

Calvary United Methodist Church  
October 27, 2019

**PRAYER POWER**  
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher

**Children's Message:**

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (ICB)

I invite our children to come up on stage. Come on up. Others out there want to come up on stage? Come clear up here because I want you to look up here so you can see better. The screens on the back don't have very good lighting.

I'm so glad firstly that you would share your gift of music with us this morning. It is so beautiful. We praise God that you would share that with us. Thank you for coming up this morning.

Today I want to talk to you about the importance of the things we learn throughout life. You learn a lot of places like most of you are in school now, right? And I bet when you are at home your parents are teaching you things all the time and grandparents. You come here and even I'm trying to teach this morning. It's like does it ever end, right? But it's a part of growing up and we learn all the days of our lives.

And there is a passage of scripture I want to share with you this morning that I want to share about the importance of the things we learn:

You should continue following the teachings that you learned. You know that these teachings are true. And you know that you can trust those who taught you. You have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child.

This book that we follow and you probably have one at home, you hopefully have your own and your parents have one. It's called the (Bible). You got it. It is so filled with many lessons. Some of the lessons are the mistakes people made and some of the lessons are the directions of how we should live. And there are so many of those that we get all the days of our life because there are so many things for us to learn. And as we continue, we follow God's Word and we follow it by looking at the examples that we read about. We follow by...we've talked about our heart, right? There are a lot of times you know in your heart something is right or wrong, don't you, because you know if it is going to get you into trouble or if it hurts other people. You know without reading anything about it it's not the right thing.

We come to a place called Calvary. This is a home where we come to find God in here, but you know God is in your home, God is in your school bus, God is at school. God is everywhere. This is just a special place that we are told on this Sabbath day, which is for us Sunday, it's a day of rest from the busyness of the world because it is something we learned that we ought to worship God. But you do that in your house, too. You give thanks for God, for your home, hopefully you pray in the morning and night and we learn little by little...how many of

you started learning first with the ABCs? Everyone out there. All of us had to learn because you take letters and what do you make with letters, when you put them together in certain ways? And what do you do when you get a lot of words? We make sentences. And after sentences? Paragraphs and then papers and books and it's just...essays...all of those things because we can expand our knowledge.

What do you learn when you see a hot burner and a hot pan on the...were you ever taught anything about that? You've been there. It's not just to stay away, it burns you. How many of you have ever been burned? Look at us, aren't we special? We didn't listen to our mothers and fathers and got burned. (I got sunburn.) And we get sunburn too. See, we are taught these lessons as a way to protect us. Sometimes we didn't do it on purpose; sometimes it is just we forget, we are hurrying around the kitchen and you touch something.

How many of you were taught anything about water? I was taught how to swim and then I was taught you don't ever jump off of a high place into water without knowing what? How deep it is, or you could get hurt really bad. And you don't go into deep water if you are not a good swimmer. You know where you are swimming, right? These things are taught to us so we might be safe.

What were you ever taught about sleeping? (Child speaks.) At least eight. I like that. At least eight hours. Why do we need sleep? So we can be active during the day. Right now the leaves are falling off the trees, right? They are taking a nap for the winter. Do you know we live in a place like with our fruit trees, if they don't take a nap there is no fruit next year. God made things so special and rest is one of those gifts.

And when we spend times with moms and dads and grandparents and teachers, we enter in conversations to learn and so it is with this book, the Bible, that we study. God teaches us through this if you use it, right?

How many of you know what this is? It is gym, right? You go there to work out, right? How many know what that is? They are great for storing boxes. If we were to look around I bet we could find a lot of gym equipment in our homes that don't have much tread wear on them, right? Because if you have these things and you don't use them, how good are they? Not so good. It's the same with the Bible. It's the same with what you learn in school. It's the same in spelling; it's the same in science; it's the same in this Word. If we don't read it and study it it's not any good to us, so God says we need to read it, we need to own it. When we read it we live it out, we love it, we own it. We are what that Word of God says to us.

How many of you are still drinking out of a little baby bottle? They are usually used for infants, right? See the Word of God says there comes a time when we grow up. We no longer want...this is in the books of the Bible...we no longer want little bottled fed anymore, we want solid food. We go to veggies and we go to meats and all those things that make us, no because it increases. You can't just be a little baby in this. You have to grow up. You have

to learn more and more. You can't stay as a baby and just know ABCDEFG... You have to put it into sentences and paragraphs and essays and papers. We grow up in our faith and it is important for you, the scripture is reminding us, that what you learn here and what you learn in your home, all these things, this knowledge is given us not just that we have brain knowledge, it is to change our life.

