

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Planting The Gospel

PART

3

TITLE

Pray Faithfully

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 6:7-13



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Providence, it is great to see you. If you're in this room or at home on live stream or some other venue on this Sunday, we are really glad that you have joined us and if you're a guest with us, welcome. We are thrilled that you are here as well. I want to ask you to actually turn with me to Matthew chapter six. Matthew chapter six if you brought a Bible. If you didn't, there are some in the seats near you and if you don't have one at home, we would love for you to take that Bible home as a gift because we think it's really important for us to be in God's word every single day of our life.

In fact, if you don't know what to read, there's even a plan in the back at Next Steps. There's a little desk back there with a little plan of what you can read each day. There's several of us at Providence actually just walking through the whole Bible in one year so it makes no difference when you start that. Certainly join us. It is great to see you. We're in the middle of a series, a five week series. This is week three. It's called planting the gospel and the burden and the passion and the vision is really birthed from a vision and that is to see God actually use us, that 1000 of us over the next three years would lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ and then to keep meeting with them to actually disciple them so that they grow and are inclined themselves and ready to share their faith with somebody else.

These last few weeks, it's fascinating to have my inbox and to read what is sent in. I think there's a lot of people that are fearful. There's a lot of people who thinks that the goal or that number is a bit too out there, it's audacious, but I want you to just think about for just a second. I've shown you this same passage the last three weeks. I want you to think about what Jesus said to us. This is not the only thing that he said to us. This is not the only instruction that he gave to us.

It's just the last one that he gave to us when he was here on the earth. He rose from the dead, acclaimed that he had all authority and on earth that had been entrusted to him and then he tells people who had believed in him, seen him resurrected, had been forgiven of their sin, been given his righteousness, they're his disciples and he says to them, "Therefore," meaning as a result of everything that's just gone down, "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." There's a little passage. It's in 2 Corinthians and Paul writes there and he likens the job of a pastor to a wedding director who's responsible to prepare the bride for the time when the bride sees the groom.

Ultimately that's the deep passion that I have in this. You need to know this. I get no matter what we put up there in terms of a number, it can be confused as ambition or things like this but I want you to think about it like this, okay? I go to bed thinking about you standing before Christ and 95% of all believers in America have never led anyone to faith in Jesus Christ in spite of the fact that the last thing that Jesus told us all to do is lead someone to faith in Christ. The number 1000 if you're wondering. That just seems like a over the top goal. You know there's over 1000 adult members who claim that Jesus Christ is their Lord and savior who've been instructed by him to go make disciples.

What this vision is that's so grand is that we would do what we're supposed to do once in three years. That's not that big. You say, "Well, wait a minute. It's one thing to share the gospel. It's another thing to actually lead someone to faith in Christ." That's absolutely true. That's why at the end of three years if we've been sharing the gospel frequently and faithfully and praying and caring and loving and 10 people come to faith in Christ, one person came to faith in Christ about 30 minutes ago in that back room which is awesome. Let's just say nine more over the next three years. We're going to rejoice just the same because it's our responsibility to be faithful and it's God's responsibility to give the fruit. The Bible also talks about different kinds of soil samples and he says that if we're faithful to scatter enough seed, then there's a really good chance that some of those seeds are going to fall on good soil.

One of the things if you've never led someone to faith in Christ, I know that that step from maybe where you're at now to actually leading someone to faith in Christ, it may seem so large you can't imagine how you get from where you're at to what that feels like. What I want you to know is this. Is that when it happens, you're going to see that it's one of the most amazing experiences that God has given to people on this earth. It is so joy giving. It creates such gratitude. Whether or not God gives us that opportunity or not, we don't know but what we do know is that he's going to confirm his pleasure in our heart through our faithfulness, our obedience to him. Now, I realize that there's fear. There's fear. People have written me this week, "Are you afraid of being shared the gospel?" Yes. Of course I am. Everyone's afraid and we know that because every time the Bible talks about sharing the gospel with someone else, before and after he says, "Now, don't be afraid."

