

We've spent a lot of time this month talking about prayer. Talking about how to listen to what God is telling us. I've had a lot of conversations outside of the church. People telling me that they don't know how to pray and that they don't understand why they should pray. Those are very real conversations, especially because they're not from people from our church. The general people that I'm out speaking with, some of them don't even know I'm a pastor. They just tell me that they don't know how to pray. Praying is such a very difficult thing for people, and it doesn't make sense as to why, right? We should all be able to openly speak to God, no matter where we are, no matter when, no matter what's going on, no matter what is in our hearts, but we don't. How many people pray during the week? I'm getting answers, I'm shocked. Okay, it must be our guests today is why everybody's answering today. We never get answers. I'm floored. It's awesome.

Did you notice that not everybody raised their hand? I didn't raise my hand because I was floored. I do pray outside of church. I pray on the way to church. I pray on the way up my stairs because you never know. I pray all the time, and what do I pray about? What do you pray about? We all pray for the sick, right? We pray for people that we know that need help. Do we pray for people that we don't know if they need help? Yes. Do we pray for ourselves? Do we pray for ourselves positively? Do we pray to God saying thank you for the gifts you've given me. Do we pray saying, I know, it's really hard for me right now, but it's harder for someone else. Do we pray for the community? Do we pray for the church? Today we're having our annual meeting.

The finance committee, and Paul did a fantastic job of putting together a budget for next year, and that budget's going to be good for next year. And it's gonna be good for the year after that. But what about three years from now? The committee chairs and Sarah have done a great job putting together committees for next year. If you look at the list, it's the same committees we had last year. The same committees we had the year before that. Some of those committees I don't think have changed in 15 years. And they'll be good for next year. It'll be good for the year after that, but are they going to be good for three years from now? Are they gonna be good 10 years from now? I hate to say this, but I do not expect to see Mom on the diaconate 10 years from now. If you didn't hear her, she said, I hope not.

What about other things we do in the church? Where are we going to be 10 years from now? Are we going to be doing all piped in music? Are we going to have a choir again? Are we going to have our last confirmation class in 10 years from now? These are all things that I pray about. We are much better than we were five years ago. We are much better than we were three years ago. We are much better than where we were a month ago. We're growing; we're developing, We're making the community better. We're making the church better. We're making the conference better. We're making all kinds of things better. But, what's the next step? What's the next thing we're going to do? How do we keep going? The people that I talked to this week asked how to learn how to pray. You know what else they said? They need to go to church.

Now, some of them I told not to come to our church. They don't belong here. Their ideas are very different than ours, and they need to go where they can hear God. They need to go where they feel comfortable talking to God. But what about the people that we know that aren't here. I can ask them to come, and I do frequently. But they don't come because I ask them because I'm one person. How many of you ask people to come? I know, I know you do. I know I'm not saying that we don't, but is it easier for somebody to come when one person asks them? Or is it easier for them to come when one, two, or three people ask them.

We care about everybody in this community, in the state, in the country, in the world. We do whether we know them or not. We care about their well-being. We care that they're hungry. We care that they're thirsty, and we do everything we can to help them. A big part of it is, do they help themselves? A lot of times, no. But asking for that help doesn't change who they are. It doesn't change who we are, and none of it really matters. Aside from the fact that we are sharing God's love of people who need it. It shouldn't matter our age, our race, our gender. Why do we go to this church? Whether we go to Saint Malachy's, whether we go to St John's, none of that should matter because we all are God's children. We all share that love, and we all help and grow. That's what I pray for. I pray that we continue to grow and that we can set aside these differences and God will help us do that.

In today's reading, James gave us a long list of people to pray for. Gave us a long list of things to pray about and spoke to us about Elijah. One of the great things about our Friday Bible study is the conversations we have about how we remember the Bible and how the Bible really is when we reread it. How many people remember the story of Elijah? See, these are the answers I expected. I got a couple. Elijah was a great Prophet. He was a great Prophet during the time of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. That's a name that most you should remember. And Elijah prayed for three and a half years because they were worshipping Baal. They were worshipping a false god, and he was trying to convince everybody that our God is the greatest God. And he prayed for it to stop raining, and it did. And he prayed so hard that God told him, you're making people mad. You need to go hide, and he did for three and a half years. And then he comes out, and they build two altars. He builds an altar and then the high priest for the king and queen builds an altar. And he's, like, do it. Pray for rain, see what happens. Pray to your false god. And they do, and they pray. And they pray, and they pray. And nothing happens. And he prays. And it rains, and it rains. And it shows how great our God is and how great God will respond to prayer. But he didn't let it stop there. He said. Okay, light your altar on fire. Make your sacrifice to your God. And the priests dance and scream and cheer, and they light the altar. How many people try to light a campfire during the rain? You don't get a lot of luck do you? Neither did they? Nothing happened. So, Elijah walked up to his altar and he prayed. And the altar lit up and it burned in the rain. And he said, again, this is how great my God is. This is how great and wonderful our God is. And this is all you have to do. Just pray.

Praying is a wonderful tool that God gave us that we don't utilize as best as we can. God knows what's in our hearts. God knows what we are capable of individually and together. Oh God, it's just like us. They cannot help those who don't want to be helped, even though they know. And they will protect us in every way they can. They still need us to recognize that we need help. So, when you leave here today, remember, talk to God in any way you can, because that's right. You don't have to start off with dear God. You don't have to start off with Holy Father. You don't have to start off with, well, I've got a problem. They know they'll hear all of those things. They will guide you and protect you, And the more we all pray, the more that they will guide and protect all of us. Let us pray.