**Union Church of Guatemala**

***“Simple, honest prayer”***

**1/28/18**

***“Pray as you can, not as you can’t.”***

***(Dom Chapman[[1]](#footnote-1))***

1. Prayer is not easy….prayer is tough
   1. *“We today yearn for prayer and hide from prayer. We are attracted to it and repelled by it. We believe prayer is something we should do, even something we want to do, but it seems like a chasm stands between us and actually praying. We experience the agony of prayerlessness.” (Richard Foster, “Prayer[[2]](#footnote-2)”)*
   2. Why is it so hard to pray?
      1. We have a weird notion that we need to have everything “just right” in order to be able to “truly” pray.
         1. Pressure from listening to beautiful prayers from others
            1. Why do we shy away from praying out loud in public? (around the family table, small group, etc.?)
         2. Our own sense of inadequacy and sinfulness
            1. We question our motives and suffer from “paralysis by analysis”
         3. The confusion created by picture perfect scenarios for the spiritual life.
            1. The ***“Instagram worthy”*** devotional picture
            2. Gorgeous selfies with motivational phrases or even Bible verses that make us feel bad about ourselves
      2. There is a temptation do “dehumanize” our prayers by trying to filter out as much of our humanity as possible so that they remain truly ***“spiritual”***
         1. We feel we might “offend” God
         2. We believe our concerns may be to mundane or even selfish for God to pay attention to them
         3. We forget we can come before Him as our Father
            1. Do we, as parents, ever reject our children even when they cannot speak in an articulate manner?
            2. Are not all the drawings and pictures that our children give us -despite their skill level- precious works of art?
      3. We expect and even demand “results”
         1. “Transactional” prayers
         2. Our “immediate result” driven culture (that wants to forgo ***the process***) drives us to despair discouragement
         3. We want prayers ***“that work”***
2. Psalm 73: a simple, honest, human and redemptive prayer
   1. The great beauty of Psalms as a prayer book, is that it gives us language and expressions and ways of addressing God that never cease to amaze and surprise us: ***I didn’t know I could talk to God like that!***
      1. ***“…lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.” (C.S. Lewis, “Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer[[3]](#footnote-3)”)***
   2. The redemptive process of Psalm 73
      1. What we know vs what we feel and see (v.1-2)
         1. Many times, we focus on the apparent contradictions of the spiritual realities and truths we know about God, with the ***reality*** of our own condition and what we see in the world that makes us stumble and doubt.
      2. We know what’s wrong with the world and it is right for us to bring it before the Lord (v.4-12)
         1. Who is missing from this picture?
      3. We tend to avoid responsibility and victimize ourselves (v.13-14)
      4. We begin to come to our senses and our eyes are opened to the impact of such egotism[[4]](#footnote-4) (v.15)
         1. Our self-centeredness doesn’t only affect ourselves, but it impacts those around us as well.
         2. To think only about ourselves, to victimize ourselves, is a betrayal.
      5. The road to repentance begins when we let go of ourselves and our opinions and seek God and submit to His authority (v.16-17)
      6. It is hard to let go of ourselves and our victim mentality. We long for revenge and delight in others being punished (v.18-19)
      7. The Lord again reveals our hearts and convicts us of our sin of pride and arrogance. We come to realize who we truly are. (v.21-22)
      8. Hope and restoration come when in prayer we finally yield and surrender ourselves and everything else to God’s sovereign and loving care and providence (v.23-26)
         1. He will never leave us or forsake us (v.23)
            1. Matthew 12:18-20
            2. Matthew 28:20b
            3. Romans 8:31-39
         2. He will get us there…always (v.24)
            1. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
         3. In Him we have everything we need (v.25)
            1. John 6:67-68
         4. He will sustain us and see us through
            1. Psalm 23:4
      9. We are now able to reflect upon God’s will humbly, with gratitude, hope and a desire to tell other about Him (v.27-28)
3. It will still be hard to pray, even this type of honest, simple prayer…but there is hope
   1. *“…never be discouraged by our lack of prayer. Even in our prayerlessness we can hunger for God. If so, the hunger is itself prayer. ‘The desire for prayer,’ writes Mary Clare Vincent[[5]](#footnote-5), ‘is prayer, the prayer of desire.’ In time the desire will lead to practice, and practice will increase the desire. When we cannot pray, we let God be our prayer. Nor should we be frightened by the hardness of our heart: prayer will soften it. We give even our lack of prayer to God.” (Richard Foster, “Prayer[[6]](#footnote-6)”)*
   2. Prayer is a Trinitarian affair
      1. The Father is always present and always listens (Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:19-23)
      2. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf, even when we are unable to utter the words. (Romans 8:26-27)
      3. Jesus is also praying for us and in our behalf[[7]](#footnote-7). (Romans 8:34 / Hebrews 7:23-25)
4. Do not lose heart and do not be afraid! Pray….He listens…always.

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chapman_(priest)> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.amazon.com/Prayer-Finding-Hearts-True-Home-ebook/dp/B00713L1SO/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1516720712&sr=8-1&keywords=Richard+Foster+Prayer> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.amazon.com/Letters-Malcolm-Chiefly-Prayer-Lewis/dp/0062565478/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1516732406&sr=8-1&keywords=letters+to+malcolm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Egotism: the practice of talking and thinking about oneself excessively because of an undue sense of self-importance. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.amazon.com/Sr.-Mary-Clare-Vincent/e/B004SUXK5A> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.amazon.com/Prayer-Finding-Hearts-True-Home-ebook/dp/B00713L1SO/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1516732644&sr=1-1&keywords=richard+foster+prayer> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-really-does-pray-for-us/> / <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-prays-for-us> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)