

## Asking

Series: *His Last Day*

John 16:23-28

April 14, 2022

Thank you for coming tonight to this special Holy Week service. A friend of mine posted on Facebook today, “The calendar does not make Holy Week significant. Our approach does. Intentionality in how we journey from the cross to the tomb changes everything.”<sup>1</sup>

Tonight, we conclude our series “His Last Day.” We have looked at the Upper Room Discourse from John 13-16. We’ve not been able to look at all that Jesus said to His disciples. That would have taken more weeks than we have in Lent. But not to worry; I am thinking about writing on this passage as the final book of my “Words of Jesus” series; that’s the series with “Hanging On In An Upside Down World” and “Living Right Side Up.” But you are going to have to wait on that; I’ve got two books to write before that one.

One of the things that I have yet to mention about this passage is its recurring teaching on prayer. Of course, Jesus taught a great deal about prayer, including an example of prayer that we have come to call the Lord’s Prayer.

So, it is fitting that in His last teachings to His disciples, as He taught them about service, the Holy Spirit, being connected to the Father, and the response of the world, He also teaches about prayer. Four times in the Upper Room, Jesus teaches about prayer. And, when you look at them, you see the Keys to Answered Prayer:

### **First, Pray in His Name.**

One teenager view of prayer: “God answers prayer four ways: “Yes”, “No”, “Wait awhile”, or “You’ve got to be kidding!”

Three of the four passages on prayer in the Upper Room Discourse say to pray in His name. I’m not going to read them now; we will be reading each one as we progress through this message, but it’s almost a broken record: “Ask in My name, and it will be granted.”

Pastors have been invoking Christ’s name in their prayers ever since. I do that as well. I seen it as my way of acknowledging the meaning behind the phrase. And what is that meaning?

“In Jesus’ name” is not a chant or a tagline or magic words like “Open sesame.” It means we’re doing something Jesus would have done, something He commanded to be done. “In Jesus’ name” means those things that are in the character of Jesus. “In Jesus’ name” refers to those things that are in His will.

One commentator suggested that you think about your prayers, then take out an imaginary sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. Above the column on the left write the word “Comfort,” and above the column on the right put the word “Mission.” Place your requests in one of the two columns. Here’s the criterion: If God answers this request, will it contribute more toward our comfort or His mission? You see, Jesus doesn’t care if we are comfortable. “Think about what he tells his disciples. He tells them they’re going to be cast out and killed for his sake. The promise of answered prayer is given on the heels of that reality. They aren’t to pray for earthly comforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Miltenberger, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10159679363344763&set=a.67450714762>

They're to pray for the kingdom of heaven to advance in this world: 'Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'<sup>2</sup> Jesus taught us to pray for the advancement of His kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

**The second Key to Answered Prayer is to Seek that which brings God glory.**

There was a tenant in an apartment building who was a widow woman who loved God dearly. Her landlord on the other hand despised God and her faith. One day she ran out of food and money and with no one to help she turned to God in prayer. She prayed, "Oh dear God please help me in my time of need, I look to you and you alone to provide my needs, now please send me some food, for I'm tired and hungry. The landlord heard the prayer through the wall and though, "I'll show her once and for all that God doesn't care for her, that He doesn't hear and answer prayers." So, he went to the grocery store and bought a bill of groceries and used his access key to get into her apartment and set the groceries on her dining room table. When the woman came in and found the groceries, she began to praise God and thank Him for answering her prayers. The landlord was listening and went to her apartment and told her she was a religious fool, and that God didn't give her the groceries he said, "I gave you the groceries." "No," she said, "Your wrong and I'm right, God sent me these groceries; He even had them sent by the devil."

John 14:13-14:

*You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!*<sup>4</sup>

We can pray all kinds of prayer: health, wealth, fame, influence. Shoot, I'm praying that I sell a million books so that Myra can retire. But will the fulfillment of that prayer bring glory to God? Will God be glorified through me becoming a New York Times' bestseller? I might like to think so, but I'm sure I'm a little prejudiced on this matter.

No. Jesus said, "Ask anything and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father."

Jesus said in John 13:

*The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him.*<sup>5</sup>

When it was learned that Lazarus was sick, He said:

*Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.*<sup>6</sup>

Often, when Jesus healed people, they glorified God.<sup>7</sup>

So, if we want prayer to be answered, we must ask for the purpose of glorifying God.

**The third Key to Answered Prayer is to remain in Christ and His word.**

We talked about being connected to God in John 15, and in verse 7, Jesus said:

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:9-11

<sup>3</sup> Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in John.

<sup>4</sup> John 14:13-14 (NLT2)

<sup>5</sup> John 13:31 (NLT2)

<sup>6</sup> John 11:4 (NLT2)

<sup>7</sup> See Matthew 9:8, 15:13; Mark 2:12; Luke 7:16, 17:15-18, 18:43

*But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!*<sup>8</sup>

Remaining (or abiding) are necessary to be able to pray prayers that God will grant.

