Faith Prays

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Series: Gospel of Luke          Nathan Carter

Introduction

Last May when I was candidating to be the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church I came here and preached from this very pulpit about the topic of prayer. From Luke 11:1-13 I said that followers of Christ should pray persistently because they are wholly and utterly dependent on their good God for everything. Now if you were here then I hope you’ll remember (although I’m not going to flatter myself and assume you do) that there was a segment of that passage about a person coming to his friend’s house at midnight and knocking on the door incessantly until he finally answered and gave him some bread. From that I talked a little bit about the need to persevere in prayer and tried to explore a little bit about why God might not always answer prayer immediately.

Now, as I was preparing and delivering that sermon I intentionally prevented myself from going into that topic exhaustively because I knew that chapter 18 and the parable about the persistent widow would be coming up. I was hoping, maybe somewhat presumptuously, that I would be the one preaching on that passage when the time came around and so I might have another chance to expound upon this later. Well, in answer to 3 years of your prayers and many of my bold, expectant prayers to God to allow me to lead this church, here I stand preaching Luke 18:1-8 to you this afternoon – that’s a prime example of God answering his disciple’s prayers.

Luke tells us very plainly up front what the intention was behind Jesus’ parable. We don’t have to guess or speculate on exactly what Jesus meant; we’re told in v. 1 – “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” It’s another teaching about prayer. As I mentioned in my candidating sermon 9 months ago prayer is one of the big themes of Luke. Luke is big on prayer! He paints Jesus as a dedicated man of prayer and he includes many other examples and teachings on prayer – more so than any other Gospel. This afternoon’s sermon is a continuation of my candidating sermon; it’s about prayer.

But as we’ve gone along we’ve also noticed that Luke is big on some other things too. We can come up with several major themes throughout the Third Gospel especially as it relates to discipleship (that is, what it means to follow Christ): materialism is a big one, also concern for the poor and the oppressed, whole-hearted devotion (losing your life to find it), etc… During this journey to Jerusalem we see several repeated themes in Jesus’ teaching to his followers. We notice a host of different qualities or behaviors that
Jesus says mark off genuine believers – things that must be present if you’re to follow Christ.

Now as I look at this I have to ask myself, “Is this just a list of obligations that I’m supposed to go down and make sure I meet in order to be a true Christian? Give money to the church – check; have compassion on those with needs – check; tell others about Jesus – check; live a simple lifestyle – check; volunteer at the Joshua Center homeless shelter – check; read the OT – check; listen to worship songs – check; pray regularly – check.” NO. This is a real temptation, but this is the last thing that Christianity is. In fact, it’s the opposite of the gospel for following lists of dos and don’ts to please God is the very definition of empty religion. You might feel comfortable with that, but let me tell you God hates it. We must resist the temptation to slip into this mindset daily, hourly.

So I ask myself as I look at Luke and as I come across yet another item that is supposed to have a place in the disciple’s life, “Is there something that connects each of these traits, a crowning concept that they all fit under, a central foundation that they all rest upon, a glue that holds the Christian life all together?” I think there is. What is it that motivates us to hold money loosely, give of ourselves sacrificially, speak freely to the lost about greatness of Christ, have an appetite for the Word of God, react with praise and worship to the good things in life, be willing to spend time seeking God’s face in prayer? The core of what it means to be a disciple from which everything else naturally emanates is a correct apprehension of the unmatched glory, beauty, majesty, awesomeness, goodness, loveliness, power, splendor and infinite value of God and consequently delighting in, reveling in, treasuring, prizing, relishing, adoring, savoring who he is. It’s all about knowing the Almighty God to be the sweetest, most satisfying, most desirable object of the universe.

