

Beyond Week 4 Reviled in Prayer

By Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

So years ago, we purchased a car. And as you do, one of the first things that you want to do is you want to connect your phone to the car. So Tom had no problem. He did it on the first day. No problem. He connected his phone. The easy peasy, right? So it was my turn to connect my phone, and I tried and I tried to connect my phone to the car and it wouldn't work no matter what setting I pushed or what voice command I said every time I navigated through the settings, whether I said Bluetooth set up or connect phone or pair phone or pair device, the car would say back to me, change to France.

And I was like, well, the kids were young right there in the backseat. They think it's hilarious. Tom thinks it's hilarious. I thought it was hilarious for a while. I don't know, French. And so every time the car would say change to France, I would say no. And the kids in the back seat, they would say yes, right?

Trying to get the car to switch to French. So, you know, maybe you know this, but our family, our kids grew up and they started driving and, and and we started playing this game of musical car. So we gave this car to our kid and blah, blah, blah. So, a few years later, we came back into our possession.

I forgot, I tried to set up my phone and I heard Change to France Day and I was like, no. So luckily it never changed because again, I don't speak French. So today is Impact of Prayer Sunday. And we know that prayer is supposed to be this two way conversation between us and God. But doesn't it feel sometimes that God must speak some other language that we are not familiar with?

Well, Samuel is an Old Testament figure, and Samuel had to learn the voice of God too. So Samuel was the last judge of Israel, and the one who led Israel from the period of judges to the time of kings. He was the one who anointed Saul the first king, and then King. David later. So we read about Samuel as a boy in first Samuel chapter three.

So here is the story. Now the boy Samuel was serving the Lord under Eli. The Lord's word was rare at the time, and visions weren't widely known. One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. God's lamp hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the Lord's temple where God's chest was.

The Lord called to Samuel. I'm here, he said. Samuel hurried to Eli and said, I'm here. You called me. I didn't call you, Eli replied. Go lie down. And so he did. Again the Lord called

Samuel also. Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, I'm here. You called me. I didn't call you my son, Eli replied, go and lie down.

Now Samuel didn't yet know the Lord, and the Lord's word hadn't yet been revealed to him. A third time the Lord called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, I'm here. You called me. Then Eli realized that it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So Eli said to Samuel, go and lie down. If he calls you say, speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

So Samuel went and laid down where he'd been. Then the Lord came and stood there calling just as before. Samuel, Samuel! Samuel said, speak. Your servant is listening. Now Samuel was being called by God for a really important task. Samuel didn't know that it was God's voice at first. Eli, Samuel's mentor, didn't know that it was God at first either.

So we can learn something from Samuel. We can learn that if we want to hear from God first, we have to stick close to God. Kind of like a good Wi-Fi signal, right? You can't expect a strong connection if you're way out in the spiritual wilderness. For Samuel, he's in the temple. He's next to God's chest or the Ark of the covenant.

So we spend time in prayer or diving into Scripture or actually showing up where God is moving. Think worship. Think justice in action events. Think those things. We we come together with community of believers. Now, I would suspect if I asked you, I would say, hey, would you like to hear the voice of God so clearly that it's just sounds like it's English and it's just you're in your bedroom and you are hearing God.

I would probably say most of us would say, yes, of course. We want to hear God's voice just so clear like that. We want to understand the purpose of our life and the direction God is wanting to wanting us to go. And and we want to receive guidance from God on making difficult and tough decisions. Now, I would guess we probably say that we want to hear from God, but I'm guessing we actually might not want to hear from God.

We might be worried what God will tell us to do, and that God might tell us to do something that we don't want to do. We're not quite ready to do. So the question is, is do we actually want to hear from God? Do we actually want to hear what God is telling us to do in our relationships and with our finances and with every aspect of our life?

Now Samuel's story, it continues on. And Samuel, you he realizes that God is speaking to him and he says, he says, speak your servant is listening. And it's and the Scripture goes on and it says that God says, God says this to, to to Samuel. God says, you know what? Your your mentor, Eli the priest. Like, I'm going to bring judgment to Eli and his sons, and there is nothing they can do about it.

That's what he that's what God told Samuel. And Samuel lay awake all night because he didn't like what God was telling him. Like, what, what do you want me to do with this information? And, of course, Eli asked what, what God told him, and he had to tell Eli. So here we are in the season of lent, and we are on this journey to the cross.