If you are told if you touch a hot stove, that's knowledge. If you touch it anyway, you didn't learn much, did you? It's to change our life, our behavior, so we live for Almighty God. All the scripture that we have is inspired by the Word of God. Everything around us is a possible learning spot for us to learn about God and God's love.

So, when you come here week after week, when you study God at home, when you pray at home, when you watch other people, you are watching God in action.

So, I thank you for coming up today. I pray that you will be blessed through the week and I do believe there was a basket of snacks here and you are all ready to take a snack with you. If for some reason there are not a lot, I'll see that you get some after the service.

**Message:**

Luke 18:1-8

The power of prayer...I believe in it, I have experienced it all the days of my life. And yet there are those days when you questions. You know, your parent is sick and they don't seem to be getting better. The loved ones you've prayed for for weeks have passed. The cancerous tumor doesn't go away. The job didn't come. The relationship remained broken. Do you hear what I am saying? We pray, we pray and we pray and people ask us: Is there really any use to keep praying? And from the bottom of my heart I say: Oh, yes there is! God does hear our prayers. God does answer our prayers. God is present with us. God is our comfort. God is our peace. But life has so many intricacies, the way they deal with our life. They prayer isn't always answered the way we want. It's not just our wish list or my wish list. God has a bigger time frame, a bigger observation of all that the world has and returns the prayer.

And so when people say to me: What bother? I say: Because it lets me know I'm not alone. God is with me all the time...in my fears, in my insecurities. He is with me as I celebrate. He's with me when I praise. God is present because prayer is my conversation with God. It's me listening and it's me speaking with Almighty God.

Sometimes we think well maybe God's just too busy to listen. I want to tell you God's not too busy. God listens all the time. God's timing and our timing, and I'm not just here making excuses for God. Think to your own family. Think to your own mothers and fathers. Do you think that they didn't care about you? Did they always give you everything? Yes, it's not quite as drastic as life and death, but parents save us from ourselves because they know more, they are more experienced.

And God knows more. God is not too busy. And sometimes we need to get out of the mindset...well, if God's too busy I'll just take care of business myself. I've done a lot of things in my life where I didn't take time for God, I just thought I'll take care of this. And guess what? It didn't always work out. Have you ever been in those situations where I'll hand it myself? You don't seek the wisdom not only from God but from anyone else? My wisdom is pretty small. We don't always make great judgements. You see, I think the issue is a lot of times I'm too busy for God, not that God is too busy for me. I don't take time and the time is called patience, because when I pray I want the answer now.

I remember with my grandchildren, sort of like my parents did with me, if you saw that example about the Flintstones and stuff: Jeff, get out here, I need some help in the kitchen. I want you to feed the dog. I want you to take the garbage...Jeff, get out here. Jeff get out here. And about...she'd be standing in the doorway: I said now! Did you ever have that? Parents can be patient for a while, but most of us don't have that gift of long term patience.

When we pray we want the answer and God says: You don't understand. There is a plan and some of it is involving other people. It's not just Jeff's little world. The world is pretty grand and we need to be a part of it.

This I've learned through my prayer life through the years: never give up. I had struggles getting into college and then struggles with many subjects in college. And struggles in relationships and with finance...you know when you are young and you're coming up, everything is a struggle until you learn a little bit, until you get disciplined a little bit, until you find a pattern for your life's beat. And God says: Do not give up. I am with you all the way.

Prayer? What is prayer for me? Prayer always was and always will be forever there is power found in prayer. But I pray I'm reminded that God's with me, that there is someone bigger than me. I'm reminded that in my trials, God is with me. He's my fortress, he's my rock. I'm reminded that I can face anything because I'm not alone. That's what prayer does for me. It reminds me that there is someone bigger than me in charge of this whole thing.

And it starts with a relationship. All relationships start by building a foundation and our foundation is built with God through conversation. When we meet new friends, I remember going off to college and didn't know anyone where I went to one campus of Penn State up in Altoona. And so as it was, you meet someone and you start talking to them. What do they like to do? Where are they from? What about their family? What are their hobbies? We build on foundations and through it we get relationships, we get accountability, we talk about honoring one another and honesty and truth and trust. That's what happens when we spend time with God. We get to know God at a very personal level.

