

## Kingdom Living: Praying

Luke 10: 1-12

We continue with our Lenten series, Kingdom Living: Centering our lives on God and serving others by taking a look at how prayer calls us to become aware of and realize that the Kingdom of God is all around us which is wonderfully freeing news for us as people of faith because usually when the preacher starts a sermon about prayer, we wonder if we are going to get a lecture about praying the right way or praying more in our daily lives. And, yes, we will admit, that sometimes when the topic of prayer comes up in church, we wonder if the preacher will give us a magic formula for prayer to fix everything, to fix our guilt for not doing enough, for not being enough, to fix our seemingly lack of connection with God and with others so that we can truly become people of prayer.

Well, I hate to disappoint all of you this morning but I wasn't given this secret formula for prayer in seminary. To be honest, praying is one of the spiritual disciplines that struggle with in my own faith life. It is not that I can't pray. It's that I struggle to include daily prayer in my faith life. I struggle to set aside some time to pray to God each day. Usually I find myself, late at night, after I've already gone to bed, realizing that I didn't pray before going to bed so I try to say some words but I will admit, I find myself falling asleep mid-prayer. And I know that

God deserves better than that from me for all the wonderful blessings that God has filled my life with each and every day.

That's why prayer as part of Kingdom Living is such good news for us as people of faith. It becomes an invitation for us to realize that our very lives can become prayers to God, that our very lives can become opportunities for us to experience the presence of God. Kingdom Living invites us to realize that a prayerful life provokes us to see life around us in new and fresh ways.

Prayer as part of Kingdom Living is not about formulas or set times for prayer. It is about being open to the presence of God which surrounds our lives. It is about expanding our vision beyond ourselves. It is about being tied to the consciousness of God which is exactly what Jesus was calling his disciples to do in our text today.

As Jesus is gathering the disciples together, he tells them that even before they are to leave, they should ask the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers for the harvest, that even before they begin on their mission, the seventy should go to God in prayer so that Prayer would become their guiding light for their mission. So that Prayer would become the thing that centers their lives on God and helps them to be open to serving others. So that Prayer would become one of the ways the Kingdom of God comes near for the disciples.

The beauty of this teaching is that Jesus doesn't tell them to pray so that they will succeed. In fact, he tells them he is sending them out like lambs in the midst of wolves! He doesn't make them empty promises that they will succeed on their mission. In fact, He tells them that some people will welcome them and some will not. That's the nature of the mission!

the words that Jesus does give to them to comfort them, to give them hope while out on their mission is to ask the Lord of the Harvest to be in charge and to guide them.. He tells them to pray so that they become aware of God's presence along their journey. He does this Because he wants them to realize that they are not alone. Even though they are going out like lambs among wolves, God is there, guiding them and leading them. And it is through prayer that they are reminded of this comforting fact and find hope for the journey. That no matter what lies ahead, God is there, walking with them. Through the darkest valleys and through life's seemingly easy paths, God is there. Prayer becomes the way for the disciples to become aware of God's presence that surrounds them.

But this simple teaching does not stop there with these words to comfort and give hope. Jesus also tells the disciples to pray and ask because he wants them to realize that the bringing near of the Kingdom of God is God's doing, not the disciples'. It is not up to the disciples to bring the Kingdom near for the people. Their job is to proclaim that it is already there in their midst. Jesus doesn't want the

disciples to forget that this Kingdom work that they are called to be a part of is God's work. It is not gained or lost solely based on the disciples' efforts and hard work.

Jesus knew what he was doing when he told the disciples to pray before starting out on their mission. He knew that the disciples had the bad habit of trying to do it all, trying to be everything to everyone, trying to bring the Kingdom of God quicker and sooner here on earth for people. Jesus knew the disciples had the bad habit of thinking that the Kingdom of God relied solely on how hard they worked in their ministries. Jesus knew that the disciples had this crazy idea that if they kept working, working hard for the Kingdom, if they just kept organizing, organizing programs and relief efforts, then the Kingdom would come sooner. Jesus wanted them to realize that all this did was lead to burn-out. All that did was lead to the draining of the spirit.

If the disciples just plowed through their mission, thinking that it all depended on them and their efforts, without attending to the moment, without pondering what the moment may mean, without realizing that the moment was God-given, then their mission would be doomed from the start. If the disciples were so task orientated that they could not see or experience the ways that God's Spirit was moving among them, renewing them, refreshing them, strengthening for the journey, then everything that they would be doing was in vain.

Prayer becomes the way for the disciples to realize that it is not all about them and their needs. Prayer becomes a way for the disciples to become aware of others and to become aware of how their words and actions affect others that they met along the way. Prayer becomes the way to help the disciples allow grace to break into their lives and experience the Kingdom of God.

Just like it can for us today as modern day disciples, as modern day followers of Jesus Christ.

We can truly become people of prayer as we seek the Kingdom of God by realizing that it is not all up to us, that God is leading the process, that God is inviting us to let go of our notions that God only wants a few minutes of our time, and to expand our vision to realize that every moment of our lives are an opportunity to praise and thank God for our many blessings. From the time we wake up to the time we go to bed, we experience the grace of God in our lives and we can respond with thanks and praise.

The good news for us as modern day disciples is that all of our moments are moments for prayer, are opportunities to be connected with the consciousness of God, are opportunities for us to put on the mind of Christ and say “not my will be done, but yours, O God.”

All of our moments are moments of grace and prayer, even when the other person cuts us off while driving, the Kingdom of God is near because we can lift

up prayer for our selves and for the other person. We can ask for God's peace to slow that person down. We can ask for God's restoring love to guide that person through whatever he or she may be going through. We can ask for God to wrap God's arms around that person and to guide them through the day.

All the moments of our lives are opportunities to experience God. God loves that we try to find some time each day that is just for God and us time. But the Good news is that God is a part of lives more than just a few minutes a day. God is there for us all day, every day. So we lift our lives up as praise and thanksgiving to God.

Even when we are going to the store, and it is crowded and carts are bumping into us and that person is just standing in the middle of the aisle, right in front of that item we need to get, we can be thankful and lift our prayers to God. We can thank God for the rain and the sun that helped grow our food. We can lift our prayers for the workers in the field who toiled to bring us this rich goodness. We can lift up our prayers and remember that there are those in our community who do not have enough to eat and ask the Lord of the harvest to show us how to share our abundance.

The very nature of Kingdom Living is that we are called to be aware of the presence of God in our midst and we can live out this calling all the moments of our days, by asking not our will be done, but thine, O God's.

We ask the Lord of the Harvest to guide us and to lead us all the moments of our days because if we plow through life thinking everything, including the Kingdom of God depended on us, we miss out on our true calling which is to share the love and grace of God with transforms us, and makes all things new.

We ask the Lord of the Harvest to help us see life around us in new and fresh ways so that we don't miss out on those moments with the Kingdom of God came near and we were too caught up in our mission and ministry to welcome God in.

We ask the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers out into the harvest because we never know the many ways God will bless and touch our lives as we strive to become people of the Kingdom of God.

May we always strive for Kingdom Living, centering our lives on God and serving one another by truly becoming people of prayer. Amen