One, simple biblical term that says all that is the word faith. Faith in God is the essence of what it means to be his disciple. It is the sine qua non of salvation. Saving faith, biblically understood, involves belief in certain propositional truths: God is holy, I am sinful and deserve eternal damnation, and Jesus has provided a way out for eternity through his death and resurrection. But it’s so much more than just that. Belief in the mind must also be accompanied by belief in the gut. It must be felt. There is an appropriate emotional response, an affection for God that is an integral part of faith, biblically speaking. It’s this kind of faith that produces all those actions mentioned earlier, of which prayer is one of them.

Prayer is the desire to talk to the God. If two people are married and are lovers then they will most definitely converse with each other quite frequently. Prayer is an expression of confidence in God’s goodness. If a young kid falls off his bike and scrapes his knee he will cry for his mom to help knowing that she cares for him. Prayer is the result of knowing who God is. If you’re riding on a plane with Clark Kent and you know who he is and some men try to hijack the plane you without a doubt will ask him to do something. Prayer is the natural outworking of a belief that God is powerful, caring, righteous, and real. If you have true, saving faith in God you will pray. By reason of logic, if you do not pray, that is if you consistently have no desire to go to God in heartfelt prayer, then you are not saved.

This is the main point of this passage. It will give us a chance to look at the topic of unanswered prayer and the reasons for the need to persist in prayer. It will also be an
appropriate time to remind ourselves of the reality that God answers prayer and that we can trust his character. However, I want the major truth that comes across to you today to be just this: **Faithful followers of Christ will pray.** I want that to be the big idea because that’s clearly Luke’s main objective in including this account and in telling it the way he does: **Faithful followers of Christ will pray.**

So won’t you join me in prayer…

**Text**

As I’ve already said, v. 1 tips us off right away to the precise meaning of Jesus’ parable, “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (v. 1). Now note who Jesus’ audience is – “his disciples.” This is a continuation of the segment we looked at last week. Starting at v. 22 of chapter 17 Jesus is addressing his disciples. And if you were here last week you’ll recall that what followed was instruction on how believers should live during the in-between time, the long period after Christ dies, comes back to life, and ascends to heaven but before Christ comes again like a startling flash of lightning to take his faithful followers to be with him and to punish all those who do not delight in, revel in, treasure, prize, relish, adore, savor him – those who instead have their hearts set on other things.

Just to further demonstrate that 18:1-8 should be understood as a continuation of Jesus’ briefing to his disciples on their mission during his absence, look down really quickly at the end of v. 8. Jesus concludes this section by referring again to the time of his return. 17:22-18:8 forms one unit. So what else does Jesus tell his disciples to do as they patiently await his return? He tells them that they should always pray and not grow weary as they wait. It’s interesting that after a similar passage concerning the return of Christ in ch. 21, Jesus also commands his disciples to “be always on the watch and pray” (21:36).

A more literal translation of the verse here conveys the forcefulness of this statement: “he told a parable to them about the necessity (it’s another instance of Luke’s famous ‘it is necessary’ clauses) of them continuing to pray and not becoming discouraged.” It is imperative that his disciples persist in prayer until he comes again.

Now to illustrate the kind of prayer that they should have “he said, ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men’ (v. 2). The first person we’re introduced to in this parable is a judge. This was a local government official responsible for hearing cases and administering justice. We’re told about what kind of judge he was – he was a corrupt judge. He was not a God-fearer and he didn’t really care about the men and women his office made him responsible for. He’s a man with the power to help people, but he does not have the disposition to do so easily.

The other main character we’re introduced to is a widow. “And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary’” (v. 3). She’s a woman who has lost her husband, a significant loss in the first-century when a husband was a woman’s only source of provision and protection. Widows were a major component of the oppressed in society back then. She makes the perfect picture of complete helplessness. She is completely powerless. She has no hope except the justice of society.

Here someone has denied her justice. Most likely it’s of the financial kind. Maybe someone’s cheated her out of certain provisions the law made for those in her spot
– some sort of broken down welfare program perhaps. Maybe her adversary has callously thrown her out on the street in taking her home to pay debt. Someone has been mistreating her and as a powerless member of society she pursues her only avenue of appeal – seeking help from a judge with the authority to vindicate her. The text says “she kept on coming” – a desperate, continued request for help.

