

The Way of Love Session Two: March 3, 2024

PRAY: Dwell intentionally with God daily

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him,

“Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” – Luke 11:1

“Lord, hear our prayer.” - Book of Common Prayer

Jesus teaches us to come before God with humble hearts, boldly offering our thanksgivings and concerns to God or simply listening for God’s voice in our lives and in the world. Whether in thought, word or deed, individually or corporately, when we pray we invite and dwell in God’s loving presence.

***Pete’s Comments:** We teach the acronym ACTS to our Confirmation classes here at St. Stephens, where ACTS is Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. The Lord’s Prayer includes all of the elements except for Thanksgiving, but that is implied in our request for daily bread. I think that ACTS is a handy way to deepen or revamp one’s personal prayer life as is, of course, an extended meditation on each line of the Lord’s Prayer.*

For Reflection and Discernment

- What intentional prayer practices center you in God’s presence, so you can hear, speak, or simply dwell with God?
- How will (or do) you incorporate intentional prayer into your daily life?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to pray?

Pete’s Questions

- 1. In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Jesus often rises early in the morning and goes to a quiet place to pray. In John, Jesus prays more often in front of the crowds and gets dramatic responses. Assuming we’re more inclined to follow the synoptic practices, do you have a special time of day for prayer?*
- 2. Most people in their prayer life are strong in one area, and weaker in others. For example, many of us excel at supplication but are weaker with thanksgivings or pure adoration. Do you have stronger and weaker areas of prayer?*
- 3. Do you think your own life would benefit from a more focused prayer life? That is, setting apart the same time of day every day, keeping a journal, or some other regular aids and disciplines?*

WORSHIP: Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and dwell with God

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. – Luke 24:30-31

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

– Book of Common Prayer, 361

When we worship, we gather with others before God. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to God. As we break bread, our eyes are opened to the presence of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made one body, the body of Christ sent forth to live the Way of Love.

Pete's Comments: *That's a pretty good description of the Eucharist, but it seems to be missing the entire first half of the service, where we gather to hear and reflect on the Word of God. It's kind of like Thanksgiving at Grandma's house, where the larger family gathers in one place, shares stories about Grandma, Grandpa, and the rest of the family, then sets the table, then eats. The idea is to leave the gathering nourished with food, of course, but also with stories and insights into family members that we didn't have before.*

Bonus, if you're interested: *if not, easy to move on.*

The word eucharist is interesting. From the Greek eu-charis, where charis is gift (think of people with charisma, and the holy oil we use in anointing, chrism; the word christ means "anointed one," but also means "one who comes as a gift.") Paul uses the word a lot in the introductions to his epistles, where we says "Grace and peace to you." Here, charis is translated as "grace." Add the prefix "eu" to it, and of course we get "good gift" or "good grace." But that's not what eucharist means! The word comes to us not in its compound form, eu+charis, but is taken as a whole and defined in any Greek-English dictionary as "thanksgiving." Its most common verb form is eucharisteo, I give thanks. Thus, the second part of our service, the part with bread and wine, is called "The Great Thanksgiving." We return to the linguistic root of the word when the celebrant offers the consecrated Bread and Wine to the people with the words, "The gifts of God for the people of God."

For Reflection and Discernment

- What communal worship practices move you to encounter God and knit you into the body of Christ?
- How will (or do) you commit to regularly worship?
- With whom will you share the commitment to worship this week?

Pete's Questions

1. *It's pretty obvious that corporate (all together) worship is no longer a priority for many people in our congregation. How are you able to keep it as a priority?*
2. *Ritual has been a staple of society since societies were first formed in our earliest history. What parts of our rituals are essential to your prayer life, and what parts are less essential or even expendable?*
3. *What steps can you take to strengthen your own participation in corporate worship?*