

**TODAY IS NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
LET US JOIN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TOGETHER
AT NOON, PRAYING FOR OUR NATION AND THE WORLD.**

Greetings to all the Saints at Manatee Life Church,

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 21:22 (NIV) – Larger reading: Matthew 21:18-22

Jesus said, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

STORY as shared by Roger F. Campbell:

In his book "*Sit, Walk, