

**Victory of the Lamb –How to Talk with God – Psalm 150 –  
February 19, 2023 – Pastor Bill Limmer**

How would you describe your prayer life? Is it vibrant or stuck or non-existent? Today we are beginning a new series **How to Talk to God**. And we are going to answer this question: **How do I pray?**

How would you define prayer? – Tell the person sitting close by you or type in the chat what is your definition of prayer. And it is ok to say, I don't know or I'm not sure.

Here is another question. When is the last time you prayed? Sometimes we get busy, and we don't make time to pray. For some of us it may have been a while and now we are a little leery of praying because we think that God might be upset with us because we haven't prayed in a long time. When I was in college my Hebrew professor, would sometimes start the class with a life lesson. We all liked the life lessons a whole lot more than we liked Hebrew. And his life lessons always hit home. One day he asked us, "Have you ever gone a while without praying? He asked, what do you think that God says when we come back to him after we haven't prayed to him in a long time? He says, "I have missed you. I love to hear your voice!"

Sometimes we struggle with prayer because our focus is on the act of prayer instead of our focus being on God. We wonder what if I don't say the right thing or I say something bad. What if I stumble over my words or if I can think of what to say? James Meeks, a now retired pastor in Chicago, tells the story of when he was a young man getting a job and he needed his birth certificate. He went to his mom and asked her if she knew where his birth certificate was at. She told him it was in the top drawer of her dresser. So he walked into her bedroom and opened up the drawer of his mom's dresser. And there he found not only the birth certificate he was looking for, but he found a lot of other things as well. Like a card he made for his mom when he was in first grade. It said, **Hapy Birthday** (without the extra p) – he was after all only in first grade. He found a Christmas card he had made for his mom, when he was in second grade. The cover said **Mary Christmas**. He was after all only in second grade and to his defense he said, Mary did have something to do with Christmas. Long story short he found all these things he had made for his mom full of mistakes, bad grammar, scratch out words and pictures. It was junk except to his mom. To his mom all these things were precious. Maybe our grammar in our prayers isn't great, maybe we will weave back and forth, remember this thing here and that thing there, if we were to get a grade in writing it might be an F but since it is prayer to God it is not junk but **precious in his sight**.

Here is another question. What does a praying person look like? **Picture on the screen of a little child praying bedside**. Often, we think of a praying person kneeling like the little boy in the little child in the picture even though most of us don't pray with that posture. Many of us from our worship experiences in our church or home think of someone standing or sitting when they are praying A lot of us think of a person with their hands folded and eyes closed. For some of us as we picture a person praying, we see their silhouette and their mouth is moving but no words are audible.

And that leads us back to our question: **How do I pray? 1. You pray with your heart**. Pray is a heart-to-heart talk with God. Prayer is relationship with God where we put our very lives into the hands of God. Prayer says my faith is no longer in me but in God who is much greater than me. **How is with your heart**.

Since prayer is a heart-to-heart talk with God, our prayers are only to be directed to God. What comes to your mind when you think of God.– a person, is it a person with a body, force some kind of power or

just draw a blank. No idea what he is like. Most people have an idea about who God is. Most think he is controlling things, or most things but not all things. Most people have an idea of God that best suits them, at least most of the time, someone who is around part of the time, like an old grandfather or an emergency chord to pull in time of need. I won't be arrogant enough to tell you that I know all about God, but I will take you and me into God's Word and have encounter some of his characteristics. Psalm 150 **Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. <sup>2</sup> Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. <sup>3</sup> Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, <sup>4</sup> praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, <sup>5</sup> praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. <sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.**

**Praise him for his acts of power.** One example of the power of God is the incredible complexity and beauty of the world. It is awe-inspiring. **(picture of the universe from James Webb telescope)** vastness of the universe, with countless galaxies and stars, each one a masterpiece of design and order. **Isaiah 40:12-15 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens.** Think of all the oceans, lakes, rivers, and he is just holding all of that in his hand and there is still plenty of room on his palm. **Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? <sup>13</sup> Who can fathom the Spirit<sup>[a]</sup> of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor? <sup>14</sup> Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding? <sup>15</sup> Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.** All the nations are like a drop in a bucket, dust on a scale to God. That's incredible – **WOW.**

God is not only powerful, but he is also all powerful. God is not only all powerful he has what Psalm 150 calls **surpassing greatness.** Let's look at some of the traits of surpassing greatness that is to say that God's greatness far surpasses ours.

