

Sermon, September 24, 2017 – Sixteen Sunday after Pentecost
Ask, Seek, Knock- Prayer Sermon Series.

Theme 2 - Trusting His Answer Various Verses



Dear Friends in Christ

Last week we began our meditation series on Prayer and learned that the power for prayer is in Christ, supported by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is the first and foremost tool we need for the work and growth of the congregation. The prayer of God's people gathered with one another, united prayer is important, for we know that the work of the Church is hard and messy. Nothing can happen unless we pray, that's what Jesus

taught us to do.

Prayer is effective for God always answers prayers. However his answer might not be in the way we expect. That's why it is important that we learn to recognize God's answer when it comes and accept it. You and I know that there are times when we don't accept the answer God gives. Maybe that's why we don't pray enough and don't believe prayer is effective.

But to know and trust that we have the power to pray for God has promised that he will answer our prayers, is very important. But equally important is to recognize that first, God will always answer our prayers, and second that his answer may come in different ways.

But how do we know or identify God's answer? It is difficult at times, isn't it? But we can learn to identify God's answer in the measure of our knowledge of God's Word. In the Scriptures we do have his promises and the assurance that he will hear our prayers and answer.

For example, the words and promise found in Psalm 103:13-14 tell us of God's compassion, the psalm says: "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13–14) So, will God show you compassion if you pray for it? Absolutely! You will be assured of it.

Therefore, reading God's promises from Scripture concerning God's answer to every prayer and trust those promises is very important.

It is also important to know from the Scriptures that God's answer to our prayer is always better than the answer we are hoping for, because it is always a blessing. That's why we are to pray "Thy will be done," or "Your will be done", and with that prayer accept his will in our lives.

Yes, God answer's prayers. Although we do not always receive what we want when and how we want it. Regardless, we are to trust that God promises to answer

every prayer prayed in faith in Jesus his Son and that His answer to our prayers achieves His ultimate will and our ultimate blessing.

That's the example Jesus gives us when it comes to a life of prayer. The letter to Hebrews 5:7–9 explains what and how Jesus prayed: “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him...”

In this text we see that Jesus did trust the Father's promises that he will hear his children's prayer. And also shows us the manner of his prayers. He “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.” (v. 7) Talking about an earnest prayer!!

When was the last time you prayed out loud? When was the last time you cried while praying? Now it is not so much the crying and the out loud but the earnest of the prayer is what counts. The faith and trust!

This text also teaches us that the Father may answer prayers differently than what we ask for, but that we are to accept his answer as Jesus did.

Accepting God's answer will help us to work through our struggles with prayer. You know the struggles: “Why doesn't God answer my prayers?” “Has God abandoned me?” “Can God really do what I asked Him to do?” “If God is not answering me, is he punishing me for something I did?” or, “Is God really there at all?, does God exist? Should I continue praying?”

As you see our struggles with God's answers, or apparent lack of answers, to our prayers are very real and very difficult. But the Lord knows our weaknesses and is patient and forgiving. He has compassion on us, and ask us to trust Him always.

And to help us overcome our doubts and struggles with prayer, he desires that we learn and take to heart some principles from Scripture. The principles are three words that will encourage our prayer life. They are: KNOW, ACCEPT, TRUST.

God wants and desires us to **Know** that He will indeed answer every believing prayer, done in faith.

God wants and desires us to **accept** the answer that He gives to our prayers;

And God wants and desires us to **trust** that the answer God gives is the very best answer that we could receive.

Prayer is effective. Jesus encourages us, in fact he commands us to pray. All through the Scriptures we hear God desiring us to talk to him. Jesus said it: “And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” (Luke 11:9–10)

This is what Jesus tells us: Those who ask, seek, and knock (in prayer) will receive, find, and have doors opened. They are the ones who KNOW, ACCEPT and TRUST.

There are lots of examples in the scriptures, which today I would like to share with you a few of them. The first example is from Moses. In Exodus 33:12–23 we hear how Moses knew that God answers prayers, so in trust and confidence he demanded that God will go with him and confirm his calling as the liberator of God's people, and

that God be with him in what he does, and as a confirmation that God will show him his glory.