She met bureaucratic red tape and was refused time and time again. The judge had his secretary repeatedly show her the door for the first dozen times, but eventually he was worn out by her nagging and impressed by her determination so he gave in. “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming’” (vv. 4-5).

She did not lose heart, she did not give up, her case was so important to her that she kept coming to him, pleading for him to intervene in her behalf. The phrase “wear me out” actually has the meaning “give me a black eye.” It’s a boxing metaphor. Her strategy is to continually punch his body with her request until he gets worn down and opens up for a right hook knockout punch to the face. He falls over before that can happen by reasoning to himself and deciding to give in to her request.

I’m currently reading this biography on the first Mayor Daley – Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago. If you read a little about the first Mayor Daley you’ll begin to see some striking resemblances to the judge in this parable. One part of this book tells of his under-handed efforts to displace the Italian community that lived on the spot where he wanted the University of Illinois at Chicago campus to be. The citizens united under the leadership of a young house-wife named Florence Scala. She led marches, had meetings with the mayor, and resolutely stood up to him saying, “I’m going to fight you on this.”

Her persistence almost paid off one night after most of the people in City Hall had gone home for the day. She and four others sat themselves right down outside of Daley’s office. As he was leaving he walked past them “toward the elevator, then he walked back and said: ‘How long are you going to sit there?’ [Florence] said, ‘All night.’ He looked at [them] then he said: ‘C’mon, I’ll buy you a cup of coffee.’ [For some reason Florence] said no, so he shrugged and left. After he went down, [she] realized that maybe [she] should have gone with him.”

Well, today UIC stands over what once was her family’s home. If only she would have gone out for coffee with him then this would have made the perfect sermon illustration. As it is, hopefully it does two things: (1) whets your appetite for this afternoon’s presentation on the history of the UIC area that we’ll have at our Relocation Prayer Rally; and (2) show how a woman’s dogged determination could obtain favor from someone with the authority and power to grant her requests.

That’s what the widow does in this parable in Luke. “And the Lord said [to his disciples], ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says’” (v. 6). He says that because she persisted in her appeals he (an unjust judge) consented to her request! Then Jesus proceeds with a classic how much more argument – if an unjust judge will do that, how much more will the gracious God respond positively to sincere prayers? It’s the same line of reasoning that Jesus used when he was talking about prayer back in ch. 11 – “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (v. 13)!
He says here in ch. 18 in his application of his own parable – “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?” (v. 7). The first rhetorical question is phrased in such a way grammatically that it demands an emphatic “Yes!” answer. Just to be clear Jesus concludes, “I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly” (v. 8a). So the judge is supposed to represent God in the parable – the one with the power to assist the powerless. Even this shady official gives in under a constant barrage of pressure. The Lord on the other hand “is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing” (Dt. 10:17-18). Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Most assuredly, “Yes!” He will not delay forever.

So the judge in the story represents God in an imperfect, hazy sort of way. And the widow is supposed to represent a disciple. A disciple is completely and utterly dependent on his good God for everything. We are at his mercy. The widow’s cry for the judge to work justice for her is meant to picture prayer. We come before God in prayer and present our requests to him. This is the perfect picture of prayer. 1 Tim. 5:5 remarks, “The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.” In the beginning of Luke we meet a widow named Anna who “never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying” (2:37). We are confronted here with a picture of what our prayer life should be like.

Application

The first question that comes up and that I said we’d tackle is, “Why does God want us to persist in prayer – to press on in prayer and not give up? Why doesn’t God grant every request immediately? Why would God sometimes ask us to keep coming to him with a plea?” I want to try to give you 8 possible answers, 4 from a Puritan pastor named Thomas Watson who pondered this question some 350 years ago, and then I will add 4 others to that. So 8 in all.

