

## David's Prayer

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on the 8th Sunday after Pentecost, July 14, 1991. Scripture Lessons: 2 Samuel 7:18-29; Psalm 132:11-18; Ephesians 1:1-10; Mark 6:7-13.

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

I heard on the radio the other day that the National Football League has banned public prayer by players in the locker rooms after the games. This ban goes along with the ban on demonstrations, like the lcky shuffle, after a touchdown.

"I'll keep you in my prayers," your friends tell you as you face some crisis in your life.

"Have you said your prayers yet?" dad says to his children when he comes in to check on them at bedtime.

Your child goes in for surgery and your wife turns to you and says, somewhat hesitantly, because your not one much for prayer, "Don't you think we should pray with her?"

You win the jackpot in the Pennsylvania State lottery and you shout, "Thank you, Jesus."

Harry Emerson Fosdick once wrote, "Religion has not arrived until faith in God has been translated into action, and the most intimate and inward action which emerges when faith in God is real is prayer."

The topic of my sermon this morning is prayer. It's based on the Old Testament lesson where we overhear a prayer of King David. What can we learn about how we should pray from this passage. I came up with seven

things, seven guidelines for my own prayers.

1. Notice who is praying. This is David, a man of action. David, a man whose hands have shed blood. David, the outdoorsmen who lived in the fields as a shepherd, sleeping under the stars, watching his sheep, protecting them from the lion and bear. David, the shrewd politician. And yet this man of action was also a man of prayer. Prayer is not the monopoly of the monk, or the professional religious person. Prayer is a work that belongs to all the people of God, the factory worker, housewife, politician, soldier, businesswoman, lawyer, doctor, teacher.

2. Notice that David's prayer was in response to the Word of the Lord spoken by Nathan. The prophet Nathan had just brought to King David a message from the Lord. The Lord had promised to establish David's kingdom forever. The Lord had made an unconditional promise guaranteeing that a descendant of David would reign over God's people forever. It was in response to the Word of God that David prayed.

Let our prayers be a response to the preached and written Word of God. Before we begin to pray let us listen to what God has said to his people in the past; let us listen to what God's people in the past have said to God and about God, then let us respond to the Lord in prayer.

3. Notice that David found a place that was especially conducive to prayer. He went in and sat before the LORD. This is probably a reference to the Tabernacle Tent where the Ark of Covenant, symbolizing the presence of

God, was kept. It was a quiet place, hallowed by centuries of use, that made it easier for David to focus on the Lord.

It's important to have a place that you can hallow for prayer; a kitchen chair, a bench on the back porch. I had a very good friend and parishioner at my church in Reedsville, Pa, Jim Haughwout. He was a dairy farmer. His special place for prayer was in the milking parlor in the barn. I know another person who sits in the kitchen in the morning before anyone else has gotten up and meets with the Lord over a cup of coffee. A professor of Church history once told us that his special place for prayer was in the shower every morning. Before our church burned down I'd sneak into the sanctuary and sit before the Communion Table and pray. Having a special place set apart for prayer helps us to pray.

4. Notice that David sat before the Lord in silence before he began to pray. Before we pray, we need to spend time simply sitting or kneeling before the Lord. Don't say anything. Simply sit in the presence of the Lord. We don't need to fill the silence with words.

5. Focus on who God is when you pray. David repeatedly addressed God as "the Lord GOD"; the one who redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt and adopted them as his special people. The God to whom we pray is not merely the God of nature, but the God who acts in history, who chose Abraham, who redeemed his people from slavery in Egypt, who gave his Law through Moses to Israel. We address our prayers, above all, to "the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The God to whom we pray is not the generic God of the Enlightenment but the God who has redeemed us in Christ and marked us with the seal of the Holy Spirit.

6. David's prayer consists primarily of adoration and praise. "O LORD God... there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you... o Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true..." Praise and adoration is simply telling God that we love him for who he is and for who God has revealed himself to be.

Our liturgy encourages us to praise God. Most of our hymns are primarily prayers of adoration:

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven  
To his feet, thy tribute bring;  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven;  
Evermore His praises sing.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him all creatures here below;  
Praise him above ye heavenly hosts;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name...  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

The liturgy is meant to lift up our hearts in praise to God. It's meant to put the praise of God in the mouths of those who might not otherwise praise God.

Praise and adoration is also a part of our daily prayers. I often can't find words with which to praise God. I turn to the Psalms or I turn to the

great prayers of the Church and present them to God as my own sincere prayers of praise and adoration.

7. There is also a boldness in David's prayer. Walter Brueggemann, in his commentary on Second Samuel, writes, "David is... not shy, reticent, or embarrassed in the presence of this incomparable God. David is characteristically bold and nervy before every protagonist, whether Goliath or Yahweh. David boldly demands that God keep God's promise. The Lord has promised to establish David's kingdom forever. David will insist that the Lord keep that promise."

The God and Father of Jesus Christ fairly invites us to be bold in prayer. The Creator and Judge of all the earth, invites us to be so bold as to call him Father. Because Jesus has died to reconcile us to God, the writer of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews exhorts us, "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Be bold with respect to the prayers you make for your children. God has made promises to the children of believers that they should grow up to know, worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Demand of God that God keep his promises. That doesn't mean that God will answer all your prayers according to your will but according to the will of the One whose purpose is to gather together all things in Christ.

Here then are seven things I found in David's prayer that might help us

to pray. Somebody else may have found ten things or three things. But probably the best way to learn how to pray is not to talk about prayer but to pray. So let us now pray:

Blessed are You, O You who are the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You who have blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. You chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before You in love. You destined us for adoption as Your children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of Your will, to the praise of Your glorious grace that You freely bestowed on us in Your Beloved Son, Jesus. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight He, the Lord Jesus Christ, has made known to us the mystery of Your will, according to Your good pleasure that You set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things... all things... how incredible and all inclusive that promise... You have promised to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to Your purpose; You, who accomplish all things according to your counsel and will, so that we, who have set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of Your glory. In Christ we who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and have believed in Him, have been marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as Your own people, to the praise of Your glory. Amen.