

## Victory of the Lamb – Promises, Promises – July 14, 2019

### John 16:23 God Answers Every Prayer – Pastor Bill Limmer

In the movie Bruce Almighty, Bruce Nolan's is ticked because life isn't going the way he wants it too. He is passed over for the anchorman position and he is hot at God. Do you ever get angry with God? Ever throw a temper tantrum like a small child in Target when they don't get the toy or soda that they want. (Not that I have done that.) I want you to know that if you have never been angry with God you are one of the few people if not the only person to never have become angry with God in this history of the world. Well Bruce is anger at God and in the movie God gives Bruce his Almighty power. At first Bruce thinks this is cool and uses his power and prayer answering abilities to go on a spree where he gets this thing that thing, and everything he wants. And then he realizes that he has to answer everyone else's prayers too. In one scene he is go back and forth throughout the house with his finger in his ears because his ears are ringing with all these prayer requests. He thinks there has to be a better way. There has to be a way to file all these prayers. And suddenly the whole room is then filled with various filing cabinets. Realizing the filing cabinets are in the way and that this family will see them, he comes up with the post it note concept. And with a rush of wind yellow post it notes fill the house from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, including Bruce, his dog, and his wife who is sleeping in their bedroom. Then he comes up with the idea of email prayers. And all the prayers are sent to his AOL email account. He opens up his account to the AOL announcement "you've got prayers." He downloads the prayers, over 1.5 million of them. He begins typing away as fast as he can answering every prayer "Yes." He checks to see what kind of dent he has made in all these prayer requests. And much to his dismay he now has over 3 million prayer requests to answer. He uses the short cut key and answers Yes to all. And he walks away saying "now everybody is happy." Except not everybody is happy.

This morning we are beginning a four-part series called Promises, Promises. Pinky promises, handshake agreements, and even written contracts can fall apart at the snap of a finger. As promises get broken over and over, it becomes difficult to trust. God's promises are the only ones that stand the test of time; all promises are "yes" in Jesus.

Sometimes it's difficult to believe God's promises are true. When we face challenging times like unemployment, heartbreak, loss, and death, we wonder if we can really believe what God tells us. But God promises us that he's there for us, he won't condemn us, he's our strength, and he'll make all things new in eternity with him.

Today the promise of God is that he hears all of our prayers and God always gives us his best Yes. Jesus says it this way.(John 16:23) **Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.**

As we start to drill down into this promise we need to do is just be honest about prayer. One of the things we need to be honest about prayer is that **sometimes we have struggles with prayer**. A lot of us know we should pray but that doesn't necessarily help a lot. Some of us feel we don't know how to pray. What kind of words do I need to use? What time should I pray? Where can I pray? Do I have to close my eyes? Fold my hands?

We sometimes struggle with prayer because of time. We wake up and we have a million and one things to do. We think we don't have time to pray but we should. So we tell ourselves we will pray before we go to bed at night. And we get into bed and we watch Netflix or the news or scroll social media and then we crash. We think we are not accomplishing much when we pray. In a world of bottom lines, efficiency, logistics, time management we have attempted to make prayer a results based activity.

We sometimes struggle with prayer because we think God is too big to care about me. And for the record God is way bigger than we can fathom but part of his bigness is that he is in and is concerned about every detail of life. Psalm 139 tells us that this big God knit us together in our mother's womb and that we can't go anywhere from his presence.

Another struggle we have with prayer is we try to use prayer as a bargaining chip with God. God I will stop looking at porn if you will turn my relationships around. God if you give me this job, I will read my Bible everyday. God I will give you ten percent if you have me win the lottery. If you heal my son, I will go to church every Sunday. We think if we just clean up this area of my life, or if I am just more sincere in my prayer that will push God's yes button and I will get what I want.

Another reason why we struggle with prayer is because God is sovereign, he is over all and we want to be over all. We want to be God. We want to be Gepetto and we want God to be Pinocchio. We want to be moving the strings. Or another way of looking at it is we want God to be our genie in a bottle. Our wish is his command. God is God. He does not run the world by hiring the consulting firm called Mankind. James put it yet another way in James 4:3 **"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."**

Another reason we struggle with prayer is because we make it about getting glory for ourselves instead of God receiving glory. We make it about our name and our glory instead of Jesus' name and his glory.

Our struggles with prayer are many but let's move on to some Pro-tips on prayer because I want you to get God's best yes. Pro-Tip 1. Prayer is an act of heart felt worship Matthew 15:8 gives us the key to this: **"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.** Prayer is about the internal not the externals. It recognizes I need you God. I need you just as much in my best days as I do in my worst days.

Pro-Tip 2. Prayer is about relationship. Think about talking with your best friend. What does that conversation look like and sound like. You talk about this thing and everything, with this emotion and that emotion. Just real life. Now think if you went to your best friend and all you ever talked about was what you wanted your best friend to do for you.

Pro-Tip 3 Prayer is taking the time to leave good things behind so do the greater thing of prayer. Prayer is not a waste of time, it is the best use of time.

Pro-Tip 4. When our verse John 16:23 the **Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.** Praying in Jesus name means praying with faith and praying about the kingdom of God consistent with his Word and will and trusting in his good purpose in our lives. It means praying that the name and mission of

Jesus is lifted up that God would receive the glory. My hearts desire is that I would be like Him. Prayer is not for gratifying natural desires for the glory of God. Psalm 37:4 **Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.** The more you and I are in tune with God and his plan the more our lives and prayers will reflect that.

Pro-Tip 5 James 5:16 **The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.** How's that going for you? Rely on Jesus righteousness and not yours and you will pray in confidence and certainty.

Pro-Tip 6. Here is one way you can pray: **A – Adoration, C confession, T Thanksgiving, S – Supplications**

Pro-tip 7. Waiting is often a part of God's best yes for us. Waiting is tough for most of us. We don't like to wait in line at the fast food place, (2 waiters per restaurant in France) we don't like to wait for a red light especially if there is no cross traffic (Pic-n-Sav Hwy 100). Perhaps worse than waiting is having to take a detour. In our prayer life **Sometimes there are detours.** How many of you when you are on vacation and you are cruising down the highway and you see this big orange sign that says Detour ahead – jump up and down, turn up the tunes, and go this is going to be great – a DETOUR! No, detours are the worst. But what if the detour was God's best yes. What if the stuff that drives you crazy is actually protecting you or even driving you to God? When you are flying in an airplane you see things from thousand of feet above but when you are on the ground you can only see so far in front of you. God sees things from above. He sees things we don't see. He sees things that would hurt us, maybe even destroy us. And so he diverts us, gives us a detour. Maybe God is frustrating you because he is taking you on a detour **but God always gives his best yes.**

As I think about it, there have been numerous times where I have poured out my heart to God and I was so annoyed with him because he was taking me on a detour. Upon reflection, I ought to have been praising him. What is annoying you? What is hard for you? Finances, relationship. God knows what is hard for you. Are you asking God to change something but God loves you enough that he takes you on long road because it is his best yes? So when things are going rough, the job sucks, the relationship ended, life isn't making sense, just remember the word Detour. And when you are on a detour you can know that God is up to something.

God took a detour because it was his best yes for you and for me. Jesus detoured from heaven to earth. He detoured his pure godliness and took on human flesh. He went through the detours of being misunderstood, judged, and condemned and crucified. He took the detour so that you and I could have relationship with the Almighty, powerful God. He took the detour so that the road to heaven could be open to us. Jesus took the detour because it was God's best yes for you and me. Jesus is the answer to every one of our prayers. Jesus is God's best Yes.