It's normal. It's normal for you to be afraid. You're not immature if there's fear. It's normal and God knows that. He affirms that. That can't be our license to not do it but he understands it's there. I also know that there's some people, even in this room this morning and perhaps in some other room, the fact is you're just searching. You're looking. You're not yet a Christian. We just want you to know, we are really really glad that you've come. Really glad that you're here. You know just as well as we have that we've not always share our faith with the winsomeness that we want to and so we're trying to grow and so you can be patient with us, but you can also look and think if you're searching of what life would be like in following Jesus, well, this is a part of it so you can look at that.

It's really been encouraging. I just want to thank those of you who have written, even over the last week. It's been fun just to read of the stories. Your stories of faithful attempts to share your story or His story with other people. I believe that God is inspiring our heart. Maybe slowly, but inspiring the heart of providence to be faithful in sharing the gospel with other people, but isn't it true that inspiration without power always causes frustration? If you wake up in the morning and you get all inspired at 4:30 in the morning to get out of bed to go to the gym, you get there right when the doors open at 5:00 except the doors won't open because the doors are closed because there's no power in the building. They shut the whole thing down.

All the sudden your inspiration at 4:30 is met with frustration at 5:00. It's the same thing with a spiritual life. It's the same thing with sharing the gospel. God has identified five very specific ingredients. Each of these ingredients is absolutely valuable. It's absolutely limited, though. When you mix them together, it creates tremendous power. Power to shake the world. What we want to look at today is the third of these ingredients and that is to pray faithfully. What does prayer do to our life?

Now, before I pray, I'm going to pray in just a moment, then we're going to jump in Matthew. The fact is there's probably no two greater areas of the Christian life where believers feel more guilt and fear and that is in prayer and sharing the gospel and we're going to wed them both into one message. You're going to just leave feeling really guilty. No, I hope not. I hope not. I hope not. We want to pray that the Lord, instead of mobilizing us through guilt, we want to be mobilized by God's grace, to be inspired with the picture of what life could be like in these areas of our life and maybe for us to take a step of growth. I think for us to grow, it's going to take God doing a miracle in our hearts. Let's pray to him and ask for that miracle, okay?

Father, we acknowledge that You've called us to this task and we accept it. We take responsibility for it and we want to do this well. We want to do this winsome like you did it, Jesus. I pray today that you would open up our eyes and help us to see the greatness of Jesus and the amazing privilege that we have to be your representatives on the earth. We pray asking for Your forgiveness for the areas we've misstepped. We ask, God that you would give us courage, even in the area of prayer where sometimes it just feels so stale. God that you would awaken that area of our life and help us to see the power and the joy in it. I pray that You would do that even as we read and so would You give us belief and understanding, courage to apply it to our life. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, this sixth chapter of Matthew, it falls right in the middle of a three chapter sermon of Jesus called the Sermon on the Mount. It starts in chapter five. It goes to the end of chapter seven. Jesus walked up on a mountain one day and a big huge crowd followed him up the mountain and he started preaching and so we call it the Sermon on the Mount. Mountain. It's interesting what he does there. He's just starting his ministry and what he wants to do is he wants to talk about his kingdom. In chapter five, the whole sermon starts with the value system of heaven itself. The kingdom. His kingdom. He says, "Now, if you want to know what my kingdom is like and what the people are like, this is what we care about."

He talks about being humble and he talks about being righteous and he talks about being repentant and he talks about faith and he talks about mercy and kindness and love. He says this is the value system of my kingdom. Then what he does is in the second part of chapter five is he levels the field. He says the fact is that every single person here who has sinned and is therefore disqualified from entering into my kingdom. He even, I believe looked at the pharisees because there's one section of it and he says, "Now, listen. I want you to know that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and pharisees, you won't go to heaven because they're not going either."

It's a devastating thing to say in front of people, but he knew who was going. He knew where faith was. He says, "Your righteousness has to even exceed theirs." They hardly had a category for this because theirs was the most extreme forms of public righteousness. Praying five times a day, fasting two days out of every week. It was an extreme, extreme moral people. Jesus says that's not enough. Then he takes five different sections and he shows each one of us that we have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and therefore are unholy and can't enter in to a holy kingdom. Then he gives us a tremendous amount of hope though and he says, "But there is one and it's me whose given the law, God's word, perfect obedience and is perfectly righteous. He came to die and to be buried and rise from the dead," and he says, "But if you go with me, if you believe in me, if you turn your eyes, look at me and believe in me, I'll take away your sin and I'll give you my perfect righteousness so that you who were disqualified can be qualified.

