

1. Intro
  - a. Today we're going to talk about prayer & prayer is a weird thing
    - i. B/C everyone talks about it, but often nobody really defines what it is
      1. Positive thoughts, rote prayers, smoke, condolences, candle
    - ii. People just expect that you should know what it is, how to do it, etc
      1. It's not natural even Jesus' followers asked Jesus how to pray
  - b. Today we are going to talk about prayer
    - i. What it is, Why you do it, How you do it
2. Acts 4:23-31
  - a. *When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God (Acts 4:23-24a, ESV)*
    - i. Their situation drove them to pray
    - ii. For most of us, this is the case, isn't it?
    - iii. Prayer is communicating with God & takes difficult to remember to communicated w/ him // cry out to him (instinctively)
      1. Need him always, but pain/difficulties = God's megaphone
      2. Maybe you're in the midst of a situation like that today
        - a. "I don't know if I'm praying right, how I should pray, etc."
    - iv. We can learn a lot about prayer from the prayer that they pray
  - b. *Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, (Acts 4:24b, ESV)*
    - i. You have to know who you are praying to
      1. This is a key idea b/c we often pray to God as if he were us
        - a. "Let me win the lottery" - "If I were God, I would..."
      2. They knew who God was b/c they knew Bible, Jesus
    - ii. He is the sovereign Creator. You are created. (potter & the pot)
      1. Groundbreaking concept - line in the sand
      2. If HE is the creator, He has authority, He has power, He has right
      3. If we are created, we exist for him, we need him, we are limited
        - a. It would make sense, then that we would cry out to Him
    - iii. We normally treat him like a genie (examples) - THE CREATOR
      1. In light of who he is, that seems silly, doesn't it?
    - iv. Why do we pray? On what basis? **B/C of who God is**
      1. You instinctively know some of this, but it needs to grow
  - c. *...who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed"— (Acts 4:25-26, ESV) \*\*describe picture of king\*\**
    - i. He is, by nature, the Cosmic King, the King of kings, the God of gods
      1. We are, by nature, rebels standing against him
      2. A funny rebellion in God's eyes (following verse in Psalms)
    - ii. "through the mouth" The King gives decrees and we should listen

- iii. The King allows us to speak bring our petitions and requests to Him
  - 1. Us speaking to God through prayer
- iv. Think of how mind-blowing that concept is - speaking to the Cosmic King
  - 1. Game of Thrones // Sword of Thrones & Joffrey
  - 2. Hebrews 4:16, former rebels boldly approach the throne of grace
  - 3. What a privilege, but how often we ignore it or use as last resort
- v. God's character is the foundation and fuel of their prayer
  - 1. Knowing God is the Creator & King will change how you pray
  - 2. If you know he is King, you aren't going to pray like YOU are king
- vi. Why/How? // **We pray because of who God is**
- d. *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (Acts 4:27-28, ESV)*
  - i. Not cosmic clockmaker, but intimately involved with transcendent power
  - ii. It is mind blowing to try and think about infinite vs. finite
    - 1. Realize our inability to see how all the pieces fit
  - iii. We are finite, but we often try to give God advice in our prayers on what he should do, don't we? (examples)
    - 1. Foolish b/c ce can't know the whole plan because we are finite
    - 2. Why we need to rely on God's leading, why he sent the HS
      - a. What to do, Who to talk to, when to talk, what to say
      - b. Not in what cereal to eat, but in spiritual guidance
    - 3. Spirit will lead if you are in communication (word/prayer)
  - iv. They prayed because they knew who God was and (here's the incredible consequence) Knowing who God is, you can know who you are too...
    - 1. It's not until you realize how small you are, are you really ready to pray // That's why it takes tragedies and pain to wake us up
- e. *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. (Acts 4:29-30, ESV)*
  - i. Why not just do a pep rally to get people out there to talk? Why pray?
    - 1. They prayed because they knew God's character, their need
  - ii. Like I said, a lot of us are hesitant in going to God in prayer.
    - 1. It isn't always a conscience decision, we just ignore him
    - 2. B/C if you think God is like \_\_\_\_\_, then you won't go to him
  - iii. Similarly, If you think you can do it in your own power, then you won't pray
    - 1. Prayer is the spiritual barometer of relying on God vs. self
  - iv. See, we pray b/c of we who aren't. We aren't God. We are weak
    - 1. "Not me, I'm not weak!" Can you cause your lungs to pump? // heal people // perform miracles // bring forgiveness & rebirth?
    - 2. When we know who God is, then we see our true inability

- v. Pray b/c what you are really offering is God, not yourself
  - 1. God brings miracles. You needed/need a miracle
    - a. **\*\*Miracles are more than just physical healings\*\***
    - b. The greatest miracle is the dead brought to life, salvation
    - c. Give examples of less “flashy” miracles
    - d. You can’t work those miracles, only God can
  - 2. Pray b/c you are powerless to change someone or work miracles
- vi. Once they knew who God was, they knew who they were and they knew that they needed God to move because they couldn’t do it
  - 1. They needed the power of the Holy Spirit
- f. *And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31, ESV)*
  - i. Well, that never happens to me...
    - 1. Why did God show up? B/C they knew God
  - ii. They prayed knowing who God was, knowing who they were, and knowing the mission God gave them
  - iii. They prayed with purpose, God’s purpose, and he showed up
  - iv. Filled w/ Spirit = power to do what God wanted them to do
  - v. God wants to be glorified
    - 1. Our desperation and need brings God more glory
    - 2. Our supposed self-sufficiency only glorifies ourselves and forfeits the power that could be ours
  - vi. They prayed knowing who God was, knowing who they were, for God’s purposes

### 3. Application

- a. Prayer is difficult - hardest part of my spiritual life
  - i. b/c independent // can’t see God // almost seems silly
  - ii. But we pray b/c of God // ourselves // our situation
- b. If we want to see change (in us or city), we need prayer
  - i. If you want to see that, in your own life (examples), in others lives (examples), prayer is your great need because God alone is your hope
- c. “I don’t know how to pray” // I’m going to teach you.
  - i. What’s the situation in your life?
    - 1. examples...
  - ii. Who is God?
    - 1. Can’t answer this question unless you spend time in the Bible asking God to show you
    - 2. God is...
  - iii. Who are you?
    - 1. This requires meditation and thought. In light of who God is, what does that say about me?
    - 2. If God is \_\_\_\_\_, then I am \_\_\_\_\_

- iv. How should I pray?
  - 1. In light of who God is and who I am, and why I'm here, what should I pray for?
  - 2. Examples
- d. The early church was devoted to prayer
  - i. Desperate for God, desperate for His Power
  - ii. Imagine if we were a church like that
- e. It takes courage/boldness to pray
  - i. To admit your need, to ask for help, to acknowledge someone greater than you
- f. **Be BOLD enough to PRAY**
  - i. B/C of who God is, B/C of who you are, for Christ's glory