

Secrets of Prayer - Sunday sermon

Mary Anglin
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Photo date and location unknown

"Prayer is like the rain, washing everything, giving moisture to the land so that life might come forth." - Sun Myung Moon

"Lord make me an instrument of your Peace." - St. Francis of Assisi

"First shall the Son of Man seek peace within his own body; for his body is as a mountain pond that reflects the sun when it is still and clear. When it is full of mud and stones it reflects nothing.

"Then shall the Son of Man seek peace within his own thoughts...There is no greater power in heaven and earth than the thought of the Son of Man. Though unseen by the eyes of the body, yet each thought has mighty strength, even such strength can shake the heavens.

"Then shall the Son of Man seek peace with his own feelings. We call on the Angel of love to enter our feelings, that they may be purified. And all that was before impatience and discord will turn into harmony and peace." - Essene wisdom from the Isiah Scroll, (Dead Sea Scrolls)

Good morning brothers and sisters! Brian was a little hesitant to sing such a song (Mercedes Benz by Janis Joplin) at Sunday service, so first I want to thank him for his trust and his willingness. Didn't he do a good job?!

I chose this song as sort of an exaggeration of the common man's prayer. Man comes before God asking Him to help solve their problems. Even Janis Joplin. Who here knows Janis Joplin? Who doesn't know Janis Joplin? Janis Joplin was a rhythm and blues singer in the 1960s. She died of a drug overdose, I think in 1970. She was extremely talented and each of her songs were sung with incredible passion. Most of her songs were filled with anguish, but this was one of her few fun songs.

This song requested from God a Mercedes Benz, and a color TV. For you young people, you may not know that we didn't always have color TVs. Back in the '60s only rich people had color TVs. Most of us had black and white TVs - and no remotes. We actually had to stand up and walk across the room to turn a dial on the television to change the channels. I remember my Uncle Leon used to call his daughter Beverly into the room to change the channel for him!

Now in contrast, we have the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Let me read this, and you if you know it, feel free to follow along with me:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

*"O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."*

Some people doubt that this song actually came from St. Francis, but wherever it came from, we cannot deny that it is a prayer of a person who seeks to live for the sake of others. It is one in which this person seeks to allow the attributes of God to flow through him to others.

We might quickly compare and judge these prayers. We might say that Janis' prayer was evil because it was self-centered and St. Francis' prayer was good because it was self-less. However, I want us to think again. I would like to read you a quote from Rev. Sudo. This was from a speech he gave to the foreign missionaries in 1975 prior to them going to their mission countries:

"Therefore if you ask God, He has the answer. Because Heavenly Father is our father, we can do anything. We can ask anything. From individual problems to the nationwide problems, and to world problems - there is nothing that God cannot solve, if only we have faith in prayer."

We can ask God to solve all problems.

As we begin the era of building the Kingdom of God on Earth, it is important to reflect on who we are meant to be and to investigate the means to become that person. Divine Principle's chapter on Christology (page 164) says:

"Let us consider the value of a human being based on his relationship with the universe, as clarified by the Principle of Creation. A person who has completed the purpose of creation can govern the entire universe. Possessing both spirit and flesh, he can rule the spirit world with his spirit self and the physical world with his physical self. With human beings acting as mediators, the two worlds enter into a reciprocal relationship and form a unified cosmos which is a complete object partner to God."

How can we govern the universe when we are overcome by our personal needs? Therefore, yes we can seek God's help in solving our individual problems, as Rev. Sudo said.

I do want to go back and compare Janis Joplin's prayer with St. Francis' prayer. Let us use Janis' words with St. Francis' heart. We do have needs: paying our bills, getting our kids to Chung Pyung, taking care of basic necessities. Both basic things and spiritual things. Our seeking of external things is fine, but should be motivated by a heart to better serve this world. When our physical needs are met we can easily focus our energy on building the kingdom.

In the same speech, Rev. Sudo also said, "Pray with hope. With hope. Prayer is the secret joy of the life of faith. Prayer is the life of the life of faith. From trifling things to the greatest things, we need prayer."

However, I want to touch on our manner of prayer. Too often I see people screaming at God and pounding the floor. Begging God. Do we have to beg God? No. God is your parent. He does not want to withhold anything from us. We need to be confident in who we are. We are God's children and he wants us to lack for nothing.

Yet, how then do we make our prayers effective? Let me read from Principle of Creation, page 37:

"The human mind has three faculties: emotion, intellect and will. The human body acts in response to the commands of the mind. When the body responds to the mind's emotion, intellect and will, its actions pursue the values of beauty, truth and goodness respectively. God is the subject partner to the human mind; hence, He is also the subject partner to human emotion, intellect and will. Desiring to realize his original value, a person responds to the perfect emotion, perfect intellect and perfect will of God through his mind, and acts accordingly through his body. Thus, he manifests the values of original beauty, original truth and original goodness."

