

The Secret Place

Psalm 23 - Lesson 2

Week of: March 29, 2020

As we are studying Psalm 23 we are seeing God as our Great Shepherd. In the sermon last week we saw that, as our Shepherd, God is our only true source of provision. He makes us lie down in green pastures, leads us to still waters, and restores our souls. In order for us to deepen spiritually we must trust God, and God alone, as our provider of all things. Similarly, during our small group study we saw that the answer to growing in the spiritual discipline of prayer is linked to our knowledge of who God is. The key to growing in prayer is not to learn better practices, but to have the eyes of our hearts opened wider to who God is. The more we see God for who He truly is, the more we are drawn to Him in prayer.

In the sermon this week we looked at Psalm 23:4 and saw the presence of God with us is the greatest source of hope we have as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Christianity revolves around the fact that our Saviour is called Immanuel, God is with us. God's presence with His people means everything.

ASK: What does it mean for you in your everyday life to know that Jesus is Immanuel, God is with us?

As we meditate on the truth that God is with us, I want us to also ask the question, "What does it look like for us to meet with Him?" Some people call it quiet time, devotion, prayer closet. Whatever you call it, the important questions are, "What are you supposed to be doing?" and "Are you doing it?"

ASK: What does a daily time with God look like for you?

READ: Matthew 6:5-6

- "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:5-6)

Focus on verse 6. We are given an amazing promise from Jesus. If we seek the Father in "secret" we are promised that He will reward us. It is in contrast to the hypocrites in verse 5 who only pray in public for people to see. The secret prayer mentioned here is a solitary time and place for a child of God to be alone with the Father. God promises to reward this secret prayer.

ASK: What do you think are some of the rewards for seeking God in secret prayer?

As we see God for who He is, and are drawn to spending consistent alone time with Him, what does that time look like? What should we do?

The Secret Place

READ: Matthew 6:7-8

- "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:7-8)

First, Jesus tells us to not mindlessly heap up words like the Gentiles who think they will be heard for their many words. This is a call to intimacy and faith. We do not mindlessly talk to God, but engage with Him in a loving, intimate relationship. And we do try to work God into meeting our demands, but trust by faith that He already knows and desires to answer.

ASK: Have you ever been guilty of mindlessly talking in prayer or attempting to word your prayers in a way to manipulate God into answering?

Jesus gives us a model to follow that is God-focused and powerful.

READ: Matthew 6:9-13

- Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6:9-13)

There are six prayer emphases we will focus on in this passage. As you go through each point ask God to give you a greater understanding of who He is, and the privilege and power that exists in communing with Him in the secret place.

Praise God for Being Your Great Dad

"Our Father who is in heaven"

Start with a few minutes of praising God for who He is. He is your loving Dad. He is perfect in all of His ways. He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Reading a chapter from the book of Psalms will help with this.

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." (1 John 3:1)

Praise God for Being Holy and Powerful

"Hallowed be Your name"

We come to Him in prayer because He is the only One worthy of our worship and prayer. His name is to be revered and kept holy. "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect". (1 Peter 3:15)

The Secret Place

Pray for God to be Glorified in Your Life and in This World

“Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

God reigns when people submit themselves to be ruled by Him. We see Him moving and establishing His kingdom in us and those around us, but we want God to be seen, and worshiped, and enjoyed everywhere. He deserves every heart, and every city, and every nation. He’s worthy of worldwide worship. And we can never rest or be quiet until he has it. Pray for any area of your life in which God is not King. Pray for God to rule in the hearts of others around you. Pray for God to allow His grace, mercy, and holiness to conquer every effort of evil. Pray for God to establish His will on earth and make it tangible and functional across the globe, in the United States, in my state, in my city, in my neighborhood.

“And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30)

Pray for God to be Your Provider

“Give us this day our daily bread”

We must set our hearts and minds to the fact that God is the giver of everything. Take time to present your needs to the Lord and trust Him for all things. Do not presume that you will get it in your own strength, but trust God to be your provider.

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

Pray for God’s Heart to be Alive in You

“forgive us our debts as also we have forgiven our debtors”

The gospel of Jesus Christ covers all of our sins, past, present, and future. We want to take time during our secret prayer to praise God for His amazing grace. You were a rebellious sinner, and God turned you into His beloved child.

As we focus on God’s powerful grace there are two things that will happen. First, it impacts us personally. As we set our hearts on God’s grace He will lovingly convict us of things that do not look like Him. This gives us the chance to confess those sins to God and ask Him for the grace to walk in freedom from it. Second, it impacts our relationships with those around us. Second Corinthians 5:18 describes salvation as reconciliation between you and God. You had a broken relationship with God that needed to be made right. As you praise God for making your relationship right with Him He will bring to your mind relationships with others that need to be made right as well. You forgive others, “as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Pray for God’s Deliverance

“and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

Our struggle is “not against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). The biggest obstacles or opposition ahead of you today are not anything you can see. Someone is hunting you behind the curtain of what you can see, trying to steal your joy in Jesus and rob you of the life he gives. Pray for protection.

“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith” (1 Peter 5:8–9). Resist him how? “Work out your own salvation

The Secret Place

with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13). Ask God for the strength and resolve and faith to fight sin and all of its lies. Don’t try to do it on your own.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Prayer Prompts:

As you end your time together, spend time in prayer. Focus your prayer on God renewing secret prayer in the lives of His people.

- Ask God to make secret prayer the most beloved thing in your life.
- Ask God to free you from the idea that secret prayer is a burden, and will instead see it as a blessing.
- Ask God to bring back Christians who were discouraged in secret prayer, and let them find renewed joy in it.