We try hard to be faithful and trustworthy to be perfect – and that's a lot of work and a burden that many of us are carrying. We leave early when the weather is bad, so we get to work on time. We do our best at work. We do our best to be there for our family and friends. We volunteer in the community and at church. But no matter how hard we try to be faithful, we're not perfect. Inevitably, we're going to miss skip a child's basketball game, be late for a meeting, forget all about a meeting, double book a meeting time, or forget about that volunteer assignment. I remember when Andrew was about 9 years old, and I can use his name because he is not here so he is not going to get ice cream, that I would play catch with him after supper only to have the phone ring during supper which led to the throwing down of supper and a hurry after to the hospital.

Because we can't always be faithful people, it's reassuring to know that God is faithful. He can always be counted on to show up in our lives. God always keeps His promises. God always hears our prayers! God is with us always! Have you ever wondered why something has happened. God never has. He is all knowing! And so he works through all things for our good. He is faithful not just to us but to his goodness. Deuteronomy 32:4 **He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.** He never ever doesn't carry out his word. **Wow!**

We are always looking for the silver bullet, the next big thing that will really make a difference in our lives. The secret to becoming organized. The quickest way to get in shape. The surefire plan to financial stability. Five steps to better parenting. The key to getting everything done right. We read books, listen to podcasts, and sign up for online on demand classes. And while organization, physical fitness, financial security, and knowledge are all worthy pursuits, we need to understand that the reason we have all this striving is because we know things aren't the way they are supposed to be, we know we aren't the way we are supposed to be.

And theologically that is called sin. Sin is missing the mark. Sin is destructive and painful. When someone sins against you, you know how bad it hurts. When we sin, it hurts others in the same way. And you know what is even worse, is that when we sin, we are sinning not just against people but that all powerful and holy God that holds the whole world in his hands. And this God, who is faithful and all powerful has promised the wages of sin is death. And so if we sin, just one time, we are on the outside looking in without a chance. We have no way to be who we were created to be. We have no way of living with God where we were always supposed to be. We need forgiveness with no way to earn or deserve forgiveness and we know that because nothing we have tried everything, and guilt remains. We are not who we want to be. We are not who we are supposed to be. We are doomed.

But this where it gets amazing because all is not lost because of God's surpassing greatness. A greatness that we could never have imagined of, unless God revealed it to us.

Here is how God reveals his surpassing greatness to you. By nature, because of our sin, because of your sin you are spiritually dead and homeless. It's horrible position to be in but you have no way to change it. You can wish it to be changed but that won't change it. In addition to that, there is this Almighty, all powerful creator God, who is faithful and just and holy. And holy means without sin and absolutely hating sin. And he sees your spiritual bankruptcy. And because he is not only holy, just, faithful but loving he loves us even though we don't deserve it. He decides he is going to gift you spiritual renewal, life, and a spiritual home so that you will never be homeless again. It is not going to cost you anything, but it is going to cost this surpassing great God everything.

So here is what love did. He didn't change the standards. He is faithful and just he can't do that. He sent his Son Jesus to take on human flesh and become your brother. Jesus took your place and lived life the way you were supposed to, he was the person you were supposed to be in every situation. But that wasn't enough. Since the wages of sin is death, he had to die for you as well. So, he not lived in your place but he died in your place. Jesus was lovingly obedient to God for you and went to hell's heart for you even though you didn't deserve anything from anyone, let alone that from him.

Tim Keller in his book *Forgive* writes that from the cross **"Jesus did not cry out, "My hands, my hands" or "My feet, my feet. Or My head, my head. He certainly could have. His body had nails and thorns penetrating it. He was slowly excruciatingly dying of blood loss and asphyxiation. Yet he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It was the spiritual separation from God that was the ultimate agony.** And he suffered that in your place because he loves you that much even though you didn't deserve anything from anyone, let alone that from him.

And because of that all who believe in this surpassing greatness of God are restored to spiritual life and relationship with God. He has restored you to who were supposed to be in the first place and all along. And are once again a child of God. Wow. That's incredible. That is the surpassing greatness of God and leads us to say WOW. **How do I pray? The how is with a Wow!** The wow is praise him for who he is!

I want to give you this opportunity now to pray a prayer of praise to God for who He is, in your own words, in your own posture, with your own heart.