First of all, in answering the question, “Why does God delay an answer to prayer?” Thomas Watson wrote in his book Body of Divinity:

1.) **God loves the sound of his children’s voice.** Watson writes, “You let the musician play a great while before you throw him down money, because you love to hear his music.” For the sake of his glory and our joy, he may be delaying in order to keep us in his presence. God delights in hearing his people pray; it is music to his ears. The older I get the more I realize this is true – God loves to hear us pray (and he loves to act in response to our prayers, but sometimes not right away).

2.) **In order to humble us.** Many times we come to God in a prideful way that assumes he is there to serve us, not the other way around – that he’s our gumball machine in the sky, a kind of divine butler at our beck and call. We may need to be brought to a place where we realize our utter dependence upon God for everything. If with each repeated prayer we get lower and lower on our knees before him and more and more earnest in our voice, that is a good
thing. He may not answer right away in order to highlight our dire need for him, which we may have previously glossed over.

3.) Because he knows that we are not yet ready for the mercy that we seek. Like a little boy who asks for a bb gun for Christmas and his parents know that he will not be ready for it for a couple more years, so too God may put a desire in our hearts/a prayer on our lips and then take us through a time of preparation for it. Most likely if you feel the door of heaven won’t open for a certain request you keep bringing to it, God is working on changing you to become more of the person he wants you to be – the person that can receive it.

4.) Finally, Watson offered that God might delay in order that the grace we are asking for might be that much more prized and sweeter when it comes. If a boy asks for a bb gun for 3 Christmases straight and then finally gets one his enjoyment and appreciation will be all the more sweet. Too many times we pray, God grants our request, and we forget the next day that it was an answer to prayer. Sometimes God wants us to enjoy the answer more fully as a sought after gift of God.

Those are good. To them I might add:

5.) There might be other pieces of the puzzle that need to be put in place first. God is sovereignly weaving together all of history according to his predetermined plan which includes answering his creatures’ prayers. God might have to answer someone else’s prayer first in order to answer my prayer. His plan may involve several other steps in between the asking of my prayer and the answering of it. His timetable is different than ours – “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Pet. 3:8). So we can never blame God for being slow. He does all things well in his good timing.

6.) There might be something in us hindering our prayers that he desires to work on. I’m not sure I completely understand this one but there’s no doubt that the Bible speaks of sin as a roadblock to our prayers. For example, 1 Pet. 3:7 tells me and all you married men out there that if our relationship with our wife is suffering, God may actually turn a deaf ear to some of our prayers: “Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” If there is unrepentant sin in your life you can’t expect to always have a listening audience with the holy God. Be careful with how you apply this one, especially in giving counsel to other people (remember Job’s friends), but do take it into consideration.

7.) Our motivations may be wrong. James 4:2-3 says, “You do not have, because you do not ask God [so maybe you haven’t even asked, you just are expecting]. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” A vast, vast majority of our prayers are extremely self-centered and nearsighted. God in his mercy may still answer them, but how pleased do you think he is when the only time he really hears from you is when you’ve lost a job, have a test in the
morning, or your team is losing? We most certainly are to pray for our needs (“Give us each day our daily bread” – Lk. 11:3), but how many times do we pray for wants and might not God want to withhold them from us in order to teach us to amend our prayer requests? If you’re experiencing unanswered prayers, honestly check your true motives.

8.) Lastly, going along with all of these, God may be refining and escalating your desires. If the boy asks for a bb gun on his birthday and then again at Christmas and his parents refuse repeatedly, they may be waiting to see if it’s really something that he wants or just a passing phase. If he keeps asking for it for 3 years, then they know that he is serious. This also gives the boy time to ponder whether it’s even something he really should be asking for. Maybe after some time he might realize that he could shoot his eye out with the gun and a more mature request would be for clothes. Similarly, if we beg God for something a few times, but when it doesn’t come to fruition we quickly forget about it then we didn’t really want it in the first place. Maybe after awhile we’ll realize that it was better for us that we didn’t get what we thought we so desperately needed at that time. If, however, we ask God for something that is good and in line with his own will, but we ask half-heartedly, God may be using this time to increase our longing for what is rightfully a good thing so that our hearts are brought in line with his and then God gives it to us.

