

Knowing the God of Prayer

Proclamation Life Groups; Week of Sunday, March 15, 2020; Tyler Clark

Sermon Theme: When God's Word is read, revealing the faithfulness, righteousness and mercy of God, the people understand their sinfulness and helplessness more clearly, responding in the only appropriate way: a prayerful plea for mercy. We, too, must cling to the righteousness and mercy of God - seen most brilliantly in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I. The Condition of Prayer – Read Nehemiah 9:1-5

- A. According to verse 3, what precedes the prayer of the Levites? What does this tell us about the relationship between God's Word and our words (i.e. prayers) to Him?

- B. As you think through some of your earthly relationships, how are those relationships affected when one party does all of the talking without listening? What might be some of the repercussions of not allowing the Word of God to shape and form our prayers to God?

- C. As you prepare for the possibility of more time for reflection and focus over the next few weeks, how do you plan to use your time to know God more? What are some potential distractions to you spending time in God's Word and prayer and how do you plan to combat those distractions?

II. The Cornerstone of Prayer – Read Nehemiah 9:6-38

- A. As you reflect on the Levites' prayer in its entirety, what strikes you about the prayer? Who is the primary focus? How is this prayer different from the way that we typically pray?

- B. Read verses 5-6 again. How is the knowledge of God's sovereign care "a pillow for the child of God to rest his head" (Charles Spurgeon)? How might this knowledge combat our innate tendency to fear and become anxious and give us confidence as we pray?

- C. What characteristics do you see about God in the Levites' prayer? Specifically, where do you see God's faithfulness, righteousness, goodness, and mercy? In contrast, what do you see about man?

- D. The peoples' first request comes in verse 32. What is the foundation of their request? In other words, where is there confidence that God will hear their plea?

III. The Compulsion to Prayer – Read Nehemiah 9:32-38

- A. As much as the people try to keep their renewed covenant in verse 38, they ultimately fail. The same is true for us. How do we cast ourselves onto the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? In what ways do we see the righteousness and mercy of God in Jesus (Romans 3:21-26)?

- B. Read Luke 18:9-14. What are the differences between the Pharisee's prayer and the tax collector's prayer? Why does the tax collector go home "justified"?

- C. In what ways can you cultivate a dependence on God in prayer in all seasons, in times of want AND in times of plenty? How can you grow in DAILY walking "through the low door of humility in order to receive the joy of forgiveness" (Martin Luther)?