

March 22, 2015

**Sermon Allen Shriver was the substitute minister since Russ Clark was ill.**

Preaching John 12 verses 20-33 so you might want to use the pew Bibles.

Jesus said in verse 27, “Now my soul is troubled, and what should I say, Father, save me from this hour, no, for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” John 12 beginning with verse 20. And now among those that went up to worship at the temple were some Greeks. They came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their lives, lose it and those who hate their lives in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled and what should I say, save me from this hour. No, it is for this reason I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” And a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said, “It was thunder. Others said, “an angel had spoken to him.”

Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake not for mine. And now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of the world will be driven out and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

There are two kinds of Christians, those who pray their way in and those who pray their way out. Most of us, unfortunately, take our prayer life most seriously when we are trying to pray our way out. What do I mean? When you are rushing to get to an appointment that you are already late for and you don't notice the traffic car until you are already picked up on radar; you try to pray your way out. When you get a letter with a return address from the IRS, you try to pray your way out. When your company is announcing it is downsizing, you try to pray your way out. When you husband or your wife confronts you with the fact that he or she wants a divorce, you try to pray your way out. When situations arise which may cause pain or fear or anger or hardship we are suddenly brought up short. Even those who might not consider themselves very pious or prayerful or even very religious when faced with these kinds of circumstances send up panic prayers. We pray to God for help for getting us out of the mess which we have landed in. We kind of

wonder if maybe God must spend the better part of a day listening to attempts by people to pray themselves out of situations, it must get very old.

Praying one's way out prayers are not very creative or new when you are trying to pray you're out there's time to be eloquent. Jesus may have felt the same way that we do. In verse 27 Jesus says "Father save me from this hour," it almost sounds like "Father, get me out of here." Sometimes we try to dress up our panic button prayers by gilding them with flowery promises. We promise; we will never speed, cheat, lie or steal ever again, if God will ever just get us out of this one. As if God hadn't heard that one before.

But there is another kind of attitude a Christian can take in prayer. Instead of flaying around for some escape hatch, instead of trying to pray our way out, we can to pray our way in. Our prayers should be praying ourselves into our Christian life. We should pray that we might live by desires of God. It is way of the Christian life that we learn to honor God and each other. Confronted with the need to make a mid-life career change, trust God will be with you and will support your inner being as you deal with the changes by praying your way in to new possibility. Finding that the demands of your time are causing your blood pressure to rise, your head to pound and your nerves to snap, step back let God provide rest for your soul by praying your way in to a slower pace. Try to start another commodity of fun for a community of faith that can nature your soul by prodding forward by praying your way into a new address for your spiritual life. Worrying about the strain in your budget and hating the pinched feeling you always have at the end of the month, pray your way in to a new examination for what is an authentic style of life. If you are grieving over the loss of a spouse pray for a renewed love for family and friends. Much of life is beyond our control. We can't run the show. We might as well relax and enjoy the picture.

Why don't we trust God to prepare our hearts for the pain and the joys of life? We must pray our way in to a yielded life, yielded to God. Each of us each of must exam our own prayer life. It appears to me that too often we expect God to be a gofer. Most of you know what a gofer is. It is someone who goes for things, for example, if you are working on something in your house you send your spouse or child to get something for you, that is what you call a gofer because they are going for or doing something for you. All too often we expect God to play the role of gofer. We ask God to bring us better health, to bring us a better job, to change our husband, or wife, child to be more the person that we want. We ask God to give us better neighbors, a better pension plan, better weather or reception on our TV set. We want God to produce. We want results. We want to be able to be able to manipulate God into fulfilling our desires. In our prayers we try to bargain with

God. Lord, I will give up whatever. If you will only. Hollywood, instead of casting George Burns as God just let, *Let's make a Deal* with Monty Hall play the role of God. Yes, indeed, God can be bargained with for things, for privileges. God is not to be manipulated. God is not here to satisfy our needs. We are not to summon God to go for, for the things that we want.

A few years ago Henry Lockabe, challenged the Christian community to rethink its approach to God. In his now classic book called, *Experiencing God*, Lockabe pointed out our approach to God mostly resembles a Christmas wish list; a litany of blessings "giveme" that itemizes what we want. Lord, bless our church, bless my family, bless our ministry, bless my hopes, bless my dreams bless my desires. Lockabe proposes following Jesus' lead and learn to pray not for what you want but for what God wants for us. Instead of asking God to bless our lives, instead of asking God to bless our lives, authentic discipleship is asking God to bless my church my family, my ministry, my home, my desires be part of what you, God, want. Mother Theresa said much the same thing. We talked about shifting our prayers from what we want, to what God wants. In the same Gospel text that we read, Jesus shifts the direction of our prayers to even further to what Lockabe proposes instead of asking God to save me from this problem or deliver me from this mess, stress, distress Jesus teaches us to ask, "God glorify your name in this action." When God's voice rang down from heaven and promises that Jesus' name was and would be glorified. Some heard angel voice, others heard thunder. When your life takes an unexpected turn, when it crashes into a barren spot or overwhelms you with responsibilities, do you hear the din of thunder roaring in your ears or do you a voice of angels offering you a chance to glorify God. It is your choice. You can either try to pray your way out of thunderstorm or you can you can pray way into the glory of God.

Let us pray. Gracious Lord so often we come to you asking that you interfere into the world for us. As when President Kennedy said speaking of our nation, "Ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country." So we too, should ask what it is that we can do for you rather than always seeking after our own interests. Be patient with us. Amen