

Zion Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA /November 15, 2023
WOW (Worship On Wednesday) – FALL SERIES - 12:10pm Service of the Word
“KNEELING WITH GIANTS – Learning to Pray with History’s Best Teachers”
Based on the book of the same name by Gary Neal Hansen
Praying with Andrew Murray: The Ministry of Intercession

WOW Service will not take place next week, Nov. 22. A pre-recorded Thanksgiving Prayer Service & Bulletin will be available at Zion’s website: www.zionharrisburg.org

Welcome & Announcements

Opening Versicles

L O Lord, open my lips.

C and my mouth shall declare Your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

L Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for self-examination

C I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed; wherefore I pray to God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

L The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. **C Amen.**

Prayer

L The Lord be with you,

C **And also with you.**

L Let us pray: Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may never forget you, but remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

Scripture Readings:

1 Peter 2:5

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

John 15:1-11

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Readings from *Andrew Murray*

From "With Christ in the School of Prayer"

Beloved fellow-Christians! God needs, greatly needs, priests who can draw near to Him, live in His presence, and by their intercession draw near to Him, live in His presence, and by their intercession draw down the blessings of His grace on others. And the world needs, greatly needs, priests who will bear the burden of the perishing ones, and intercede on their behalf. Be a priest, *only* priest, *all* priest! Seek now to walk before the Lord in the full consciousness that you have been set apart for the holy Ministry of intercession. This is the true blessedness of conformity to the image of God's Son.

From "The Prayer Life"

Prayer is in very deed the pulse of the spiritual life. It is the great means of bringing to minister and people the blessing and power of heaven. Preserving and believing prayer means a strong and an abundant life.

Homily

The Prayers

L Show us your mercy, O Lord,

C and grant us your salvation.

L Clothe your ministers with righteousness.

C Let your people sing with joy.

L Give peace, O Lord, in all the world,

C for only in you can we live in safety.

L Lord, keep this nation under your care.

C and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

L Let your way be known upon the earth;

C your saving health among all nations.

L Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten,

C nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

L Create in us clean hearts, O God,

C and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

L *Additional petitions offered...*

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

L Lord, remember us in your kingdom and reach us to pray:

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord almighty bless us and direct our days and our deeds in his peace.

C Amen.

Additional Teaching & Resources on Andrew Murray & The Ministry of Intercession From *Kneeling with Giants* by Gary Neal Hansen (with adaptations)

The kind of prayer Murray cared about was intercession: asking God to do things for others and especially asking God to further the work of evangelism. ...

I encounter many Christians who interpret “the priesthood of all believers” to mean that each of us can approach God directly without need for any human priest. Murray, like Luther, taught the opposite: priests are absolutely necessary. Each of us needs a priest, and each of us must be a priest for others. Luther emphasized preaching as a priestly act, speaking for God to the people, whether in church or when we tell a neighbor the good news of Christ; ...

Murray looks to the Bible for instruction on prayer. Within the Bible he looks to Jesus as the most important teacher; ...

Murray has a simple, straightforward approach when interpreting biblical texts: he takes them literally. He urges his readers not to let their rational minds get in the way with objections. Better, he thinks, to just take Jesus at his word: “Let us beware of weakening the Word with our human wisdom.” ...

Some of the terms he (Murray) uses here and elsewhere have become commonplace, at least in some circles. For example, he is the earliest person I have found to use the term “prayer warriors” for people committed to intercession, and he frequently discusses the “power of prayer.” ...

In *The Ministry of Intercession*, he tells us, “The best way of learning to do a thing – in fact the only way – is *to do it*. It sounds vaguely prophetic of a shoe ad, but “*do it*” makes a good starting place. ...

MURRAY’S BASIC METHOD

Start small.

Pray local.

Be specific.

Be biblical.

Watch for answers.

Keep at it.

THE ADVANCED METHOD

Leap one: Make a core commitment to holiness.

Leap two: Abide in Christ.

When Jesus says to have faith in God, Murray explains:

“That is, let thine eye be open to the Living God, and gaze on Him, seeing Him who is Invisible. ... So believing God is just looking to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His presence, giving Him time and completely yielding the whole being to take in the full impression of what He is as God, the soul opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of His love.”

Murray speaks startling, much-needed words in a culture of nominal faith and culturally approved selfishness. If we read him to figure out how to get God to answer our prayers, he tells us that we need to slow down and spend more time in God’s company. Murray affirms that for intercession to be fitting, we need an ongoing, life-changing encounter with God.

In Summary:

When we have spent time abiding in Christ, learning what Jesus teaches about prayer and becoming humble enough to know that we do not have it mastered, we are ready to really take up Murray's basic program: Set aside ten or fifteen minutes a day to practice intercession. Make requests for those closest to you first, then in larger circles for the church, for mission, for the world. Ask specifically – for what is really needed. Ask God for the things Scripture clearly tells us to ask for. Watch for answers, looking for the signs that God is at work around us. Keep at it; repeating our requests won't bother the God who loves us so much that he adopted us as his children. And perseverance in the face of unanswered prayer does build patience.

Cautions:

- 1) ... It is at least potentially dangerous to measure our Christian maturity by God's answers to our prayers, as Murray sometimes teaches. ...
- 2) ... *Murray's* emphasis on the "power of prayer." ... One can get the idea that the purpose of prayer is, in fact, power. Christians should think carefully about the pursuit of personal power. Many assume that power is a good thing, but I question whether it is a worthy goal for Jesus' disciples. ... Jesus was more prone to emphasize giving up power, whether telling us to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-42) or pouring out his own divine life on our behalf (Philippians 2:5-8). The Lord's power was made perfect in Paul's weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- 3) ... When people want to be "prayer warriors." This can express an admirable passion for prayer. Though the language can grate on ears of those who would follow the Prince of Peace in the blessed way of peacemaking. ...