Growing up we all have those places where we like to hang out and hanging out around a campfire for me as a kid was about as fun as it got in scouting and in other programs. You sit

and you talk and you laugh and you tell stories. Some of them are awfully made up, but you tell them anyway. You get to know one another in great ways when you spend time and you grow deeper.

When we look around right now, thank God for this rain as much as we don't like it on some days, we need it desperately, there is life. Trees have the beauty that we see about them right now, but they are deeply rooted. If it weren't for the roots, especially in the summer in the dryness and the trees when it gets dry. They would die. And when the storms come and the wind blows, sometimes we do see they blow over and they are gone forever.

As we develop a relationship with others, we grow strong and as we develop a relationship with God we stand firm. There is a song we sing in Sierra Leone about the great cottonwood tree. It stands probably, I think they are like 300 feet tall, taller than any tree we have here probably other than the redwoods. Like a bit cotton tree, when the storms come I will not be shaken. I will stand firm. That's what it is to stand with God. And so when there is death and there is loss and there is disappointment and there is hurt and pain, you are deeply rooted that you can somehow draw out from the well of the living life of Jesus Christ to know that you will bloom again. And as I told the children, if the trees don't find rest, if we don't take our Sabbath, if we don't go in Christ, guess what? We are exhausted.

We come to God in prayer for new life. Jesus spent about three years of concentrated life of his ministry with those disciples, getting to know one another. He didn't just say: Go preach my Word. They had to know, they had to believe, they had to trust, they had to honor, they had to have all of that that comes in time. If you want a deep faith, you spend time reading and praying and studying and serving in fellowship, you will be strong. And without it we grow weak.

I love the old photos of the families, you know, a dozen children in the family and everyone is grabbing for something all the time and you wonder does mom or dad even hear me when I'm calling out at the table time. And moms and dads hear.

I read a story...have any of you ever seen that March of the Penguins a couple of years ago. There is hardly a word in the whole movie. And they show these things, they march 16 miles from the sea into Antarctica, they lay their eggs. The women go back into the ocean and the men hold these eggs on their feet for like three to five months, something like that until they hatch. And when the babies cry and these seals and stuff get to the ocean, guess what? There are like 40-50,000 of them and when they cry, the parents can find them. Why? They are connected. Why? Their cry is different than anyone else.

So, when you cry out to God, God says: I hear you. I hear you. I hear you and I will be there for you. He says: Do not grow weary, because I am your God. I will be present for you.

In this story, this old judge said: I don't care for God, I don't fear God, I don't worry what people think. This old lady is driving me crazy. We're not going down that road. I will do justice just because she has persisted.

There are times, it's like, in other words, if I pest God enough I'll get what I want. No. It doesn't quite work that way. God just wants us to let God know. People say why should I let God know? God knows all. Your parents know you love them, of course. Do they like to hear you say you love them? What do you think, parents? Oh, yeah. God knows, but God is a parent. Parents know you need new sneakers or stuff, but it's nice when you ask. It's nice when you are kind. It's nice when you are supportive. Our God is our Heavenly Father who is like the parent.

Did you ever have a child pull at your leg for something, like at the grocery store right at the checkout counter where all the sweets and candy are? And sometimes as a parent you know the budget is okay, you know they haven't had too much and you are willing to give. And other times, because you know them, you don't give them a pure sugar diet. You say no.

Our God knows so much more than we will ever know. So, the scripture says: Ask and it will be given to you, we have to understand that God knows more than we know.

There are people outside the body of believers who think that prayer for many of us is just a crutch and I want to say absolutely not. Prayer is my direct line to God, it is not a crutch. It is my connection to God. It is my strength. It is my shield. It's the promise. It's the hope. It's the knowing that I am not alone. In our congregation as we get older there are many widows and widowers. There are many single folks. There are people who have traveled here from other states and other countries and there are times we can feel alone and what does God say? You cry out to me and I'm going to be with you because I am your God and I will be answering your prayer. And I want you to know you will never be alone because I am your God.