This is what chapter five was all about is getting into the kingdom. You get to chapter six and now he shifts it just a little bit and he says as you prepare to go to the kingdom, it's really easy while you're here on the earth to do things for the praise and the applause of man. Don't do that. Live for my kingdom. Live for the honor of my kingdom. Live for the rewards that will come in my kingdom. In the midst of talking about living for his kingdom and not this earth, this kingdom, what he does is he wants to pause and teach us how to pray. To teach us how to pray. It's an amazing thing and this is what he says. Let's start in verse five.

He says, "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward, but when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Now what can we learn in these verses about Jesus and about his heart that can serve us as a propellor to move us to help us to share the gospel, to share our faith with people in this world." Three things, the first is this. It's that Jesus desires our heart to be moved by His mission. Jesus desires our heart to literally be moved and motivated by his mission. I want you to think about what's happening here in real time. Sitting there in front of Jesus is this enormous crowd of people who don't know how to pray. Maybe they're like us. We pray and it feels wooden. It feels like our words are all in knots. Maybe it feels like bronze covers our ceiling and we're just wasting our time.

Maybe it feels like we're just so distracted and so we go over here and then all of a sudden we're supposed to be praying this and thinking this and all of a sudden, wait, I'm not supposed to be thinking about my work. Let me pull that thought back over here. Prayer becomes hard. Joy, peace, power is not what a lot of us think about when we associate words with our prayer life. All of their life, this crowd of people have been imitating a model that left prayer feeling mangled. For those of you who have ever been fishing, you'll see this picture and you know what I'm talking about when you think about mangled lines. When the line gets all knotted up and you reel it in and all the sudden it creates a bird's nest right in the reel.

The fastest, easiest way when this happens to you, you really have one of two options. You can quit fishing. That's what some people do with prayer is they just praying. The second thing is what Jesus does and he grabs that knot and he basically cuts it out and he says, "Don't pray like this. Don't do this. This is not how I intended." What he does, he cares so deeply about the joy and passion that we have in praying to him because that's what he created it for, that what he does is he tries to unravel the mess. He just cuts the line. He says, "Let's not do it this way." He says, "Look, you guys know. You know your models. You know the people you've been following. They love to stand in the corners and in the synagogues and use all these lengthy tons and tons of empty phrases in order to be seen to impress people."

You've seen all that. He grabs it all and he cuts it off and he goes, "Don't be like them. That's not what I created. That's not the gift that I've given you to talk to me at any time. This is not how to do it." Then Jesus, what he does is he rips all the line out of the reel and he says, "Let me restring it the way that it should be strung. Let me help you with your prayer life." What he says is pray then like this. He's going to teach us how to pray. I love what he does here because he uses the word like. Pray then like this. In other words, every time you pray this is the words you have to say and don't veer off of these words now. He says pray like this.

What he is going to do here is he's going to serve us in a way that I hope that you'll see is life transforming. Actually what he does here because what Jesus is going to do is he's going to literally download what's in his heart into our heart so that when life squeezes us and what's in the heart comes out the mouth in our prayers to God is what comes out actually reflects not just our heart but his heart. You see, the fact is is a long time ago I memorized this prayer. The lord's prayer. A lot of us have probably memorized this prayer. Most of you didn't memorize it in the context that I memorized it because the context I memorized it was that the varsity football team at a public high school. The coach said you need to memorize the Lord's prayer.

That doesn't happen a whole lot today does it? The reason we did that, he asked that is because at the end of each game, we would gather at the 50 yard line he'd give out several charges. We'd take a knee and we would say the Lord's prayer together. There was never a single time that I never thought any of those phrases and had the conscious thought to associate it with sharing my faith or the kingdom of God or evangelism or what he's doing in the world. Never one time and yet what you see here is just that. He says, "Let me teach you how to pray. Let me restring the reel so that the line comes out and goes back really, really smoothly." He says, "Pray then like this." He starts.

Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. Hallowed means God may your name be seen as holy. May your name be appreciated. May your name be loved. What he's saying here is this. "Listen, I'm going to install my heart in your heart so that you're going to start praying things like this. Father more than anything else I want right now, I want your name to be loved and appreciated in my neighborhood where it's not. More than anything else I want your name to be loved and exalted by my children or my uncle or this country where it's not. I want people to love your name like I love your name."

