

“Pray”
Shepherding Series 4/8
July 21, 2013

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (NRSV)

This week marks our fourth week in our SHEPHERDing Series. Today we are learning about Prayer and how to simply Pray. I hope you notice how our series is working with one another and follows simple commands about being a Shepherd. Show Up, Hear Them, Encourage and today, Pray.

Our Scripture today is a prayer for another person whom Paul knew to be faithful. It has always been one that stood out to me when I thought about praying for another person. You see to us this is often a foreign concept outside of Church. We are not really in the practice of taking dedicated time out of our days to pray for another person. And please recall that I am speaking in generalities, for some of us the time we take to pray everyday is our particular time with God.

But in ancient times as you have probably noticed throughout Scripture prayer is in some ways a form of greeting. It was a common practice to pray for another person and to make it personal. To call out their transgressions and to lift up their good works in the name of the Lord was conventional. We start our letters with Dear, and end with Sincerely. They started their letters with Blessed be God whom I lift you in prayer to...

Prayer can take many forms: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, for any taking note that is our ACTS of Prayer. Prayers can also take any combination of those ideas, just turn to the Psalms and you will find many versions of prayer from Praise to Lament and everything in between.

Prayer is also personal and general. Every Sunday we pray together in corporate prayer. We pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray saying Our Father who is in Heaven Holy is Your Name... we know this prayer we are familiar with it. We have many familiar prayers do we not? Ones we learned as Children around the dinner table, right now we are teaching Sophia one God is Great God is Good and we Thank God for our Food. Amen. We have those prayers we learned before we went to bed...Now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my Soul to keep.

Yet at some point we sense the need to ‘grow’ up and move beyond those simple prayers and pray on our own to God and yet we also struggle innately with doing it right. For some reason we hear our ministers praying so eloquently every Sunday and we grow trepidatious about how to pray...I know this I certainly could not pray how some ministers pray with all the right God language. It is intimidating is it not? To hear someone else say God who is mighty and Glorious and above all things, in all things and through all things, we lift our praise to you, our rock and our redeemer. You know what burdens our hearts and what we need to confess, hear us Oh God.

That to be honest is not natural, we as ministers have to learn a lot of that to become comfortable with it and in a lot of ways we have the liberty by our profession of throwing out all the awesome God language just because we can.

But that is not what we as individuals need is it? We need to know how to pray for one another and be intentional in prayer for one another, and most importantly be comfortable asking God for prayers for one another.

We need to get over our hang-ups about how to pray and just PRAY!

Prayer in its simplest form is conversing with God. Talking to God, telling God what is happening with our days. It is a conversation with the one who knows the number of hairs on our heads who knows us so intimately and so completely that we cannot fathom the depth of that knowledge because God knows parts of ourselves that we still need to discover.

And yet today we are not focused on praying for ourselves, but on praying for others. Praying for them. Truly lifting them to God. Greeting them and leaving them with a prayer as they did in ancient times. As those who follow after the Shepherd we need to pray for others. We need to say God I lift up so and so, I lift them to you for you know her needs you know his heart you hear her cries you see his tears. Lord you know her you know him and in that I pray for you to be with her, be with him.

I want us all to take a moment shortly and silently ask God to help us pray for others and by praying for others help ourselves in our own prayer lives. I give us this time now but I also challenge each of us to find time to pray to God for ourselves and for others. We need that time spent with God as part of our spiritual needs. We need that time with God to center us, to remind us who hears our prayers. We need this time to practice in prayer so that it no longer becomes practice but is a natural part of our lives.

So let us pray...Amen.