I believe there is a secret here. We often speak of mind-body unity, and the dual characteristics, but I rarely hear people speak of the qualities of emotion, intellect and will. In order to be in "harmonious oneness and obtain absolute value" (DP), these three attributes should be in balance. Be harmonized.

If we refer to today's 3rd reading from the Essenes, it speaks of body, thought, and feelings. "First shall the Son of Man seek peace within his own body... then shall the Son of Man seek peace within his own thoughts...then shall the Son of Man seek peace within his own feelings." This passage was pulled from a chapter on prayer. These points correlate to heart, intellect and will.

I believe that Jesus mastered this wisdom and this was how he had the power to perform miracles. Jesus said that those who came after him would do even greater things than he. Do we have the potential to perform miracles? Yes!

The ancient wisdom contained in the writings of various cultures such as the Essenes, the Nazarenes, the Ancient Egyptians, the Incas and Native Americans reveal a mode of prayer which modern civilization is not accustomed to. You may or may not be familiar with history, but as Christianity spread to Rome and in the 4th century became the state religion, ancient teachings were eliminated and watered down. Because of this we lost a lot of the wisdom that Jesus and the ancients knew. However, as ancient texts have been discovered, modes of prayer have been discovered. These modes merged the qualities of thought, feeling and emotion into a single potent force of creation.

Thought = Intellect
Emotion = heart
Feeling = Will or 'experience'

At first hearing, we might think that emotion or feeling is the same, but emotion is the general state of heart such as love or fear. Feeling is equated with experience. As an example, what is your first reaction when I say, 'ice cream'? "Yum". Yes, that seems to be the common emotion. How about 'rain'? "Cool, refreshing." What about 'money'? "Need more." Yes, I think most of us here get a little uptight at the word money. We tense up; knowing we need more. There is a little fear or anxiety. Then feeling is the 'experience'. Let me explain.

I would like to share a story with you from this book, "The Isaiah Effect" by Gregg Braden.

In the mid-1990s there was a terrible drought in New Mexico; the worst in three years. The author, Mr. Braden, was asked by his Native American friend, David, to accompany him to the Hopi holy ground. David went to a prayer circle created by rocks and walked around it. It seemed very simple, like he was just preparing to pray, but then he suddenly said, "We're finished, let's go". Mr. Braden was surprised and asked if his friend had already prayed for rain. He replied, "I did not pray for rain. I prayed rain."

Let me read you the explanation that he learned from the elders:

"The path between man and the forces of this world begins in our hearts. It is here that our feeling world is married to our thinking world. In my prayer, I began with the feeling of gratitude for all that is and all that has come to pass. I gave thanks for the desert wind, the heat, and the drought, for that is the way of it, until now. It is not good. It is not bad. It has been our medicine.

Then I chose a new medicine. I began to have the feeling of what rain feels like. I felt the feeling of rain upon my body. Standing in the stone circle, I imagined that I was in the plaza of our village, barefoot in the rain. I felt the feeling of wet earth oozing between my naked toes. I smelled the smell of rain on the straw-and-mud walls of our village after the storms. I felt what it feels like to walk through fields of corn growing up to my chest because the rains have been so plentiful. The old ones remind us that this is how we choose our path in this world. We must first have the feelings of what we wish to experience. This is how we plant the seeds of a new way. From that point forward our prayer becomes a prayer of thanks."

"Do you mean thanks for what we have created?" I asked.

"No, not for what we may have created. Creation is already complete. Our prayer becomes a prayer of thanks for the opportunity to choose which creation we experience. Through our thanks, we honor all possibilities and bring the ones we choose into this world."

Do you want to know what happened after David's prayer? A weather pattern of cool moist air from the Pacific Northwest spread east across Utah and into Colorado. This was normal. But for some unexplained reason, this weather pattern turned south and rain drenched New Mexico. Then it returned to its normal course. Scientists had no explanation for this. Was it a result of David "praying rain"? We don't know. But New Mexico was relieved of its drought that summer.

We must know that the Universe does not lack. All that we need exists. We must believe in who we are as God's children. We are God's master creatures. We can and should call upon the Universe to provide and serve.

We need peace in this world, we need gas in our tanks, we need many things. We can bring these things to pass with the right expectation. The Universe is here to serve us. We are the connecting point of the Universe to God, the connecting point between the spiritual and physical worlds. We are the manifestation of God on this Earth.

Thought can be hit or miss. Those who can feel the rain, feel the victory, will be successful. We need to experience it before it manifests and then it will. When we master this, we can not only bring external abundance but also internal healing and growth. It is the mastery of uniting belief and feeling. Come to God with our desire, and God will respond.

Thank you. Please join me in prayer.