

He Knows Before you Ask (Matthew 6:5-8)

As we look at Matthew chapter 6 verse 5-8 today, we find Jesus continuing to _____ His disciples on how they are to conduct themselves as Citizens of Heaven in their relationship with God. He begins, just as He did last week, with a word of warning about bad _____ that they should not pick up from the Pharisees. Jesus' teaching this week focuses on the proper attitude of their heart toward God in _____.

When you pray

Notice that Jesus says "when you pray" not, "if you pray". Jesus _____ that, for His disciples, prayer to their heavenly Father will be a regular part of their life.

Remember, that Jesus was speaking to _____ disciples; during this time, they had _____ hours each day that were called the hours of prayer. The first hour of prayer was at 9AM. In this first hour of prayer is when the Temple gates were opened-this is the third hour from sunrise. We read in Mark 15:25 that the hour of prayer is when Jesus was crucified: **25 Now it was the third hour when they crucified Him.** So, Jesus was on the _____ as at the hours of sacrifice and incense, while the priests interceded for the nation, and incense and sacrifices were made, prayers for salvation were being offered up all over Israel, most of them not realizing that their salvation was being _____ at that very time, on a hill just outside Jerusalem. The Church was _____ in prayer. Fifty _____ later, on the Pentecost after Jesus' crucifixion, the Holy Spirit descended on those believers who were all gathered together in one place. Guess what time it was? The hour of prayer. We know this because Peter began His explanation of why these believers were so on fire for the Lord as the Church received the Holy Spirit that day with the words in **Acts 2:15 For these people are not drunk, as you assume, since it is only the third hour of the day;** Again, it was 9:00 AM, when the disciples **All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer** (as it says in acts 1:14) that the Holy Spirit _____ on them. Prayer _____ things. It certainly changed things that day!

One of the great causes of _____ in the church today is that we, as believers, set so little time aside for prayer. Prayer time is the _____ time in our lives as believers, and in our life as a church together. It is the time when we _____ that God's will is done in our life, and in the life of the Church.

You are not to be like the hypocrites;

We, personally, are not to be like the hypocrites. Sin is pernicious and _____. It follows us even into the _____ of God, if we are not very careful. (1st Corinthians 6 15-17). We have to be _____ how we approach God. Think about what it _____ to pray like a hypocrite. Remember that the original thought behind the word that Jesus uses for hypocrites comes from the theater and describes "play actors". Don't put on a show. Don't play-act in your prayers; it is a very _____ thing to approach God in this way. (Isaiah 6:5).

for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people.

Don't be like these Pharisees who loved to stand and pray loudly in the synagogues, so that all the religious people would hear them praying, and to stand on the street corners, so all of the sinners could hear them praying, and everyone would think "oh, what a righteous man". Of course God saw their _____, and did not respect their attitude in prayer. In fact, God says that their prayers _____ no reward whatsoever from God: **Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.**

⁶ But as for you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Jesus counsels us to go into an inner room, and close the door, praying to our Father in secret. There are good reasons to have a _____ closet. First: intentionality. Christians should find or create a special time and place to spend _____ with Him, and do nothing else (see Luke 10:38-

41). We, as Americans living at this time, are the most _____ people that has ever existed. And this time with Jesus is one of the great things that's _____ in our busy lives. Luke 5:16 says **16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.** So, if the Son of God needed to take time out to be by Himself and pray, then _____ we do also!

Second, we have privacy. Privacy means we're not concerned about what others _____ of our prayer. It means that we can talk about things with God that we'd rather not _____ with others. It means that all of the _____ in the household are shut away for a while. It also means that we can be truly _____ with God.

And lastly, sharing a special, secret place with God, and only God, fosters _____ with Him. Depth of relationship depends on sharing _____ time together.

The second part of this verse has to do with _____. We usually place _____ on our prayers being answered in the way that we want them answered, but Jesus takes the _____ off our wants, and what we think are our needs, and instead places value on prayers being _____. What is the nature of the reward Jesus is talking about? Well, first off, we are rewarded by gaining intimate _____ with God. When you come to Him in submission and _____, you can have this kind of intimacy. When Christ becomes our Savior, we are adopted as sons and daughters of God, made possible by Jesus' finished work on the cross. We have all the privileges a child has with their father—including an close, loving personal relationship. The second reward of prayer is that prayer brings us into _____ with God's will for our lives. The purpose is to allow God to change our hearts, so that we will do His will.

The third reward of prayer is _____ from God. As we learn to pray, we find that our desires become less about ourselves, and more about being in alignment with His will, we find that as we delight ourselves in what delights Him (Psalm 34:7).

⁷"And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸So do not be like them;

It seems like we, as people, are always trying to make prayer all about _____, in one way or another. Mindless repetition is fruitless, no matter what great prayer it started out as. If you discover you're _____ for others, or even mindlessly _____ familiar phrases, then stop, apologize to God, and begin again in talking to Him.

for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

And, lastly, Jesus reassures us that God knows what we _____ even before we ask him. And this makes sense, since God knows everything. Yes, prayer changes _____, but probably more importantly, prayer changes _____, and allows God to mold us into His instrument, bearing more and more the "image of Jesus"; that family resemblance.