



# ***THE NEW SHOFAR***

## **Pray and then keep on praying**

**Our day should be broken up into prayer opportunities**

**Ordinary Sunday 17**

### ***Jesus is the model for our own life of prayer***

Throughout his Gospel, Luke has sought to highlight the humanity of Christ. One of the ways he has done this is by having a clear focus on the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus prays. He prays constantly and he lays his life and his ministry before God his Father. So significant is this focus for the evangelist, he provides seven accounts of Jesus at prayer which are peculiar to Luke. Prayer in the New Testament is understood to be the uplifting of the heart to God. That does not simply mean singing and saying prayers with praise as their major focus. Praising God means primarily an acknowledging of the sovereign rule of God in all we are doing, planning and saying. We offer praise to God when we accept divine sovereignty over our lives, that we are needy people, creatures struggling with personal weaknesses, limitations and sins. It is by giving room for God, time for God in our daily living that we give to God the praise He deserves.

### ***Pray continually***

For Luke, prayer engages the whole of human living and activity. We are told to pray *continually*. Of course, that is impossible if we limit “praying” to words alone. The evangelist teaches his own Church to make prayer an holistic activity. We pray continually when we begin and end our life activities with a short time for God. How easy is that ...*please Father God, be my guide and strength as I begin this action...(name action). May my words and deed reflect the Way of your Kingdom.* Ten seconds? Then at the end...*thank you Father for your comforting graces, may the works I have just completed, bring forth fruits of your Kingdom.* Another ten seconds? By doing this we are not injecting God into what we are doing. We are acknowledging the God who is already at work in what is important to us.

### ***Not just talking about prayer but doing our praying***

What about grace before meals? Is that a fundamental aspect of all our meals – thanking our gracious God for the blessing of food when so many others go without? If we skip “grace”, it may well be a sign other areas of our discipleship are going without contact with God.

Night prayer, the concluding of our day with a moment of thanks for the gifts of the day, an acknowledging of our failures in faithfulness and the possibility of our sinning. We ask for forgiveness and the gift of a peaceful and refreshing sleep as we commit the day to God. As the parable of the seed reminds us, we do the planting and God does the growing, even when we are

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not even aware that we have been sowing Kingdom seeds. How difficult can that be... *Our Father in Heaven, I thank you for the gifts of today and ask that what I have done in your name will bear lasting fruits. I ask forgiveness for my sins (call them if I can – that unkind word or thought about “Fred”; spending work time/resources on personal pursuits; putting profit before justice and mercy, etc) – and pray for the gift of a restful sleep that I may rise in the morning to once again take up your mission in the world. Simple! Then in the morning – Father, I commit this day into your loving hands. May my every word and deed reveal something of your love for all men and women and further the work of your Kingdom.* This is what Luke has in mind when he records the focus of Jesus on prayer.

### ***It really is all about God***

The way Luke presents all of this praying by Jesus is as a way of growing in the intimacy of his relationship with his Heavenly Father. This is a special aspect of Luke’s understanding of what prayer does and why it is important. It leads the person praying deeper and deeper into the life of God, the reality of God. We pray because God wants us to be at one in Him. We do not deserve this or earn it by being good. It is a free and unearned gift. The result of His regular fellowship with God was the strengthening of His relationship with His Father until Jesus could say in John *I and the Father are one.* Jesus understood the way his life on earth was all about *doing the will of the one who sent me.* Jesus did not see his life as being all about himself. He lived life as a gift for God. This is why, at the opening of his time of suffering and crucifixion he could declare in a most profoundly moving way... *Father, if you are willing take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*

### ***Today’s Gospel is an invitation to do something about growing our prayer life***

Prayer and praying are easy topics about which to talk. And talk. And talk some more. What is difficult is persevering in prayer, praying constantly, both of which are the expectations of Jesus. When our parishes do not have people praying for the parish mission, praying for each other and presenting the world before God in prayer – we are failing in our vocation and are doomed to decline and disappear. We can never become the people we were created to be if we are not regular in our daily praying. Praying means living under God’s sovereign rule, living in a world we believe has been turned on its ear by the coming of Jesus of Nazareth as our Saviour and Messiah. Our manner of praying and the times we pray (or fail to pray) are indications of the seriousness with which we take this saving reality.

It is easy to pray. We do not even have to worry about the wording of our prayers, for if we put aside the time (maybe just minutes) the Spirit will give us the “words”. What then is our response to today’s Gospel going to mean for the way we build our daily activities on prayer?

- Set up simple times for prayer – morning, meals, evening, before and after activities. These are minimal requirements and a discipline needs to be rigorously maintained.
- Get together with others in my parish/area to find time for communal prayer – come to church twenty minutes early on Sundays; form a prayer group/Bible study group.

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