And we practice during lent, letting go of our worldly attachments. And we start trusting and listening to God. We open ourselves up to God's calling, and we actually do what God is calling us to do, even when it's not easy. So part of lent, we have been talking about the Wesleyan Covenant prayer, and there is a line in there that's a prayer to God, and it says, God, let me be full.

Let me be empty. Let me have all things. Let me have nothing. When was the last time you asked God to take away everything that you have? Let God let me have nothing. I want nothing, I think, what what could this part of this prayer possibly mean? And I think it's directing us toward contentment right now. The Apostle Paul has something to say about being content as well.

There's a really popular verse we use sometimes when we are discontent, or to give us the strength to accomplish things. You see this all over on sports teams, and it's Philippians four, chapter chapter four, verse 13, and the verse is, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And we use this verse to declare victory when things go our way.

Like, yeah, I knew I could do that because I believe in Jesus and Jesus is strengthened in me. But actually, if we look at the verse before or here's what this verse is actually saying, so Paul writes, I know the experience of being in need and of having more than enough. I have learned the secret to being content in every, in any and every circumstance, whether full or hungry, whether having plenty or being poor.

So what is this secret that Paul is telling us? It's that famous verse, but it's better translated as this I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength. I can endure all of these things. I can be content whether I have a lot or whether I have not. And the secret is Jesus is the one that gives us the strength to be content.

Now, lent is a really good time to consider what matters in life, especially when we compare it to what Jesus did on the cross. So as we trace the footsteps of Jesus this lent, we find that Jesus faced some really tough things to and he prayed about it. There's this really powerful moment that Jesus had in the Mount of Olives.

And, we traveled to, to Jerusalem a few years ago, and we were able to visit the Mount of Olives church. That's the picture you're seeing? It's. And next to the church there is a an olive tree grove. So here's a picture of, of the trees right next to this church. And we stood

there looking at these trees, thinking about this incredible prayer that Jesus had under these trees.

And our guide was talking to us. And he said, these trees are thousand of years old. And then he said quietly, actually, they're about 800 or 900 years old. But it's believed that the roots of these trees are thousands of years old, possibly the very site where Jesus prayed this vulnerable prayer. So we read this story found in Luke chapter 22.

Jesus left and made his way to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived, he said to them, pray that you won't give in to temptation. He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed. Jesus said, father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me.

However, not my will, but your will must be done. Then a heavenly angel appeared to him and strengthened him. He was in anguish and prayed even more earnestly as sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. When he got up from praying, he went to the disciples. He found them asleep, overcome by grief. He said to them, why are you sleeping?

Get up and pray so that you won't give into temptation. So inside the church of the Mount of Olives church, this picture was above the altar. And it's a picture of Jesus kneeling down beside these olive trees, praying this prayer. He's praying this prayer to God. He says, take this cup of suffering away from me. But then he says, however, not my will, but yours be done.

That is a powerful prayer, one that we probably don't often do. God, your will be done in my life, whether that means I am full or empty, whether that means I have a lot of things, whether that means I have nothing. Now, we don't know God's answer. We don't know what what Jesus heard during that prayer in that moment.

We know that God sent an angel to give us strength, but we also know that Jesus wanted his followers to continue to pray. Now there are some prayer warriors. Maybe you're one of them. Maybe, you know, a prayer warrior just someone who is just so into prayer and just so dedicated to prayer. DJ hockey is part of our Horizon's family, and he is one of those prayer warriors. So take a look at his video.

D.J. Hawk

My name is D.J. Hawk. My wife and my family have been going to horizons for nearly from the start. Summer of 97. And why is essential to this campaign and to our church. Prayer is essential for life. I could not go a day without it. And I love praying for our community, for our kids, for our for everyone here.

And I'm honored to be part of a prayer team. The focus of this campaign is what does God want to do through me and what it's got to do through you? That is a heavy but yet vital question to ask. And it could be time, resources, finances, prayer, encouraging others. It could be so many different things. So what does God want to do through me?

And what does God want to through you? That is that is really the question of this campaign. I have helped with Horizon's youth groups for close to 20 years, and I can't count how many times God has put a kid or a family on my heart, and I'll just text them or call them or message them somehow, in a way.