The next phrase. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What he's saying is this. Is that when my passion is in your heart, this is what you're going to be saying. You're going to say things like, "Father would you establish your kingdom here on this earth even if it means wrecking my kingdom? All that you love and value in heaven. All that's right and beautiful and noble and excellent and praiseworthy in heaven. Would you bring those things down to the earth so that we can establish them here? Would you inaugurate your kingdom right here on the earth? Would you do that?"

Then it goes into three different things where we're asking God to do something in our life. He says, "Would you give us our daily bread? Would you forgive us and then would you protect us? Would you deliver us from evil?" I think what Jesus is saying if you understand the context of what he's trying to do is downloading his heart into our heart so that it would come out of our mouth when life squeezes us. What he's saying is this, "God I have directed my entire life around your mission and to that end, would you provide what I need? To that end would you forgive me when I get off course? To that end, would you protect me each day to keep me from getting off course? To living for some other kingdom?"

It's amazing to me that every phrase is anchored to his mission. Every phrase is anchored to people seeing him as holy and righteous and savior. The Lord over heaven and earth. Everything is anchored to a mission. You say well what mission is that? Well, it's the rescue mission that God determined that he would put himself to when we sinned against him and broke fellowship with him. You need to understand that this rescue mission, it's going to end in success. He says it. Habakkuk 2:14 says this, "The earth will," not might be, could be, I hope it will. No. "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Providence, listen. This mission is going to happen.

Every single person that comes to faith in Jesus Christ means the kingdom is growing. No matter what the church looks like. It's size in a given country, the kingdom of God is always advancing because everyone that trusts Christ is added to it. Don't you see that in this passage is also the echo of hallowed be your name? What he's saying is this. Is that if we truly understand what God really cares about in the world and what he's really after in the world and that starts coming out of our mouth, we're going to see Habakkuk 2:14 and say, "This is what you're doing. You want the knowledge of your glory literally to cover the entire earth," and that's what it means when we say, "Father hallowed be your name." Let your name be loved and appreciated to the corners of the earth, to the corners of my home, to the corners of my neighborhood.

Some of you are sitting here and you're thinking, "Wow, that's interesting. How did he pull it off?" Well, how he pulled it off was he sent his son Jesus Christ to live a righteous life on the earth and then his son went to a roman cross, his own volition where he was crucified to pay for my sin and your sin and the sins of the world. He was buried, he rose from the dead and then he said, "If you'll turn and look at me and believe in me and trust my accomplishments on your behalf, I'll take away all of your sin and I'll give you all of my righteousness and you'll be qualified for my kingdom." This is the rescue.

It's an amazing thing if you really think about it. If you've never trusted him, you can do that today. You can do that today. You can trust Christ today and your sins will be forgiven. He will give you righteousness. His righteousness to you today. You have to turn and you have to look and you have to believe. What's amazing is then God took those who did believe and he creates a church. The big church is made up of lots of local churches just like Providence. What he does with us is he takes us who have believed in him and he makes us the channel through which the mission is going to be accomplished.

If it's true that Jesus does desire that our heart be moved by his mission, then we should apply this to our life by asking, let's honestly evaluate what moves our heart. Think about that for a second. What is it that moves your heart? When you're squeezed, what comes out your mouth? The best way to know is to find out or to listen to yourself pray or listen to yourself when someone asks you this question. "Hey let me ask you something. What can I be praying for you about right now?" When you're asked that question, maybe ask these questions. Does Jesus glory and the salvation of people populate your prayer requests? Does Jesus salvation in the lives of lost people populate your small group or life group prayer requests?

Some of you are like, "Wait a minute. Are you saying that we can't ever pray for our kids or for cancer or things like this?" No of course. Of course. God tells us this. He says, "Put all your little systems away and talk to me like a father. You're a child. I'm a safe father. Talk to me." Some of you are all bound up and you have to go in order. I gotta adore him, then I gotta confess to him, then I gotta thank him. All of a sudden, you keep finding that morning after morning after morning what's on your heart keeps interrupting your prayer life and it causes knots. Let me give you a license. The license is this. Start with where your heart is at because wherever your heart is at is going to come in the back door no matter where you're praying.

