

To all the Saints at Manatee Life Church,

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 7:7-11 (MSG) – Matthew 7:1-20

“Don’t bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn’t a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we’re in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn’t think of such a thing. You’re at least decent to your own children. So don’t you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?”

STORY:

D.C.E. shares the following story: After the American Civil War, E. M. Bounds became pastor of a church in Franklin, Tennessee. A year earlier, he had ministered as a chaplain to confederate troops at the Battle of Franklin, one of the bloodiest of the war.

A young man in the church named E. M. Haynes, who later became President of Asbury College, wrote that when Bounds came to Franklin he found the church in a wretched spiritual condition. Realizing the deep need of the people, he gathered a half-dozen men and met with them every Tuesday night for a year to pray for revival. They got down on their knees and prayed for themselves, for the church, and for the town. *“God finally answered by fire,”* wrote Haynes. *“The revival came down without any previous announcement or plan, and without the pastor sending for an evangelist to help.”* It lasted about 6 weeks and brought tremendous spiritual healing.”

E. M. Bounds later wrote, *“The Power of Prayer,”* a much loved book that was born in part out of his experience at Franklin, Tennessee. Many of us are dismayed by the apathy and worldliness in our churches and in our own hearts. Perhaps it’s time to pray for revival.

OBSERVATION:

Is it my imagination or is it a reality ... people today (myself included) as well as today’s church do not spend enough time in prayer. Oh, we pray, but they are quick little prayers filled with our words and thoughts. Seldom are we quiet before the Lord, ever listening to hear what he has to say to us. Being still and quiet just makes us uncomfortable. Our minds wander. This centering prayer takes discipline ... much like running a marathon ... you don’t start out running the full 26 miles at one time. It is necessary to build up your stamina.

Bishop T.D. Jakes talks about his mother as a prayer warrior. *“She became a warrior far superior to any epic hero. She became a giant on her knees. With a sword in one hand she battled the enemies of death and disease, and with her other hand stretched toward heaven she kept beseeching God’s help and His mercy.”* The key word in his statement is the word *“became”*. It takes work. It takes discipline. And she was rewarded for her commitment to the spiritual discipline of prayer.

We are just too busy, stretched too thin, running in a thousand different directions all at the same time. It appears that we are overworked and over scheduled. Even in the time of isolation during the pandemic we are either over scheduled or are under performing. Where has all those “extra” hours gone? Our (real or imaginary) day-timers are so filled with all sorts of activities that we barely have time to grab a bite to eat. We seldom get a good night sleep. We run through the varied activities of the day ending the day exhausted ... just like we started it.

Prayer? Maybe a bless-him or them, here and there ... maybe a thank-you-for-the-food ... maybe a now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep ... but real, meaningful prayer ... on our knees ... heartfelt ... soul stretching ... emotion driven ... where our sweat is like great drops of blood ... prayer? Probably not. And we wonder about the state of our church and our world today!?!

QUOTE:

"There are parts of our calling, works of the Holy Spirit, and defeats of the darkness that will come no other way than through furious, fervent, faith-filled, unceasing prayer." - Beth Moore

PRAYER:

Eternal Father, we claim to be believers, but we ignore regular and meaningful conversations with you. We like to identify ourselves as followers of Christ and yet, are barely on a first name basis with you. We take some pride in being a believer, but hardly spend any real time with you, one-on-one. Slow us down, help us to prioritize our activities and bring us to the point so that our time with you is the most important activity in our day. In the name of the one who makes direct access to you possible, Jesus Christ himself. Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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You are invited to watch the Worship Service on Facebook @ Manatee United Methodist Church. Share the experience with your friends and neighbors.

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