

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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After Amen – The Lord's Prayer

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To call George Frideric Handel one of history's greatest composers is an understatement. Beethoven said to him, 'I bow the knee'. He wrote 42 operas, 29 oratorios, 120 cantatas but at the age of 56, he was past his composing prime. He was depressed, he was in debt and a stroke limited the use of his right hand. He was struggling to stay relevant which is so ironic because he was about to write a timeless piece of music. On August 21, 1741, Handel started composing, for the next three weeks he would not leave his house he rarely left his composing chair. 21 days later he would emerge with perhaps the most performed piece of music in western history a 260-page composition called The Messiah. On the last page, he wrote the initials SDG - Soli Deo Gloria - to God alone be the glory.

The opening act begins with Old Testament prophecy. There are more than three hundred Old Testament prophecies that are fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We remember one of them this weekend Palm Sunday. The Prophet Zechariah said rejoice oh people of Zion shout in triumph oh people of Jerusalem. Look your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious yet he is humble riding on a white stallion, no, on a donkey riding on a donkey foal. The kingdom he came to establish is not a political ideology; it is not established with military might. His law is love and his Gospel is peace. The middle act of Handel's commentary of Handel's composition is a commentary on the passion of Christ and the final act is a celebration of the risen Christ in the fact that he shall reign forever and ever. Now that's the back story here's the rest of the story. The Messiah debuted on April 13, 1742. It was a benefit concert, the concert raised four hundred pounds and those four hundred pounds were used to set free 142 men who were in debtors prison. That's the tip of the iceberg in his will Handel left the Messiah to foundling hospital in London. Why? Because Handel wasn't a musician who followed Christ he was a Christ follower who happened to write music. Music was his passion but the Gospel was his mission and he knew it was his calling to set the captive free and to care for the sick. This was not just music this was a movement. This is a little double entendre right there. One of Handel's biographer's said that the Messiah has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphaned more than any other musical production. The musicologist Percy Young said perhaps the works of no other composer has so largely contributed to the relief of human suffering and to that I say hallelujah. Why do I tell you that story and what does it have to do with the Lord's Prayer? Well, I'm gonna shoot straight. You need to pray then you need to pray some more but you cannot just pray like it depends on God at some point you have to work like it depends on you, you have to get to the amen. Amen is not the end of the prayer it's the beginning of obedience you have to stop praying and start composing, you have to stop praying and start giving, start serving. Praying without praying about it, without acting on it is hypocrisy. Praying about it without acting on it there's another name for it, disobedience. Two weeks ago I said that prayer is a two-sided coin; heads forgive us our trespasses; tails as we forgive those who trespass against us. You have to flip the coin. The reason so many of us get stuck spiritually because we prayed the first half of the prayer but we haven't done the second half of the prayer.

Let me flip the coin in a little different way this weekend. Heads pray like it depends on God; tails work like it depends on you. Here's my fear. We want to pray about it and be done with it. We've done our duty but that's a fundamental misunderstanding of prayer it doesn't work that way you can't just pray like depends on God you have to work like it depends on you. We want God to answer our prayers without personal involvement. Yes, we want God to answer our prayers without getting our hands dirty, without having to inconvenience ourselves, without having to sacrifice anything but here's what I've learned whatever you're praying for your volunteering for. When you pray I'm telling you nine times out of ten God will find a way to make you part of the answer to the prayer that you prayed. Well the biggest mistakes we make when it comes to prayers we confuse portfolios we ask God to do for us what God has asked us to do for him and so we say God provide for my friend who's in need God says I have provided, I provided you, I put you in their life to be the provision for the need that they have. I'll tell you about a defining moment in my prayer life it happened twenty-two years ago as part of our one and only small group and at the end of the group we would often ask for prayer requests see if anybody had a need. Sure enough, a recent college grad who was one of our original 19 people was then leading a campus ministry and he said our campus ministry needs a computer and I volunteered to pray for it. I start praying for it and I don't know that it's ever happened this dramatically before I mean there's maybe two or three times and listen, not an audible voice but unmistakable God interrupted me mid-sentence so why are you asking me you're the one with an extra computer. I quit praying mid-prayer and I said to Jeremy we don't need to pray about this I have an extra computer it's yours. I have a hunch there are more than a few prayers that we could answer if we didn't ask God to do for us what he's asking us to do for others. Please take what I'm about to say in context there are some things you don't need to pray about. Why? Because God's already spoken on the subject. Sure you can pray about logistics when, where and how. You don't need to pray about loving your neighbor, you don't need to pray about giving God the first fruits, you don't need to pray about going the extra mile or turning the other cheek or caring for the least of God has already spoken on those subjects. You don't need to pray about it you need to do something about it, you've got to get to Amen. And that's where we are this weekend, that's where we are.

