

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 303
Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21
Today's verses: John 16:23-28
Today's Topic: Fullness of Joy
Date: 8th April 2004
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John 16:23-28 MKJV And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you. (24) Before now you have asked nothing in My name; ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. (25) I have spoken these things to you in parables, but the time is coming when I shall no more speak to you in parables, but I will show you plainly of the Father. (26) At that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will pray to the Father for you, (27) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God. (28) I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father.

“Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.” - this is actually a command! Jesus is commanding us to take a course of action that will lead us to become totally happy. Jesus also says: “Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you.” Thus Jesus wants us to be joyful in all things and the method is - ask the Father and you shall receive!

So why aren't all Christians millionaires? Why do some remain un-healed? Why do many Christians still have frustrating jobs and relationships? Yet why do many experience amazing answers to prayer, daily supply of needs and see true miracles of healing? Why do some Christians often see prayers answered while other equally sincere Christians hardly ever see prayers answered?

I think the key is something called “world-view” - that is how we view reality. Jesus explained it this way: “At that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will pray to the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God.” The Father loved the disciples because they saw reality a certain way and believed certain things about Jesus to be literally true.

Firstly the disciples were loved by the Father “because you have loved Me” - that is because they loved Jesus and committed themselves to journey with Jesus. To listen to Him, walk with Him, talk to Him, travel with Him, go out on missions for Him and teach and obey His commandments. Love for Christ was central - real day-to-day love like love for a family member. Some Christians love Christ as a concept or an ideal or a social icon much as a fan of a rock star does. But this is not the same as loving the “rock star” personally and eating meals with him! Our love for Jesus has to go beyond warm feelings and religious notions to daily living in His Presence, and going to work for Him amidst the realities of life. And like normal love, we only love those who we believe love us. The disciples loved Jesus, in part, because they truly believed that He loved them first. Christians who get their prayers answered believe that Jesus loves them like a family member and live daily with Him and for Him as a result.

Secondly the disciples were loved, and their prayers answered, because they “believed that I came out from God.” In other words the disciples believed that incarnation was possible. They had a “down to

earth God” not just one that floated on a cloud “way up there somewhere”. God was immediate and with them in the person of Jesus Christ. The power of God was not just an abstract ideal but a living reality. Heaven was contact-able and God actually sent His Son to us.

The world-view of those who get their prayers answered is not more knowledgeable or theological than that of those who struggle. Rather it is centered on living out an adventure with Jesus who loves them. People who trust God’s love enough to launch out on that adventure have many prayers answered while those who hang back and “wait and see” generally have few prayers answered. It is the missionaries and evangelists and keen young bible college students, those who have accepted the risk, that see the glory of God.

Thus when Jesus says “ask ..” He is speaking to a bunch of His adventurers. These were disciples who had learned and heard and suffered and who were there with Him just prior to the cross. God was real to them in the face of Christ.

When God is real to you in the face of Christ and His calling and adventure is your delight and you believe that Heaven and Earth are connected and that God is “doing stuff today” then prayer will be second nature and exciting.

If on the other hand your world-view is that Jesus is a concept and Heaven is distant and not connected with daily life then prayer will be a chore at best and a guilt-ridden struggle at worst.

You have to decide to join the band of disciples and to “risk all for Jesus” - yet to do so because He has loved you first. If Jesus runs your life and you join His adventure then the Christian life is great fun and amazing! If however you run your life and Jesus is merely a spiritual power invoked to solve difficult situations, then you are committing idolatry and will be most miserable.

Prayer can be amazing or prayer can be back-breaking. You can delight in God's nearness and presence and answers - or you can groan in frustration. The secret is following Jesus, step by step, along the dusty road. Not just thinking about Jesus but actually living with Jesus today. When your world-view shifts and God moves out of the abstract into the concrete then your prayer life will change as a result. When you stop loving an idea or an ideal and start loving a person who loves you, then your prayer will become connected to Christ and be deep and resonant. When the Christian life is discovered as a 24/7 adventure not a one hour ceremony, then God will be with you at breakfast.

This is not a matter of being very good or moral. Jesus never says that our prayers depend on how good we are. Many strict living saints have unfulfilled prayer lives while some rather unusual saints see miracles (e.g the Galatians see Gal 3:1-5). Its not a matter of being worthy, all believers are justified. It is a matter of loving and living with Jesus in an adventure of faith - often with a group of others.

Prayer is connecting Heaven with real life in an obedient adventure with God. Has Jesus come forth from Heaven for you?

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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