But God put you on my heart today. No idea why. Or sometimes God just works through people to help others and encourage and I've lost track how many times I've texted kids or parents, hey, just like you know, I'm praying for you. I don't know why, but. And many times they will say, hey, you know, thank you so much for that text or call.

We're going through a time right now of X, y, z issues and just thank you for praying.

While it's tough to do that. It is always so rewarding to hear. I don't know how you knew or, but just thank you, God, for leading us to pray for people like that. You know, I'm just very thankful and grateful that God moves like that. And I pray he does that for you too. What resources, what time? What passions does God stir in you to help others in whatever way you can?

Because everyone can do something. Everyone has something to give. Whether it's time, talent, treasures, or all the above. Even encouraging others, listening. How does God want to work through you in this? So will you join me beyond the horizon?

Pastor Mandy:

Prayer mattered to Samuel. It mattered to Jesus. But what about prayer in the life of horizons in our own life? Well, as D.J. said, prayer is essential for life. And I love that quote when thinking about our prayer to God and about God's will for our lives. Horizons. Prayer was wants to build a building after worship, worshipping at Scott Middle School for seven years, setting up and tearing down for seven years every single Sunday for worship services.

There was a prayer for a building, right? That was the hope and prayer of horizons. Ted and Andrea Larson just last week were talking. They were part of the very, very first group that started Horizons Church, and they talked about standing on the land and looking out on the horizons and praying over the lives that Jesus might change through this church.

And that prayer was answered. Here we are standing in a building, and then years later, horizons prayer was to pay off the debt through a campaign. Freeing up money for ministry

was what the hope was. And it happened. It did free up ministry money for ministry. Along those years, we, hired a special needs coordinator and a digital media specialist just in time for Covid when we needed a figure out live stream.

So that was a blessing. And then there was a pastoral change and, Covid and the United Methodist denomination speed bumps along the way. And yet the ministries have not stopped. God has answered prayers here through that last capital campaign. And now our prayers turn to the next ten years. What does this look like for us? And we've had this vision that's stirred up within us as we've listened to God's will for this church.

And this vision kind of created three different strategies for us one, helping us connect with our own individual neighbors. And we started a cohort and a good neighbor experiment cohort. And we learned about abundance and how this can transform neighborhoods. Another strategy was to partner with another church or organization, and another part of Lincoln that's making a difference, right?

There's people who are already doing good things, and we can do more things if we partner with them, rather than try to create something new. And then another strategy was to expand our reach to this neighborhood right here, to, to include, to, to open up our space to add things and, and update the prayer path and add a disc golf course and, and maybe a future, inclusive playground right here on our property where, where we will invite all families.

This campaign also includes maintaining the church building and parking lots so that more people can enter this place and find Jesus. That's the prayer for us through this beyond campaign. Now, next week, you'll have an opportunity to pray. We're going to do this this prayer event. And it's going to be there's going to be pinwheels and prayers. And after each of the service will invite you to take a pinwheel and go outside and pray in certain spots of our land as we think about the future, we have to be in conversation with God.

And when we hear from God, we have to respond to God. We have to listen. The Hebrew word shamar is actually me actually means is translated. Listen here and obey. It's that same word, right? If we're going to hear from God, we have to obey God. And hearing God requires. Here's a response. And it's a collective response as a church and as individuals.

But it requires us sometimes to be silent, and then we can humbly respond to what God is calling us to do. Now, the voice we hear from God might sound a lot like one of our mentors, like it did for Samuel. It might be found in Scripture, or a devotional, or through music, or through the sign of the night, or maybe even through creation itself.

And it's not always what we think. It's not always what we want to hear. I mean, think about what Samuel heard that judgment was coming to his ears. His mentor in his family, and

there was nothing that they could do about it. God's will for us is not always easy. It may require us to be empty for a while.

It may even require us to sweat blood. So how will you respond to the question, God, what do you want to do through me? Like Samuel, like Jesus is like D.J. Hawk, like horizons. Prayer leads us to take big steps of faith. So your goal for this week is really to spend some time in silent prayer asking God what you want, what what God wants for your life, and then be silent and then be silent.

So let's pray and then have this time of silence. Lord God, we're asking you this bold and big question. What is it that you want to do through horizons?

Lord God, this week help us to use less words and just be open to what it is that you have to say to us. And we say this in Jesus's name.