Those of you who are married see this connectedness played out in your marriage. After a few years, you begin to know what your spouse is thinking. You can even sometimes finish their sentences. You know what I am talking about? You know what they are thinking, you know what they are going to say, because you are so connected.

That's the way it is when we are connected to Christ and His word. Through the study of Scripture, through our prayer life, we connect with Christ.

Last month, Myra wrote a \$15 check to the church for her Women's Bible Study book. When it hit our checking account, only \$5 was taken out. The next morning, I went to the bank branch and said, "I owe you money." But when I told them the circumstances, the one lady said, "How do we handle this?" She probably didn't have much experience correcting a banking error that benefitted the bank. Most people would probably keep the money, but I knew that the Lord wanted honesty from His servant. There was no question in my mind that I needed to get this fixed.

When we are closely and intimately connected to the Lord, then we know what the Lord wants, so that we pray along those lines.

**The fourth Key to Answered Prayer is to pray for things that produce fruit.**

A pastor thought God gave Him an idea of making disciples for Jesus Christ, and he presented it in the monthly Elders' meeting. After giving his most impassioned plea and really "selling" the idea, the board voted down the pastor's proposed changes 12-1. The head elder looked at the pastor and said, "Well pastor, it's 12 votes to 1. Looks like you've been out voted. Our time is up for the evening, so will you please close in prayer."

The pastor, not wanting to give up yet on what he felt God was leading him to do then lead in prayer. As he prayed, he lifted his hands up to heaven and prayed, "Looooorrrddd - I know my brothers here do not have the same vision You have given me. Please help them to see that this is not MY vision, but YOOOOUUUUUURRRR vision!"

At that exact moment, a lightning bolt with a loud clap of thunder burst in through the window in the meeting room, striking the table, splitting it in two and knocking all the elders to the floor. As the dust cleared, the pastor looked at the head elder and said, "So, what do you think about that?"

The head elder, dusting himself off, sighed and said, "Well, I guess that's 12 votes to 2 then."<sup>9</sup>

John 15:16:

*You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.*<sup>10</sup>

How many of our prayers are for the increase of the kingdom of God? How often do we pray for those who are far from God?

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<sup>8</sup> John 15:7 (NLT2)

<sup>9</sup> Mondaymorninginsight.com, downloaded from www.sermoncentral.com

<sup>10</sup> John 15:16 (NLT2)

Our prayers should be about the Lord giving us the opportunity to go and convert sinners, as well as accomplishing things that will remain, even unto eternity. So often, we pray for such little things, such transitory things. And while God hears the smallest prayer, He wants us to pray for the big things, the things that are going to last for eternity. So, pray for our church's ministry to the lost. Pray for your opportunities to share the Gospel. Pray for things that will last, that will produce lasting fruit.

**The final Key to Answered Prayer is to pray with joy.**

And then John 16:23-27:

*At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy. "I have spoken of these matters in figures of speech, but soon I will stop speaking figuratively and will tell you plainly all about the Father. Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God."<sup>11</sup>*

There are two wonderful products that come from prayer. First, receiving. Jesus said that we would receive answers to our prayers. One commentator said, "Praying opens the windows of heaven for one to receive many blessings."<sup>12</sup> The second is rejoicing. We will have abundant joy. And isn't that the case when prayer is answered? We have abundant joy. Prayer lifts our souls. There are numerous lines in Scripture that indicate that.

A sour-faced Christian is not a praying Christian, for prayer brings overflowing joy to the person who prays.

If you aren't seeing answered prayer, what are you praying? Is your praying shaped by Scripture, the Word of God? Does it come out of the connection you have with the Lord? Is your praying a ritual or the overflow of God's life flowing through you? Is it something you do because you know you should, but you rarely see results?

My friends, we need to pray in Jesus' name: in His character, His will, His way.

We need to pray for things that bring glory to God.

We need to remain in Christ and His word.

We need to pray for things that will produce lasting fruit.

We need to pray with joy.

Grant Stubbs and Owen Wilson were flying up the sloping valley of Pelorus Sound in New Zealand, admiring the beautiful panoramic view. Then there was a cough.

"Bless you, Owen."

"For what, Grant?"

"Your cough."

"I didn't cough."

"Oh."

Then there was a wheeze and a sputter, then silence as their micro light plane engine died.

Both men were Christians who immediately prayed to God for help.

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<sup>11</sup> John 16:23-27 (NLT2)

<sup>12</sup> Analytical Bible Expositor – John 16:24

The pilot prayed that the tiny craft would get over the top of a ridge and that they would find a landing site that was not too steep – or in the nearby sea. There was an instantaneous answer to prayer as they crossed the ridge and there was an airfield, one the pilot didn't know it existed until then. After they glided the powerless craft to a landing on the grassy strip, the pair noticed they were beside a 20-foot-tall sign that read, "Jesus is Lord--The Bible." When we saw that, they started laughing.<sup>13</sup>

Pray for the right things with the right motivation, and you will see answers.

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<sup>13</sup> From a sermon by James Bohrer, "WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?" 1/14/2009, downloaded from [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)