Start and say, "God this is what's on my heart. This is what's burdening me right now." He says that this is a license. Do that. Anywhere. If it's your kids, if it's cancer, if it's heart disease, if it's a job, unemployment, finding whatever it is, you bring it to the Lord and you bring it to your life group also. Those are important things. What he's saying here is this. He's asking us this question. "Does my mission make it into the desires of your heart? Do you ever think when it's time to share requests in your life group, does it ever come into your mind this? Guys, if there's one thing. I know there's a lot going on in my life, but the majority of people on my street they don't love the name of Jesus Christ and that breaks my heart. Would you pray for my neighbors?"

What if this kind of prayer life that was so centered around the mission of God, it wasn't just seen in our life group, it was seen in our life group because it lived in our heart. It wasn't a guilt motivated thing like, "Well, I'm about to go to life group next week so after last week's sermon I'm going to talk about my lost neighbors." What if you just wanted to talk about your lost neighbors? Your lost children. That God would work in their heart. If God ... This is the next point. This is where we get to. If God is sovereign, and he has a sovereign will that's set on accomplishing a mission, then why enlist us to pray about it. This is the second point I want to show you and it's this. It's that Jesus ordains prayer as a means to accomplish his mission. He not only wants us to be moved by his mission, but he literally ordains prayer as the means to accomplish the mission. This has always been stunning to me what you see here.

Honestly it moves past stunning into I don't quite understand it. I just know that it's true and so I believe it and act upon it. Think about what's happening here. Jesus is asking us to ask him to do what he tells us he wants to do. Think about it like this. Let's just say that there's a missionary over here that I want to support. How crazy would it be ... Shouldn't say the word crazy because that's what God does. How interesting is it that I would come to you and say, "Now, listen. I want to give to them but I need you to ask me to give to them." Think about it. Pray then like this. Our father in heaven. Hallowed be your name.

Jesus wants his name hallowed. We could just say, "Well, Jesus go hallow it. Get it done. Knock yourself out." No. What does he say? He goes, "So this is what I want. I want you to ask me to hallow my name. Your kingdom come your will be done. Alright. Well, if you want your kingdom to come and you want your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, do it." He says, "No, I don't want to do it without you. I want to make you part of the equation. I need you to be praying that my kingdom would come. How about Matthew chapter nine verse 38? There Jesus says, "Look. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Who's the Lord of the harvest?

It's him. He sees his farm and he goes, "You know these rows need some laborers. Look at those laborers over there. I should call those laborers to work these. This is how I'm going to do it. Hey church. Would you ask me to go talk to them because these rows they need laborers?" Do you see how interesting this is? Do you also see how important it is if you see that for us to actually be doing it? What he's doing is this. The reason that we need to pray when God is sovereign has authority over all things is because he has made us part of the equation to get it done. God is not only ordained the end but he's also ordained the means to the end. It's an amazing thing if you think about this.

For most of us we think of prayer, it's hard. God rescues us out of sin. He pulls us into a lifeboat and he goes, "Guess what everybody? I'm sovereign and I've got a mission and this is where we're going and I've already ordained the path of the water, but I want you to pray." Most of us are like, "Well, wait a minute. This paddle. It's called prayer. That's a lot of work. I trust your heart anyway, so I'll tell you what. How about I just sit luxuriously and ask you for another pillow so that the lifeboat can be more comfortable and I'll just trust you. I trust your good heart. You just get me home and you get everyone else home who's supposed to get home and this will be a great thing."

He goes, "No, I want you to literally push against hard water and the reason is because I've not only ordained the end of the water, I've ordained how you're going to get there. I've ordained the means." You see, God in his incredible mercy loves the lights in rescuing us and then taking those who he's rescued and placing them on the rescue team for others. He tells us, this is your role. I want you to be praying. I want you to pray that people would come to faith in Christ. Providence, let's agree to participate in his mission by praying. If this is really a part of it that he's ordained your prayers, then we can't be silent. People's eternal destiny is at stake. People's lives and his name and his glory is at stake.