The classic example here is the prayer for someone’s salvation. How many times have you prayed for somebody fervently for awhile and then gave up. It’s good to desire someone to put their faith in Christ and behold God as the most glorious object in the universe, but do our hearts really believe that? We all have probably heard the story of George Mueller, Christian social reformer from the Victorian era. He prayed for the conversion of five individuals “every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of [his] engagements... Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted... Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted... Six years passed before the third was converted. Fifty-two years after he began to pray, these two men were finally converted... as a result of Mueller’s funeral service. If you really desire it and it is in accordance with God’s will, you will press on in praying for it.

So, God loves to hear the sweet sound of our voice, he desires us to come to him in complete humility, he won’t give us something we’re not yet ready for, he wants our delight in him to be great when we obtain what we’re asking for, he is sovereign and works everything out in his own timing, he desires to purify our hearts and our motives, and ultimately so that we earnestly desire and ask him for the things that are close to his heart. For these reasons his answers may not always come when and how we initially want them to, but if we press on in this manner, the answers will come! God answers prayer! His character is good and when his children earnestly desire what is good and pleasing and perfect he gives it willingly and gladly. God will bring about answered prayer for his chosen ones. He will not keep putting them off. He will
see that they get what they need, and quickly. He doesn’t need to be badgered to death like the unjust judge. He is the epitome of one who fears God and cares for men. So the point is not that we must bug God and wear him down, but that he is willing to grant our cries for help. He may have reasons in his infinite wisdom and for our ultimate good for delaying, but he will answer the prayers that persist.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 Jn. 5:14). There is great power in that. Why don’t we take him up on it more often? We don’t have to shout loudly or slash ourselves with swords and spears like the prophets of Baal. We have a God who speaks and things happen. We have a personal relationship with the living God of the universe who unilaterally controls every electron, proton, and neutron in the universe. And as Blaise Pascal put it, “God has instituted prayer so as to confer upon his creatures the dignity of being causes.”

What a great motivation to pray!

I have been amazed at the numerous times I have seen God answer prayers in ways that are clearly connected to my requests. I have been praying through little cards with each of your names on them and items that I’d like to see God do in your lives – things that you may not have even asked for prayer on. I do this daily, and over the last 7 months I have seen God do those very things in your lives that I asked him to do. It has been amazing to watch!

On Joe Lee’s card for the past few months I’ve been praying that he would get into Physical Therapy school at UIC. He desperately wants to stay here and be a part of what this church will be doing in that area, but he also feels called to Physical Therapy school. As of Wednesday, the only place that had accepted him was USC and it looked like he might have to move to CA. UIC had denied him because they had lost his transcript. I didn’t give up praying and neither did Tim and his small group. Later in the week UIC emailed him and told him that he had been accepted to their program. That’s an answer to persistent prayer. Also, Richard got a job last Friday exactly one week after he was laid off because we had been praying! God answers prayer.

A perfect application of this text is what we are going to be doing after church today. For those of you who are members, we will be gathering back in this room at 4:00 to corporately lift up to God our church’s relocation to the UIC area this fall. We’re going to pray every month for the next six months like this and every Saturday at prayer meeting and members of the Relocation Research team are fasting regularly and praying for this and we’ll be sending out prayer requests to the IPT and asking everybody to include this move in their own personal prayer times and we’ll be crying out to God day and night that he would use this weak, tiny, inexperienced bunch of people whom he calls his chosen ones to proclaim the glory of his name in a grossly under-reached neighborhood of Chicago.

