

Psalm 23; Lesson 1 – God Provides

Week of: March 22, 2020

During this time of unprecedented fear and worry it is important for us to set our hearts and minds on God who is our perfect shepherd. He is our provider who leads us in paths of righteousness. Because He is our loving and powerful shepherd we can completely trust Him in times of uncertainty. As we saw in Psalm 23, He is the only one worthy of being trusted.

ASK: Why can only God be trusted to provide for us and guide us?

Since God is the only one worthy to be trusted as our shepherd, then He is the one we must go to with our needs in prayer. As Pastor Brad said in the video, prayer begins with relationship. We go to the Lord in prayer because we know Him and trust Him.

ASK: How would you define prayer?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines prayer as an “offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will.” This means we trust the will of God so as to present our desires to Him knowing that He will provide for them in ways that are perfect. This “offering up of our desires” can only happen if we know and trust who God is.

ASK: If you could describe your prayer life in one word what would it be?

Many Christians struggle in prayer. However, the answer to helping our prayer lives is not improving the mechanics of prayer. The key to a deeper prayer life is to grow in greater knowledge and understanding of who God is. The more I understand who God is, the more I am drawn to Him. The more I am drawn to Him, the deeper my prayer life will be with Him. As we set our minds on who God is, today, we want to focus specifically on God as our Father.

READ: Matthew 7:7-8

In this three-fold description of prayer as asking, seeking, and knocking we see different aspects of prayer and different aspects of its reward.

1. Prayer is like asking in that we simply make our requests known to God, and everyone who asks receives. Receiving is the reward of asking. We must ask with confidence and humility.

2. Prayer is like seeking in that we search after God, His word, and His will; and he who seeks finds. We must seek with care and application. Finding is the reward of seeking. God values persistence and passion in prayer because they show that we share His heart. It shows that we care about the things He cares about. Persistent prayer does not overcome God's stubborn reluctance; it gives glory to Him, expresses dependence upon Him, and aligns our heart more with His.
3. Prayer is like knocking until the door is opened, and we seek entrance into the great heavenly palace of our Great King. We must knock with earnestness and perseverance. Entering through the opened door into His palace is the reward of knocking, and the best reward of all. The idea of knocking also implies that we sense resistance. After all, if the door were already open, there would be no need to knock. Yet Jesus encouraged us, "Even when you sense that the door is closed and you must knock, then do so and continue to do so, and you will be answered." Yet the image of knocking also implies that there is a door that can be opened. "His doors are meant to open: they were made on purpose for entrance; and so the blessed gospel of God is made on purpose for you to enter into life and peace. It would be of no use to knock at a wall, but you may wisely knock at a door, for it is arranged for opening." (Spurgeon)

ASK: What does it look like to ask, seek, and knock in your prayer life? Is there one you find easier? Is there one you find more difficult?

READ: Matthew 7:9-11

When Jesus is seeking to build our confidence in prayer He does so by appealing to the Father heart of God. No loving father would purposefully seek to harm their children. Earthly parents have an innate impulse to do what is best for their children, yet they are flawed as a result of sin's corruption of all humanity through the fall of Adam and Eve, and the quality of their parenting does not match God's. In comparison to even the best human father, God is infinitely better and loving. In order for us to really have a heart for prayer we must first understand how good, gracious, and compassionate God is. Jesus made it clear that God doesn't have to be persuaded or appeased in prayer. He wants to give us not just bread, but even more than what we ask for.

ASK:

- Do you ever struggle to believe that God is perfectly good and will always give good gifts to His children?
- Is there any area of your life in which you do not trust God?

- Prayerlessness is really idolatry. Everyone seeks help from someone or someplace. We all ask, seek, and knock. However, we do not always go to God. Is there anywhere you go for help in time of need other than God?

When we go to someone or something other than God in our time of need we are ultimately saying that they are our shepherd who guides and protects us. As we become aware of these “false shepherds” we must repent of them. Like David, we must say “The Lord is my Shepherd”. Are you willing to repent of your idol and only ask, seek, and knock with God?

MEMORY CHALLENGE:

Encourage your class to memorize Psalm 23 over the next three weeks.