Tonight, both services already, I already struggle with saying this because I don't want to guilt you into this. Honestly I don't. Guilt is such a terrible, ineffective poisonous fuel. It is a fuel but it's just a nasty one. It just makes everyone feel sour. I don't want you to feel guilt. Tonight, six times a year we have a prayer and worship tonight. One of them is tonight. Every single time I've ever stood up on this stage and begged on the same day so I know you're all in town. Anywhere between 1500 and 2000 people to come back to pray in order to do what we're talking about right here about 300 people come back.

I'm always tempted. I'm like, "Maybe I just shouldn't say anything." Then I have an excuse for why we didn't come. Frankly, sometimes I feel embarrassed. Man I just plead. I don't know how to help people see the importance of this. What if a revival in Raleigh is waiting our prayers? Yeah but the park is so nice. Do you see what I'm talking about? My invitation is this. If you don't want to come or if you already have plans, then between now and the next one, I would simply encourage you to pray God would you help move my heart to want to do that? If it's really that important, you're sovereign over the universe. Brian may be wrong. If he's right help me. Help me to see that it's important for me to actually come back and pray.

There's another significant point here and that's this. Why? Why is all this important? Why pray? It's because Jesus promises power to praying believers for his mission. Jesus knew his commission to make disciples, that those disciples would go hallow his name throughout the earth. It required a power that we don't have. He knew that life transofration of people requires a power that we don't have. He knew a few things about us. First of all is he knew that unbelievers are unable to see the savior. They're unable to see the savior. They're not unintelligent. They're just unable to see the essential nature of Jesus Christ. How important he really is. This was me for 16 years. I grew up in a home for 16 years.

16 years where I heard the gospel, I believed that Jesus died and rose again like I believe I'm holding a piece of paper, and I did not see how he was consequential to my life.

Yeah he'll keep me out of hell. Help me to get to heaven, but alright whatever. I just couldn't see. I'd look at it. Oh it's Jesus. Never stirred my heart, never stirred my affection. Nothing. He was a concept. He was a savior but not a friend. This is how most people are. They look at Jesus and they just conclude I just don't get it. I don't see why he's so significant to you. There's a reason for this. Jesus knew this reason. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that, "The God of this world," that's Satan, "has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." We often assume that the power in sharing the gospel comes in the slickness or the competency of our presentation, but the heavy lifting always occurs where our fingers can not touch and where our mouths can not reach.

It always happens in ... There's a spiritual battle over every single person. Ephesians chapter 6 verse 12 says this. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood," that with pp. We're not just trying to persuade people. "But against the cosmic powers over this present darkness." Every unbeliever you know. There is literally a spiritual battle taking place that you can not see and the only way for you to get in that battlefield is by praying. It's the only way you contribute to it. You pray. You try to love them. You try to share with them but ultimately there's a blindness even to what you're telling them. The only way that you can get in that battlefield is to pray. Is to pray.

Not only are unbelievers blindfolded, but Ephesians six says that evil hands, the evil hand is literally holding that blindfold tight so they can't see. He also knew something about us. He knew that believers are unable to move the heart. He knows that we don't have the power to remove the blindfold. As intelligent as Paul was and he was an intelligent dude. He knew that he was helpless. He knew that he was helpless. 1 Corinthians chapter two verses three through five says it this way. It says, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

You see, Providence, the clear presentation of the gospel is important and we'll get to that on week five, but we must remember that the hearts of the people we're talking to, Ephesians two says that they're dead in trespasses and sin just like ours were. Their eyes are blindfolded. They have a hand of evil holding that blindfold tight. Every single person you know who's an unbeliever, they're important, they're valuable. Just like these doors, though. They're locked. They're locked. God didn't give you the key. He told you who has the key. It's the Holy Spirit and he told you how to access the Holy Spirit who can unlock that lock. That's praying.

God has power for his mission and he gives it to those who pray. Acts chapter one verse eight says it this way. After Jesus commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples, he orders them to stay in the city and pray. Then he says why. He says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." These believers after Jesus resurrection, they prayed for 10 days in a row. Peter stood up and preached for 10 minutes in a row. Thousands of people who were dead came alive spiritually. The church was born. Guys, we don't have the power. We have to pray. Let's pray for the salvation of unbelievers. Each week, we've tried to give you a little homework, a little tool. Something just to help you to prod you.

