**SUNDAY 10/17/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 10:35-45**

Three pastors gathered one morning and were were talking about prayer in general. As they were talking, a telephone repairman was quietly working

 on the phone system in the background.

Before long the pastors began to discuss the appropriate

 and effective positions for prayer.

One pastor shared that he felt the important thing was in the hands.

He always held his hands together and pointed them upward,

 as a form of symbolic worship.

The second suggested that real prayer was conducted on one's knees.

The third insisted they both had it wrong.

 The only proper position worth its salt was to pray

 while stretched out flat on one's face on the floor.

By this time the phone man couldn't stay out of the conversation any longer.

He interjected, "I found that the most powerful prayer I ever made

 was while I was dangling upside down by my heels from a power pole, suspended forty feet above the ground.

 That was real prayer!"

Our position as we pray is not nearly as important

 as what we are saying to God, and what we are asking of Him.

God is always listening,

He is interested in our requests.

What position we are in is not important to Him.

He wants to hear what we have to say.

Real prayer is coming close to God.

Our position is not what is important.

What we say is what is important.

Trusting God to help us is important.

James and John approached Jesus and said to him:

“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”

Jesus asked them: "What is it you want me to do for you?"

They replied: "Let us sit on your right and left in Heaven.

 Let us have the seats of honor."

When the other disciples heard this they were very angry.

Probably because they wished they had asked first,

 so they could have been honored.

Jesus must have been discouraged and frustrated.

These were His closest followers.

After all their time together, the apostles still did not understand.

In God's Kingdom, to be great, one is to be a servant to others.

It isn't about having the best seats.

It is all about serving and helping others.

It is all about doing what God wants us to do.

Martin Luther wrote about seeing two mountain goats meeting on a mountain trail which was so narrow only one could travel on it at a time.

When the two goats encounter each other, going in opposite directions,

 Luther thought for sure they would butt heads,

 and the strongest would survive,

 while the other would be knocked off the cliff, and die.

Instead, when the mountain goats met they stared at each other for some time,

 and then one laid down and let the other walk over him

 so they both could live.

Jesus was disappointed and angry that the disciples would fight amongst

 themselves for the highest honor.

They were more foolish than the mountain goats.

Instead of helping and cooperating with each other,

 they wanted all the honor and glory for themselves.

As we read through the Bible we discover many people

 who did not receive the answers they requested:

King Saul prayed for guidance, but God did not give it to him.

 Saul then sought an answer through a medium.

David prayed for the life of his son, but God did not grant that request.

Elijah prayed that he might die, but God had much more work for Elijah to do.

Jonah prayed that God would take his life

 because he thought it was better to die than to live.

Paul prayed that his "thorn in the flesh" would be removed.

Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father, "May this cup be taken from me."

 But that request was not granted.

It was the Father's will that Jesus drink the cup of suffering for our sake.

In spite of His agony, Jesus was able to pray: "Your will be done."

God knows what is best for us. He sees the bigger picture.

Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you;

 seek and you will find;

 knock and the door will be opened to you.

That is His promise.

But what we are given, and what we will find, may be a big surprise,

 usually much more than we imagined or hoped for.

God sees every tear, every fear, every problem, every pain,

 every hope and dream, every success, every failure.

God fully knows and understands each of us.

He knows us infinitely better than we know ourselves.

He knows what we need, even before we ask for His help.

Prayer is much more than a laundry list of wants.

It is a time to talk with and listen to God.

God's wisdom is greater than ours.

We can ask Him for many foolish things, but He will give us what we need.

God has a complete understanding of what is good for us,

 even if it doesn't make sense to us at the time.

We ask with wrong motives.

We want what will make us happy for a moment.

But God wants what is best for us.

There are many times when we don't get what we ask for in prayer,

 and then years later are glad that we didn't get what we first wanted.

There was a man who three times asked God to convince each one to marry him.

But none of the three consented.

Time passed and he fell in love again.

This time the woman married him.

The two now live a loving and happy life.

The man realized if God had granted his wish any of the first three times,

 he would have been a very unhappy man.

He frequently thanked God for not giving him what he wanted.

God does listen and answer our prayers.

But thankfully He doesn't always answer the way we think he should.

Although Paul said that God can do more than we can ever imagine,

 he didn't say that God would do whatever we ask.

That's because not everything we ask for is what's best for us.

And so just as your earthly father didn't buy you a candy bar

 every time you asked for one, though he could have,

 so our Heavenly Father doesn't say "yes" to every request we make of him because he knows the things that we ask for aren't always for the best.

It was bed time and 6-year-old Jessica knelt by her bed.

She was silent for a long time.

And Mom asked: "What is the matter?"

"I don't know what to say," Jessica answered.

Finally, she folded her hands, bowed her head and repeated the whole alphabet.

Mom asked: "Why are you reciting the alphabet?"

Jessica replied, "God knows more about what I need than I do,

 and he can take all these letters

 and arrange them in just the right way

 to hear and answer my prayers!"

When she reached the letter "z", Jessica happily hopped into bed,

 confident God could handle everything.

We talk to our friends, and family, and neighbors.

Talking to God is just as easy.

We don't need to give God instructions,

 we simply report for duty,

 and He will take care of us.

He has the power to give us what we need.

Even the disciples finally understood.

They became servants for all people.

They all suffered greatly and died painful deaths.

But they were able to spread the good news throughout the world.

AMEN