

Worship 19
Prayer As Worship 1
Deut. 4:6-8

Introduction:

1. Relationships are two-way streets. Nowhere is this any clearer than in the text of Scripture. God extends Himself to us and we respond. Just like in all relationships there are positive and negative responses.
2. God always extends Himself to us positively. He invites us into relationship by means of His graciousness, kindness, and compassion. We can do one of three things: 1) we can ignore it; 2) we can respond with hostility; or 3) we can respond in faithfulness and thanksgiving.
3. God has initiated the relationship by communicating with us. Prayer is our effort to communicate with Him. It is a faithful response communicated with humility and thanksgiving that perceives God as a gracious rewarder of those who seek Him (cf. Heb. 11:6).
4. When the prophets of Baal called to their god, "There was no voice and no one answered." They called out from morning until evening. They leaped about the altar they had made. They cut themselves with lances until the blood gushed out. "But there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention" (1 Kings 18:26-29).
5. It is an awesome thing to communicate with the God of heaven, but it is even more awesome that He would respond to us. But herein is His glory manifest. He cares. He hears. He responds.
6. What is the place of prayer in worship?

Discussion:

- I. There are a variety of Hebrew and Greek terms that are translated "prayer" in the English.
 - A. The English word itself involves an earnest request but it is most generally used to describe an address to God either in audible words or in thought.
 - B. In Hebrew the terms used carry the ideas of
 1. Pleading (ex. Isaac prayed for Rebekah because she was barren, Gen. 25:21).
 2. Entreating (ex. Moses prayed that the Lord show him His glory, Ex. 33:18).
 3. Interceding for another (ex. Abraham interceded for Abimelech when Abimelech took Sarah as his wife, Gen. 20:7).
 4. Beseeching (ex. The sailors beseeched God as they threw Jonah overboard, Jon. 1:14).
 5. Asking (ex. David's song asked for the peace of Jerusalem, Psa. 122:6).
 - C. In Greek the ideas are similar.
 1. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus instructed His disciples to pray not to be seen of men (idolatry), but to pray in secret to your Father who will reward you (Matt. 6:5-6).
 2. Simon was instructed to pray to the Lord that the intention of his heart might be forgiven (Acts 8:22). Both these passages see God as rewarder and forgiver, a God of graciousness.
 3. In 2 Cor. 13:7, 9 Paul prayed that the Corinthians do no wrong and that they be made

complete.

4. In Rom. 10:1 he prayed for the salvation of Israel.
 5. In 1 Tim. 4:5 he spoke of blessings being received with gratitude, sanctified by the word of God and prayer.
- D. While the terms used may seem to not add significantly to our understanding of prayer, they do stand in stark contrast to the prayers of idolaters.
1. First, they are responsive to God having communicated Himself to us.
 2. Second, they recognize Him as a gracious rewarder of those who seek Him (cf. Lk. 11:9-13, 18:1-8).
 3. Third, God hears and responds.
 4. These are not insignificant. Idols have mouths but cannot speak; ears but cannot hear; and eyes but cannot see. Their only response is a loud SILENCE!

II. Physical gestures are often associated with prayer.

- A. In 1 Sam. 8 Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord and spread out his hands toward heaven and prayed (22-23). In verse 54 it says that he arose from before the altar, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven.
1. Such posture may be reflective of the suzerain context of God being a great king (Psa. 47:2; 95:3, 6).
 2. God is a great king above all. Solomon as his vassal humbles himself, kneeling with hands spread out.
 3. So in Jesus' parable of the tax collector he stood some distance away, unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Lk. 18:13).
 4. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane "knelt down and began to pray" (Lk. 22:41).
- B. While there is no prescribed posture for prayer in Scripture humility before the great king is only appropriate. This is why we bow our heads in prayer. It is not so much the posture that is critical but the humility.

III. Perhaps the best way to gain insight into prayer is to look at concrete examples of prayers. In the remaining part of this study (multiple lessons) we are going to look at some specific examples from the first testament and then the new testament. We will try to analyze them and learn from them. In the remainder of this hour we will look at some examples from the first testament.

- A. There are many examples of prayer in the first testament.
1. Jacob prayed as he returned from Haran in anticipating of his meeting Esau (Gen. 32:9-12).
 2. Samson prayed before causing the collapse of the building on the Philistines (Judges 16:28).
 3. Hannah prayed in connection with her desire for a child (1 Sam. 1:11; 2:1-10).
 4. Moses prayed to be able to cross over and see the promised land (Deut. 3:23-28).
 5. All of these are very personal and offer us much insight, but let's examine a lesser

known prayer.

- B. It was by Abraham's unnamed servant and is recorded in Gen. 24:12-14.
1. The servant is on a mission to find a wife for Isaac.
 2. He commits the mission to God, although he is looking for something in the woman that will "fit" for Isaac.
 3. What is he looking for? He is looking for a woman who exhibits the same kind of lovingkindness that he sees in God. She will demonstrate this in giving a drink and watering the camels. This will be a mark of her character. It is no arbitrary test. Given what the servant is looking for we are not surprised that God would answer such a prayer.
 4. The address: "Yehweh, the God of my master."
 5. "Show lovingkindness ("hesed") to my master Abraham." He has accepted the God of Abraham. He perceives Him as a God of grace. He appeals to God on the basis of his understanding of God's faithfulness. Is he thinking of the promises God has made to Abraham???? And how a wife will "fit" in with those promises????
 6. What he says is, "Here I am, now help me accomplish this mission."
 7. But notice that he sees his part as serving the purpose of God. "May she be the one whom You have appointed for your servant Isaac." He submits himself to the unfolding of the plan of God. He is asking God to use him in accomplishing God's own purpose. He will be used considering his dependence upon the divine "hesed."
 8. Immediately the perfect candidate arrived at the well (15-27).
 - a. She was very beautiful.
 - b. A virgin.
 - c. Gave the servant a drink upon request.
 - d. She volunteered to draw for the camels.
 9. The servant praised God (27).

Conclusion:

1. Note that it is God's lovingkindness that is determinative when it comes to prayer. He is indeed a rewarder of those who seek Him.
2. Humility is the appropriate response. Not my will but yours. Serve His mission.
3. Submit your will to the will of the great King and you will be blessed in what you do for His blessings spring from His lovingkindness.
4. If you are praying for a spouse, first, submit yourself to God's mission. Second, ask God to lead you to a spouse that will demonstrate the lovingkindness that characterizes your God.