We’re going to ask God continually and not give up that he would use us to advance his kingdom in a dark part of this city. Is it God’s will that there be a gospel light in the UIC area proclaiming the magnificence and splendor of Jesus Christ to the people who live in the town homes and condos of University Village and Roosevelt Square, the lofts and homes of Pilsen, the dorms at UIC, the government housing projects along there? You bet it is. And so if we humbly pray and pray and pray and do not give up and in the process see our motives for moving become more and more pure and feel our desires for the glory of God to spread all over the UIC area increase then I believe
with all my heart that God will bless us and use us for his glory. And to be used to
distribute the sweet aroma of Christ will be the most satisfying task we could dream of.
May he teach us about persistent prayer through this process and may he stir up your
hearts to desire such things too.

Conclusion

Well, we’ve only skimmed the surface of this topic of prayer – probed a little into
the reasons to persist in prayer and reflected briefly on the power of prayer, but I want to
go back to what I told you the main thrust of this passage was at the beginning: faithful
followers of Christ will pray, that persistence in prayer is the result of faith, it’s just
what true believers do. Why do I say that’s the overarching main idea of this passage and
thus has to be the overarching main idea of my sermon? Look at v. 8b – “However, when
the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

He’s just finished telling his disciples to be committed to prayer during the
interim time as they await his return because he knows the days will grow long and the
temptation will be to lose heart. Now he closes with a provocative question, “Will I find
faith on earth when I return?” Do you see how he links prayer with faith? We might
think he’d ask, “Will I find prayer on earth when I return?” But he says faith. That’s
because he’s saying if he doesn’t find faith, he won’t find people praying fervently,
persistently, relentlessly. If he doesn’t find people praying in this manner when he comes
back, it means there won’t be anybody around with faith – they will all have given up and
set their hearts on other things. Do you see that?

Jesus told them a parable to illustrate the necessity of prayer (it is necessary; v. 1).
Prayer is a necessary part of being a follower of Christ. Now look again more closely at
v. 7. He equates the chosen ones, God’s elect, with the ones who cry out to him day and
night. The elect and the ones crying out to him day and night are the same people. How
do you define the elect? Those who cry out to God in prayer regularly. What do you call
someone who is always praying to God and never gives up? A Christian. When the Son
of Man comes, will he find pray-ers on the earth? Will he find you praying?

Now I’m sure every saint in heaven will say he should have prayed more.
Remember the disciples Peter, James, and John falling asleep the night before Jesus was
crucified when he asked them to pray with him? I bet they wished they had a heart for
prayer that night. We could all pray more, but if you don’t have much of an appetite at
all for prayer, if you’re heart balks regularly when prayer is suggested, if you aren’t
disciplined in prayer, if you don’t find yourself naturally slipping into conversation with
God – that’s a problem. That’s something that should worry you because it stems from a
lack of faith.

So I just want to get really practical in these last couple of minutes here and try to
help you address that problem in whatever degree you might have it. Since the root issue
is a lack of faith, you don’t necessarily solve it first of all by resolving to start praying for
15 minutes everyday – that’s legalism, there’s no life in that, it won’t work. And since
faith is a matter of having a proper comprehension of God’s dazzling splendor and
admiring him for it/the gut’s reaction to the mind’s clear perception/a delight in who God
is then what you need is a fresh vision of God.

If you find yourself largely apathetic to prayer – you don’t enjoy going to God for
help and strength and comfort – first of all repent. Say, “Lord, I don’t feel like praying,
my heart is not inclined to spend time with you, I really don’t desire to pray. I’m sorry. Forgive me. Help me.” God will forgive you and help you – guaranteed. Now pull a Moses, that is ask God to show you a little bit of his glory (Ex. 33). Say, “God the smog of sin in my life has obstructed my view of you. I can’t even see you. Part the cloud. Shine your light through.”

