

## **Session Sixty-Two: Jesus Teaches, Heals, and Prays**

**Theme:** Sweet Hour of Prayer

### **Law/Gospel Focus:**

Our sin alienates us from God. We stand naked and empty before God. God, in His love for us, sent Jesus to suffer and to die for us to restore the broken relationship with God so that we might approach God, assured that He will hear us for Jesus sake.

### **Objectives:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, we will:

- 1) explain the reason Jesus spent time in prayer;
- 2) summarize the message of Jesus' parables;
- 3) respond to God's love for us in Jesus as we approach Him in prayer.

### **Introduction:**

- 1). How would you describe your prayer life? Why?
- 2). What is the typical content of your prayers?
- 3). How might you change your prayer life? Why? How might you change the content of your prayers? Why?
- 4). Respond to the statement, "If you feel distant from God, guess who's moved." How might your prayer life describe your distance (faith relationship) from God?

In today's lesson, Jesus prays. We will examine the reason for and content of Jesus' prayer. We will then study Jesus' parable of the talents and apply its message to our lives.

### **Inform**

Read Mark 1:29-39 and Matthew 25:14-30.

### **About the Text:**

*The Sabbath ended at sundown. Immediately a crowd came to the house with their sick and demon-possessed. No matter what the disease, Jesus healed the sick and drove out the demons. Nothing was too difficult for Him.*

*Jesus did not allow the demons to speak. He wanted those who were healed and those who witnessed the healings to draw their own conclusions directly from His words and actions and thus to come to the realization He was more than just a healer of the body; He was the promised Savior from sin. ...*

*That Sabbath had been an exceptionally busy one for Jesus, yet He did not sleep late the next morning. Instead, He left the house before sunrise and retreated to a solitary place to pray. It may seem strange to us that Jesus the Son of God felt the need to spend time in praying to and communing with His heavenly Father, but only until we remember He was also truly human. As such He too was dependent upon God. However, in one respect His prayers were not identical with ours. They were not prayers for the forgiveness of sins, for He had none. In His prayers He talked with His heavenly Father about the work that lay before Him and thus found strength for His task. On this particular morning He may well have discussed with the Father whether He should remain longer in Capernaum or begin taking His message into other areas of Galilee. The Father's answer was clear in the words of Jesus to His disciples and subsequent action.*

*That Jesus felt the need for spending time in prayer reminds us that our need to do so is greater. We remember also that the Old Testament prophet Daniel felt the need to kneel in prayer three times a day. ...*

*Peter and the other disciples had different plans for Jesus. When the crowd gathered again, they discovered that Jesus had left the house. Immediately they began searching for Him with Peter leading the search party. That they found Him suggests that they were aware of His practice of going apart by Himself to pray. They told Him about the crowd looking for Him. Undoubtedly, they thought Jesus would be pleased with that. But Jesus knew many only came to Him for what there was in it for them. He also recognized the disciples still had a lot to learn about Him and His mission. Had Jesus followed their suggestion, He would not have placed the emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel, but on presenting Himself [only] as a healer. ...*

*Jesus therefore informed His disciples on that very morning that He would set out on a preaching tour of Galilee. ... Wherever Jesus went on this tour, He entered the synagogues. This offered Him many opportunities to preach the Gospel, since synagogue services were not only conducted on the Sabbath but also on Mondays and Thursdays. In connection with His preaching He also drove out demons, for they were the opponents of His message. The tour may have lasted several weeks or even months, but Mark summarizes it in one verse. The Savior's emphasis was always on preaching the Gospel.*

From Harold E. Wicke, *The People's Bible: Mark*, © 1988 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission. (Reprinted by CPH as *The People's Bible Commentary: Mark*, 1992, p. 27-30.)

*"Talen" was first used for a unit of weight (about 75 pounds) and then for a coin, which is how Jesus uses it in this parable. When we use the term for an ability or a skill, that is a meaning which is derived from this parable. The talents that Jesus gives us include all the intellectual and physical abilities we are born with and those we develop as we mature. Our talents include all the material possessions that rightfully come into our hands. And they include the many opportunities God provides us for using our talents to serve Him and our neighbor. ...*

*Notice that the Master pronounces the same verdict upon both of the servants who doubled the talents entrusted to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's*

*happiness!” They had been faithful with their respective talents, and that was all their Master asked of them. It is for their faithfulness that they are commended rather than for their accomplishments.*

*Jesus had a reason for making the servant with only one talent the unfaithful one. If it had been one of the servants with more talents, we would be too inclined to say, “What a shame! What a terrible thing that a person so richly blessed should be ungrateful to God! But, of course, my gifts are not very numerous or great, so the Lord surely cannot expect much from me.”*

*Ost of us would place ourselves into the category of the servant who received only one talent. That may be where most of us belong. But surely is no excuse for being unfaithful with the talent God has given us. It will not do at all for any of us to say, “I can’t do much; so it is all right if I don’t do anything. It won’t really make any difference.”*

*It may be true that the work of God’s Kingdom will get done without the support of those who have very limited means and talents. But we need to realize that God calls upon us to serve Him with our individual talents, not because He cannot get along without our help, but rather because faithful service to Him is of great value to those who do the serving. As Jesus said on another occasion, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).*

From G. Jerome Albrecht and Michael J. Albrecht, *The People’s Bible: Matthew*, © 1996 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission. (Reprinted by CPH as *The People’s Bible Commentary: Matthew*, 1996, p. 362, -363-4.)

## **Discussing the Text:**

- 1). Why did Jesus retreat to a solitary place to pray?
- 2). How were Jesus’ prayers different than our prayers?
- 3). What was Jesus’ emphasis in all His preaching tours? Why?
- 4). Use these basic questions to explain the parable of the talents: (a) Why did Jesus tell this parable? (b) What is the parable’s point or theme? (c) How does the parable call God’s people to faith and discipleship?

## **Connect:**

For Christians, praying is simply sharing our needs and desires with our merciful, faithful God. Many hurts and hollow places are found within the human heart. Many days bring a new measure of distress and pain. Prayer is simply seeking comfort and provision from our Creator and Lord. We pray as children who know and trust the Word of their loving Father.

Our prayers remind us first of our place in the universe. We are “creatures,” alienated sons and daughters in search of a permanent home. By our rebellion, we have distanced ourselves from

the holy God and His eternal kingdom. Our Father's perfect will is far removed from our sinful, selfish ways. We need daily sustenance, daily forgiveness, and daily protection.

Every prayer begins with a simple realization: we stand naked, with empty hands, before God. He alone can supply what we lack. In Christ, our Father hears our pleas and answers us with His good gifts and Spirit. He loves us with true fatherly devotion, sending His own Son to die for our forgiveness and life. Because of Jesus, we have the confidence to approach the living God, assured of His mercy and goodness.

- 1). Why is it important for us to find a solitary place to pray?
- 2). Why is it important for every prayer to begin with the realization that we stand naked, empty, before God?
- 3). Why would most of us—if honest—place ourselves into the category of the servant who received only one talent?
- 4). Why is it important that as we serve Jesus, our primary task be sharing the Gospel?