Study after study will show that people that turn to God in prayer find healing. I'm not talking just physical healing and wholeness. We will all pass from this earth at one time, but we find healing. And the more I thought about this I read about a gentleman...I worked at Hershey Medical Center for a year studying. I paid them \$1000 for the privilege to work there as a chaplain way back in school years. And we read all these studies about the coordination of prayer and healing. You see, most likely if people are praying they also have a relationship with God. And to have a relationship with God means to know that you have to strive for right living. When people do us wrong, what are we supposed to do? Forgive 70 x 7. People that don't have that tend to harbor things and so the mind ache, the heartache, the stomachache, the cancerous tissues in our body, they don't do well for that. Really, seriously. People who live their faith believe in some power higher than themselves. They trust in God. They release things to God's care, for God's justice, for God's mercy.

And this young man named Burke who studied his PhD out in San Francisco found that indeed the personalities, it was like they became life lifters. They became the positive people in the hospitals. When I visit people, you can't imagine the difference in those who when you see them they don't have much faith and those who say: Well, I don't know what is going to happen, but I believe God is with me.

My friend, Mel, died some years ago. He had a heart attacks, he had multiple strokes and finally he needed one more heart thing and they were going to try it and he said: Well, you know I'm in a good spot. I'd like to be around to praise God and enjoy family, but if not, I'll be with God so either way it's a win-win. He didn't make it through the surgery, but he's with God.

There comes a place where in Christ we know we and our loved ones will be with God and that one day our hope is in the Kingdom of Heaven, that we are all together again. That is the power of prayer.

So, what is your story? Where are you putting your faith? Where are you placing your faith? Where are you placing your prayers?

I read this some years ago in a Mennonite journal: Muscular Christianity. I love that. Spiritually ripped, physically fit, fully equipped. Prayer is what does it. Prayer equips us that we can face the undeniable. They have always said there will be prayers as long as there is a foxhole or kids in school, right? Because we reach out to God. We are hoping above all things that God is with us. And God is our strength and God is our source.

And so it is that prayer is our conversation with God, seeking and growing all the days of our lives. I had a dear friend named Joyce in my second parish. She was a Sunday school teacher, a great leader in the community, a leader in everything you can imagine as a faithful disciple of Christ. She not only had Multiple Sclerosis, then she found out she had Pancreatic cancer, which usually doesn't have a happy ending. She was given six months to live and her family and friends surrounded her, prayed for her, but she told her family as well: I just want you to be able to live your life and trust always in God. And when we celebrated her life, it wasn't a sad day. The largest funeral I've ever attended, 6 or 700 people. It was a continuous victorious sign of her faith and her power and her trust in Almighty God because she had relinquished, she had given over her life to God, but no matter what.

When you step out to be a soldier and you go into war, you've given your life over not only to country, but to God. When you step out in the mission field, when you step out of your house every day, I hope you say: God, rain or shine, I'm yours. I'm trusting you. I'm trusting you that I'm in your hands all the days of my life.

Final story I just love in reading the woman about prayer, teaching her children and her grandchildren. She said the greatest thing I want my children and grandchildren to know

about prayer: it's about the relationship not the result of my prayer. Do you understand that? It's not getting what I want, it's the relationship. She said I want my grandchildren to pester God as much as they pester their parents for everything they want. And when they are happy at cheerleading or band or sports and celebrating and jumping, I want them to be praising God as much as they praise God in those times because it's not whether I get what I want, it's about the relationship I have with Almighty God, that I know I am connected to God at all times.

You see, prayer doesn't change things all the time. Prayer changes me. It gives me a sense of peace. When we've been wronged, when people have offended us, when people have outright hurt us, when we are able to forgive, when we are able to find new life, prayer changes me to say: God, I don't know how, but I'm okay because you are my God.

Sometimes it takes days, months, weeks and year for all that healing to come to us, but one day we'll awaken and say: thank you, God. I have life. And it is abundant. And it is a gift. Because we begin to feel alive. It's not comparing my faith with your faith or someone else's prayer life with my prayer life. It is a matter of us coming and abiding in prayer that I can be still. I can just be still and know that God is with me.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we aren't the most patient people in the world. We call to you and desire your answer immediately. We pray for the gift of patience. We pray for the gift of building and developing a relationship with You that in the best of times or even in the worst of times we will know we are never alone. Send your blessings upon all this day, we ask in Your Most Holy Name. Amen.