In the snapshot this week if you have one with you, you can pull it up and look at it but there's a little tear off with some circles on there. As you look at these circles, the first one you see is family. What this is is think about your family. Is there any family member you have who's an unbeliever? Brother, sister, parent, child, aunt, uncle, cousin. You just write their name there. You may have more than one so we gave you two other smaller circles. You can write someone else's name down there. You can look at your neighbors and you can do the same thing. Think about your street. Is there anybody that you know on your street who doesn't appreciate and love the name of Jesus? You can just put their name down. You can pray for them. Same with a coworker or friend. Then the fourth one. The word other there. That's just simply anybody else you could think of.

Perhaps it's somebody that you'll never talk to and perhaps it's a celebrity that you just really appreciate but you know that they don't know the Lord. Maybe you just put their name in there. What do you do with this? This is just a reminder. You can have it in your Bible. You can have it in your bathroom on the mirror and when you go through say hey there's that name again. God would you open up their eyes to see the glory of Jesus Christ? It's just a little tool. We want to give you this tool and ask that you would consider doing it this week. Filling it out and praying for people this week. This morning, we have the opportunity to do something that we love to do at Providence and that's to actually pray and commission missionaries and mission teams to go.

They're walking in here. Here comes Dave. He's going to lead the parade. The first team leaves in about a week. They're going to fly into Prague and then move from Prague to some smaller towns where they'll have an opportunity to do a lot of evangelism through basketball. Teaching basketball to folks. Then the second team that will be going they'll go to Boston and they'll actually do the same thing through basketball and baseball just to be able to hang out with people with the hope of sharing the gospel, why we are here with them. Then there's the third team. In fact, you can see on the screens here that there's a lot of names. They're hard to read because they're small but on the right hand side, you see thumbs up. Thumbs up is a camp. It's a camp for families to bring their family and it's a camp for families that have a child with a significant illness like cancer.

It's an opportunity for us to go and just care for them, to love them and to show them the love of Christ and perhaps pray for them and maybe even share the gospel with them. In the New Testament, when they commissioned people, it was an interesting thing. You see the same thing here. This is a good looking group isn't it? It is. It is a good looking group, and yet you know and they know and I know that the power is not in them. They know that they're not the rescuer and they're not the hero but they know who is. We all have a part here. We pray for them and we even give to them so that they can go so that we can be sending them but then they go.

As we all have a part in this, what we're really saying is Jesus we believe you. We believe that you care about the world and that you're on a rescue mission and we your church has been created for that purpose. We resign and yield our heart to say that's what we're going to be about because we believe you. In the New Testament when they would pray over missionaries as they went out, they did something that was interesting. They would gather around them physically and literally. It says they would lay hands on them. There's times in the New Testament where they laid hands on people to hurt them, but that's not in this case. They would lay hands on them.

What they were doing symbolically was saying this is that your part of our body. We're one body and we're sending you out. You're an extension of us that we have as much at stake in you going as you do as you're going. Then they would pray. I realize that this is a big room so we don't do that. We don't ask everyone to come up and lay hands on them. Then there's a lot of other people in the fellowship hall and the amphitheater. Maybe even home right now and they can't do it either but symbolically what we do here frequently is just as we pray we lift our hands up where we're seated and just act like you have your hand on a shoulder up here. Even those in the amphitheater, fellowship hall and home. I know it's kind of weird, but just in faith as an expression of faith, I would even encourage you to reach your hand out so that you can participate during this time. If you would, let's pause and let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we come to You. The maker of every good thing. The ruler of every single person on the earth. Even those that do not know you. We ask, Father that Your name would be hallowed to the ends of the earth. We pray that your kingdom would come and your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. I pray that You would provide for this team their daily bread. I pray that You would forgive them and cleanse them. God I pray that You would protect them from evil in the weeks that come. I pray, Father, for us as a church family that as we all participate in sending and going and praying that you would help us to be passionate to remember these who are going. To continue to pray for them. I pray, Father that you would give them safe travel. I pray that you would provide the needs, the cost for these teams. I pray Father that You would go before the leaders to give them wisdom. Father, we pray that as a result of loving and caring and praying and sharing, that You would unlock people's hearts and people in Boston and in Czech and these families on the western part of our state, God, that some of them would literally be saved.

That is our prayer. We ask that You would be glorified and we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.



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