Now you don’t just do this and sit down on the couch and watch TV or start playing a video game. Focus on God as revealed in his Word – this is the primary means God uses to awaken in us a desire for him; it is God’s book about himself. Another thing to begin doing is reading books about God. Put down your sci-fi novels or People magazines or even Christian books about psychology or how to handle a certain problem and read books that deal primarily with God himself as revealed in Scripture. These are dense, they’re not cotton candy, but neither will they leave you with a quick sugar high and then allow you to find yourself lower than you were before.

Another thing to do is listen to God-intoxicated sermons by men whose eyes have apprehended more of his beauty and glory than you – it’s contagious. I have a select few such preachers that I can always listen to and be brought into the terrifying presence of God. Mine may not connect with you, but find such a person or persons and listen to them often as they paint before you the beauty and grandeur of the Lord. Read church history and Christian biography about men and women of yesteryears that saw God as so glorious they were willing to give their lives for him. You can even listen to certain music, look at certain artwork, admire certain phenomena of nature, but make sure if you do this that it’s not the drum beat or the bright lights or the mere pleasantries of creation that gets your blood pumping but the biblical truth about God which those things communicate.

In other words, seek God out, do what it takes to set your mind on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God and as the haze is lifted ever so slightly and rays of his unapproachable light flood through, your heart will surely follow. And as we feed our faith and as our knowledge of God and delight in him grow prayer will follow. When we delight in God, we will delight to enter his presence. When we believe him to be all-loving we will not shrink from persistently asking him to intervene on the side of justice. When we believe him to be all-powerful we will persevere in prayer knowing that he is able to act mightily. Faithful followers of Christ will pray. Will you be one?

Benediction
Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. And let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Amen.
End notes:

2 Thomas Watson, Body of Divinity: Contained in Sermons Upon the Assembly’s Catechism (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 399-400.
3 Taken from Ben Patterson, Deepening Your Conversation with God (Bethany House, 1999), 105-106.
Luke 18:9. some were convinced of their own righteousness. He spoke also this parable to certain people who were convinced of their own righteousness, and who despised all others. The word also ties this parable to the earlier one (18:1-8). Luke opens this parable with an introduction (v. 9) and Jesus closes it with a conclusion (v. 14). In the introduction (v. 9), Luke does not specifically mention Pharisees, but speaks of people who are self-righteous and contemptuous. The tax collector brings no personal achievement to the table to bargain with God, and makes no offer to play the personal-achievement game. Luke 22:20. the evening meal: Evidently referring to the Passover meal that Jesus ate with his disciples before instituting the Lordâ€™s Evening Meal. Thus Jesus celebrated the Passover according to the accepted custom of the time. A new covenant by virtue of my blood: Luke is the only Gospel writer to record that Jesus on this occasion referred to a covenant an allusion to Jer 31:31. The new covenant, between Jehovah and anointed Christians, was made operative by Jesusâ€™ sacrifice. (Heb 8:10) Jesus here uses the terms covenant and blood in a way similar to the way Moses used the terms when acting as mediator and inaugurating the Law covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. Luke 22:17-20 describe the events of the Last Supper. However, there are many variants of these verses (e.g. omitting Luke 22:19b-20), and the most common variant is very different to the parallels in Mark and Matthew. Why do these variants exist? The Majority Text of Luke 22:17-20. The Shorter Variants of Luke 22:17-20. Which is the Original Variant? Comparing the Majority Text with the Parallels. Accounts not containing Luke 22:19b-20a or their parallels. 1.1 The Majority Text of Luke 22:17-20. 1.2 The Shorter Variants of Luke 22:17-20. 1.3 Which is the Original Variant? 1.4 Comparing the Majority Text with the Parallels. 1.5 Analyzing the Accounts. The Syriac Variants. Accounts that include Luke 22:19b-20a or their parallels. What is the Status of the Majority Text? 1.9 D, a, d, ff2, i, l. 1.10 The Syriac Variants. 2 Conclusions. 3 References.
