

The One Who Answers Prayer
John 16:23-33
Sermon Outline

Introduction: To pray, according to Jesus, is to be inside the most powerful circle of influence in the world. What does Jesus promise us and how can we experience the promise more fully?

I) What does Jesus promise us?

A) Direct access to the Father

vv. 23: In that day you will ask nothing of me... Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you...

Jesus said these words on the threshold of a cluster of events that would change world history forever.

The heart of the change: Access.

No one, not even Jesus, will stand between us and the God of the universe.

Not only will the Father listen. He will answer

B) Along with access will come other things

1) Clarity regarding the Father's love.

vs. 25 ...I will tell you plainly about the Father

2) Fullness of joy and peace

vs. 24b: ...that your joy may be full

vs. 33: that in me you may have peace

Prayer is more than a way to get things done

C) Why does the Father give so much to us?

II) How can we experience Jesus' promise more fully?

A) Be more patient

...ask and you will receive does not specify when

In that day refers to a broad period of time extending from Jesus' resurrection to his second coming

B) Take prayer more seriously

Taking stock: How many man-hours did EPC devote to serious prayer over the past week?

One of the reasons we don't get around to serious praying is that we don't know how. The only way to learn to do anything is to do it.

C) Broaden your prayer horizons

Vs. 23 ...whatever you ask in my name

How broad is *whatever*?

Meaning of ...*in my name*

1. On the basis of the favor that Jesus enjoys
2. In accordance with what is on Jesus' heart
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

“Think locally, pray globally”

The terrible disjunction between what is and what should be—both globally and locally—should drive us

James 4: You do not have because you do not ask. You ask, and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions...

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Do you ever struggle with the desire to get into the “inner circle” where all the important decisions are made? Which “inner circles” are you most eager to get inside of?
- 2) Does being an “insider” with God strike you as an unexpected and unusual privilege? Why? Why not? Do you desire that privilege? Why? Why not?
- 3) We can paraphrase and modernize what Jesus is saying here as follows: “The Father loves me so completely and he will be so utterly satisfied with my self-offering at the cross, that you won’t even need to ask me to speak to him on your behalf. Just say my name in his presence and he will listen and act. No bureaucrat will put you off at the door. Nor secretary will bar your access to heaven’s CEO. No officious immigration functionary will shunt your application for status to the ‘never to be reviewed’ pile. Your email isn’t going to get spammed or buried 300 levels down.” What is it about Jesus that enables him to make such a guarantee to us?
- 4) Jesus promises the end of figurative language and a growing clarity about the love of the Father. What if anything makes it hard for you to “see” with conviction and clarity that the Father loves you?
- 5) What is joy and what does it mean to experience the “fullness of joy” (vs. 24). Does this joy elude you? What compromises joy in your experience?
- 6) Discuss the following statement: “We tend to think of prayer as the way to get things done. We have a need—or the world has a need—and so we seize upon Jesus’ promise and ask the Father to act. The Father acts. But that is not all he does. He gives us more than answers; he gives us himself—vividly, consolingly, and with joy.”
- 7) Discuss John 16:26-28 in the light of the mistaken notion that Jesus’ task was to get a reluctant and angry God to give us another chance.
- 8) Jesus does not tell us precisely when God will answer our prayers. Does this comfort or frustrate you? Answer with reference to specific situations in your life.
- 9) How many “man-hours” do you figure EPC, or your small group, put into serious prayer over the past week? How much time did you yourself devote to serious prayer? What factors inhibit serious attention to prayer?
- 10) Praying “in Jesus’ name” means, among other things, to pray in accordance with what is on his heart. According to the Lord’s Prayer, what matters are on Jesus’ heart?
- 11) What practical steps can you or your group take to be sure that your prayer is more frequent and more driven by the terrible disjunction between the way things are and the way that they should, and will one day, be?