Did God answer his prayer? Yes he did. God answered Moses prayer, although Moses had to wait, but when it happened, God gave Moses a sign of his choosing, in order to confirm Moses' role and standing. God said to Moses: "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD'. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."²¹ And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by."²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:12–23)

Moses, Knew, trusted and accepted God's answer, so he continued with the mission he had to liberate the people of Israel from the Egyptian captivity.

Then in the New Testament we have the example of the apostle Paul who was suffering something he called a "thorn . . . a messenger of Satan" (v. 7) that was bothering him. In 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, he asks God to remove that thorn. This is how he says: "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me." (v. 8)

His trust was in God that he would hear his prayer, so he prays three times. God did answer him. The answer however didn't come in the way Paul asked for. The thorn wasn't removed, but God gave him something else, something a lot better. God said: "My grace is sufficient for you" (v. 9). The beauty in that answer is the fact that when we realize we are weak, God is strong in our lives. He is a Father that knows better, way better. "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (v. 9) Paul says.

You didn't get the answer you got from God answering your prayers? Remember God knows better, and he wants better for you, after all you are his child, he wants you to be his child, he wants only the best for you, even, yes even in our eyes that would seem unfair, bad, or crazy! Yes Crazy!

That's what happened in our next example. That is the example of a Son who prayed. Remember the reading we did a few minutes ago? From Hebrews 5:7–10 where once again we see Jesus praying. Jesus prayed to the Father with loud cries and tears, the author says, and as the Gospel of Mathew tells us Jesus was "sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38). Jesus pleaded with the Father to remove from him the suffering that he was about to go through. The Father heard Jesus prayer, his cry, his tears, he saw his sorrowful condition, and what did the Father say? The Father said no to Jesus' prayer, he said not to his request that the cup of suffering might be removed from him. Now, if you as parents love your children very much, you would say that such a response from the Father is cruel and illogical, right? But it wasn't, it wasn't, because the Father knew better, actually he not only had Jesus in mind but even you and I today.

Yes the Father was able to save Jesus from death (Hebrews 5:7), he was able to resurrect him on the third day. But here is the better news, what the Father did in answering Jesus prayer was not only for Jesus, but through Jesus it was for all of us. That means the Father heard Jesus' prayer for us.

And now, through Jesus, God not only is able but willing to answer all our prayers with a big yes! When we ask, “Will You forgive me, Father? Will You give me eternal life? Do You love me, even though I’m suffering?” God will answer with a big yes!

And because the Father knows better, then with all rejoicing, with gusto, pray like Jesus prayed, “Thy will be done.” “Your will be done.” Only when we know that the Father knows better, and that he will answer our prayers it is that we can pray “Your will be done.”

Dear friends, does prayer work? Does God always answer our prayers? Absolutely, God wants us to Know that, he wants us to Trust that, but he also wants us to Accept his answer, because his answer will always be better.

And that alone, that God answer our prayers, is a great motivation enough for us as a Church, as families, as individuals to get immersed in a life of prayer, that we would become prayer warriors.

Dr. Martin Luther went through his own suffering and trials during the Reformation of the Church and out of his experience gave us encouragement that we should pray he said: “Therefore, when we feel pain, when we suffer, when we die, let us turn to this, firmly believing and certain that it is not we alone, but Christ and the church who are in pain and are suffering and dying with us. Christ does not want us to be alone on the road of death, from which all mortals shrink. Indeed, we set upon the road of suffering and death accompanied by the entire church...All that remains for us now is to pray that our eyes, that is, the eyes of our faith, may be opened and that we may see the church around us.” (Martin Luther’s Fourteen Consolations.”

Should we as a church come together in words of prayer? Absolutely! Should we pray unceasingly? Absolutely, that’s what God wants and desires that we know, accept, and trust what He so generously and graciously gives. He desires that we come to Him in prayer with His gifts in our hands—nothing more, nothing less. All for Jesus sake!

In his name, amen.