 2 Matthew 6:5-8**

*“When you pray . . .”*

 Prayer is opening one’s life to God. It is inviting him to act in our lives. Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is being willing to accept his will in our lives. Prayer moves the hand of God by giving him the moral freedom to do in our lives what he has been wanting to do. God, in his sovereign practice, does not impose his will upon us. Consequently, he functions in our lives in accordance with the degree of freedom we surrender to him. Prayer is therefore relational, a free person inviting the Person of heaven to share his very best with us.

 To expose the hypocritical motive that some have for praying, Jesus refers to those who stand in the synagogues and corners of the streets for human notice and praise. He says that they have their reward; they received what they were asking for - the admiration of others. Their style is like that described in a newspaper report of a religious service, which, in referring to the prayer, said, “The finest prayer every offered to a Boston congregation!” In contrast, Jesus says that the prayer to God is to be addressed to him in the secrecy of heartfelt communion.

*Thank you, Lord, for hearing my prayer offered in humility. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 3 Luke 9:28-36**

*“Jesus went up on the mountain to pray”*

 Jesus decides to go to a mountain to pray and takes Peter, John, and James with him. During his time of prayer Jesus is transformed into a glorious figure with a brilliance like lightning. Jesus is not alone, since he is joined by Moses and Elijah. Though these are two great saints, it is hard to believe their presence has no deeper meaning than simply being there to keep Jesus company. Moses represents the teaching and leadership ministry of Jesus, and Elijah represents the prophetic ministry of Jesus, especially as it relates to revelations of the end times.

 Moses and Elijah are discussing the journey Jesus is taking, with its turning point being his death in Jerusalem. Much of Luke’s Gospel from here through chapter 19 concerns preparation of the disciples for ministry in light of Jesus death, resurrection and ascension. The disciples are napping but wake up to find the discussion in process. Peter, in his excitement, asks Jesus if three booths should be built – an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles, which looked forward to the arrival of the end times when God would raise up Israel.

*May I come to know you in new ways, Lord, through prayer. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 4 John 11:38-44**

*“Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed”*

 In spite of Martha’s misgivings, the people obey Jesus’ command and the stone is removed from the entrance to the grave. In the midst of the stench of death and the unbelieving crowd, Jesus lifts his eyes toward “home” and offers a vibrant prayer. One can sense the intimacy and union between Father and Son and the warm gratitude that the Father has already heard and answered. Jesus constantly abides in his Father’s will, so all he does is essentially a prayer. Jesus longs that all who have heard him conversing with his Father, these wondering, grieving people, will know that he has been sent by his Father.

 Then there is the cry, the loud shout, “Lazarus, come forth!” The prayer and the act of obedience now become one. It is the shout of life. John states it tersely, “And he who had died came out.” Miracles of life do not need verbal embroidery. God spoke and something happened. The dead man heard the voice of the Lord and came to life. Today, Jesus is still calling people out of spiritual death into new life.

*When I prayed to you, Lord, you brought me from death to life. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

January 2 - 7

“How Jesus Prayed”

**Thursday, January 5 John 12:23-28**

*“What shall I pray?”*

 The Man who was weary at a well as he spoke with a Samaritan woman and who wept before the tomb of Lazarus does not go unemotionally to the cross. In his humanity Jesus shrinks from this awesome death. Here the anguish, the longing of Jesus to avoid the cross, is boldly recorded. But there is no turning back from the decision he and the Father and the Spirit made in eternity. Jesus has come in loving obedience to the Father’s will and every move of his ministry has been a response to that plan. That faithfulness has brought him to this hour. And there will never be a harvest of salvation, the Gentiles will never know, unless Jesus completes his mission.

 For this purpose he has come! So the trembling, questioning cry, “Father, save me from this hour,” is answered by the Son’s decisive prayer of obedience, “Father, glorify your name.” That name has been entrusted to Jesus and now in his last, costly act he will lift that name up above all other names. Then, as at his baptism and his transfiguration, the Father’s voice is heard. God’s name has been glorified throughout Jesus’ ministry, and now in this hour he will glorify it again.

*I glorify you name, Lord, by praying that your will be done in my life. Amen.*

**Friday, January 6 Matthew 6:9-13**

*“Pray like this”*

 The beauty of this prayer, called the Lord’s Prayer, has been honored in both spoken word and in music. Across the lines of culture and language, the Lord’s Prayer has served as the model for Christians to approach God. No prayer can surpass the scope of meaning contained in its simplicity. Placed here at the center of the Sermon on the Mount, it is a focus of faith. It is a liberating expression before God. It is faith in action, focused on the future rather than on a restoration of the past. His Kingdom is to come now, his will is to be done now, for the Christian life is not our works but God working in and through us.

 The prayer begins with an invocation that is threefold, relating to God’s name, God’s Kingdom and God’s Will. It continues with three petitions for food, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil. The prayer may be divided into three sections of emphasis: (1) the honor that worship accords to God; (2) the humility that recognizes our dependence upon God; and (3) the hope which the rule of God creates.

*Whatever else I say in prayer, Lord, I will include your words. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 7 Luke 11:1-4**

*“Lord, teach us to pray”*

 We might wonder why the disciples waited so long to ask Jesus to teach them to pray. They had been with him for many months, watching him pray each day. They saw him withdrawing alone to pray. The Messiah’s life was a life of prayer and they must have been aware of that. Perhaps they had been too intimidated to ask. Most of us are hesitant to ask each other about the important things of life. Apparently the disciples were.

 In his response, Jesus shows them that prayer can be both brief and real at the same time. The effectiveness of our prayers has nothing to do with their length or spiritual sophistication. How little we find in this prayer Jesus gives us that could be considered complex. This simple prayer deals with the very basics of your life and mine – with reality. Prayer is essential to the life of faith, and the way he taught this truth to his disciples was that he simply prayed. He just prayed and prayed until they eventually asked, “How do you do it?” By way of answer, he said, “Try this . . .”

*Teach me to pray, Lord, that I may deepen my life with you. Amen.*