It takes 17 seconds to pray the Lord's Prayer. It takes a lifetime to learn it, takes a lifetime to live it out. And so for the past weeks, six weeks we've been unpacking the Lord's Prayer. It begins with the salutation our Father who art in heaven. We pray to a heavenly Father who is incomprehensibly powerful and he's loving and forgiving beyond comprehension. We do not pray in our name we pray in the name of our Father. It's followed by seven petitions.

1) Hallowed by thy name. There are more than 400 names for God in scripture each one reveals a piece of his personality, a dimension of his character. We petitioned by the power of those names and when we pray we are praying in the authority of the name that is above all names the name of Jesus. That's where our confidence comes from and it's a holy confidence.

2) Thy kingdom come. We're praying that God's plans and God's purposes would prevail.

3) Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. When we pray this part of the prayer we're praying precisely the way Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Do you remember he said take this cup from me, it was a cup of suffering he knew what was about to happen but he prayed

a prayer and I have learned to pray this prayer, it takes a little bit of courage. Jesus said not my will but thy will be done. It's a prayer of surrender but it's not just submissive, it's subversive, it's preemptive, it's proactive. What we're praying is that heaven would literally invade earth. In heaven the lion lays down next to the lamb were praying for the reconciliation of all things. In heaven there's no more death or mourning or crying or pain so what are we praying? We're praying for healing, we're praying for deliverance, we're praying for the peace that passes understanding and for joy unspeakable. We're praying that the reality of heaven would redefine the reality of our circumstances.

4) Give us this day our daily bread. We are praying for God's provision.

5) Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. It is a petition for forgiveness.

6) Lead us not into temptation. We're praying that God would guide us that God would GPS us in the path of righteousness and

7) Deliver us from evil. We're asking God to set captives free no matter what the bondage no matter what the addiction. He is the God who is singing songs of deliverance all around us all the time. Psalm 32.

And this is probably where the original prayer ended, the Doxology. "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." is not included in most modern translations and that's because it's not found in the most ancient manuscripts. Scholar's best guess is that the ending felt a little abrupt and so this Doxology in a sense is an amendment. But let me say this it might not be in the original manuscripts but it echoes, it echoes the Doxology of David in 1 Chronicles 29, read it. And the angels and elders who are singing in Revelation 5. Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. When we pray that what are we praying? What are we saying? I think we're praying that God would advance his kingdom; I think we're praying that God would manifest his power and I think we're praying that God would put his glory on display. Well how does that happen? Well happens through you and through me it happens one act of faith, one act of obedience, one act of kindness, one act of courage at a time. Please hear me and this is a high privilege you are the hands and the feet of Christ.

A few weeks ago I was speaking at an event in Orlando I referenced it a couple of weeks ago I interviewed Brian Head Welch from the band Korn but there were two other speakers. I'm going to pop a picture on the screen so you can see. And I was struck by the juxtaposition on either side of me. On my left was Emmitt Smith, he holds the NFL all-time rushing record 18,255 yards. I did the math that's 10.4 miles with a 300-pound defensive lineman knocking him down every 4.2 yards. Pretty impressive. And on my right is Nick Vujicic. Nick is a remarkable human being, born without arms, without legs. But he made a decision that he would not be defined by what the world calls a disability. Google Nick watch some of the things that he is done and you will discover that he has done things that most of us with two arms and two legs have not done, like surfing for example. So we're on this panel and answering questions and Nick says that his life mission is to stand in front of the gates of hell and redirect traffic. Go, Nick! Then he says something so powerful and so poignant, I don't know that I'll ever be able to forget it. He said

God is using a man without arms and legs to be his hands and feet. A conviction came over me. Am I doing everything with the hands and feet that God has given me that I can? But also just this sense, man, if Nick is doing what he's doing come on I can, I can do this thing. It doesn't matter what you do, it doesn't matter whether you're an athlete like Emmitt who used his feet to gain yardage or a musician like Brian who uses his hands to play the guitar or a man without arms and legs like Nick you are the hands and feet of Christ. You are the only Bible that some people will ever read. The question is this are you a good translation? The best prayer is a life well lived, the best prayer is doing what Jesus did, the best prayer is being the hands and feet of Christ to a world that's hurting, a world that's angry a world that skeptical but a world that's looking for what's true and what's good and what's beautiful and what's right. When we pray thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory we are praying God now let me be your hands and your feet.

Let me give you a little formula this weekend you can jot it down ability plus attitude plus anointing equals impact, pretty simple. But I want to give you some numbers and listen this is might be fuzzy math. Here we go impact equals fifty percent ability, fifty percent attitude and ten percent anointing but that doesn't add up to a hundred, that's my point. You've got to cultivate your God-given ability. Yes, there is no shortcut to the ten thousand hour rule, you have to work as hard as everybody else but you can do it with God's help. And then you got to bring your 'A game' attitude. Well, what's the 'A game' attitude? I'll tell you exactly what it is. It's Philippians 2:5 you should have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus who humbled himself and took the posture of a servant. But it's not just ability plus attitude you've got to add anointing to the equation. 1 John 2:27 "you have received the Holy Spirit and he lives within you so you don't need to, you don't need anyone to teach you what is true." Then it says this, his anointing teaches you about all things, not some things, all things. Listen, whether you're a doctor or a lawyer or a teacher, a plumber, contractor, consultant, mechanic, chef, lobbyist whatever it is you do God wants to help you do what you do beyond your natural ability. It's called his anointing and it's for everyone it's the difference between the best you can do and the best God can do. Well, how do I get that? I want that. Well, it's yours. Are you a child of God? It's yours by position in Christ. Without the Holy Spirit, I am below average but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I want to tell you this weekend the anointing of God is the x-factor, it is the IT factor. It is not easy to define but I want to tell you this, his Spirit is in you and his anointing is on you even on your off days. And so we pray this prayer but then with the ability God has given us with the same attitude as Christ and with his anointing now we're his hands and now were his feet and now his kingdom is coming.

This week we hosted a screening of a documentary film that the Miracle Theater our theater here on Capitol Hill called Emanuel. It's set to release June 17th which is the three year anniversary of the shooting that took place at Emanuel AMA Church in Charleston, South Carolina. It claimed the lives of nine souls but it's a story of unbelievable forgiveness. When that film is released we'll show it and you need to see it. After we screened it the director of that film Brian Ivy shared a little bit of his story and I want to share it with you. In 2011 he was a rising junior at USC School of Cinematic Arts. He read an article in the LA Times about a pastor in Seoul, Korea who built a drop box for abandoned babies where they could be adopted and cared for. That pastor, Pastor Lee and that church has now saved 600 unwanted babies, many of whom had deformities and disabilities much like Nick Vujicic. When Brian read that article thoughts fired

across his synapses. He thought if I don't do anything about this if I don't tell this story everyone's going to forget. You can call that what you want I call it a God idea. But an idea is just an idea until you do something about it. You have to take that thought captive II Corinthians 10:5 and you have to make it obedient to Christ with blood sweat and tears, with time talent and treasure. And so Brian sent an email to Pastor Lee using Google translate he raised \$80,000, he recruited a team of 11 students, he flew six thousand miles, and he slept on the floor of that orphanage for three months. And it was while filming that documentary and watching Pastor Lee be the hands and the feet of Christ that Brian Ivy put his faith in Christ because I want to follow a God like that. When everything was said and done Brian had produced an award-winning film called The Drop Box. Here's what I love Brian is pulling a Handle if I can say that. Emanuel, the release is June 17th all of the prophets are going to go to the families whose loved ones were killed in that shooting. Brian Ivy is advancing God's kingdom. He's manifesting God's power and he's putting God's glory on display. How? Well, just through the abilities that God has given him as a filmmaker. I think through a pretty amazing attitude that was transformed sleeping on that orphanage floor.

So let me ask a question in closing this weekend what do you need to stop praying about and do something about. Please pray and then pray some more but you have got to get to 'Amen'. Do not let what you cannot do keep you from doing what you can. You are the hands and feet of Christ and may God give you the courage to pray this prayer, Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. May his kingdom come, may his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.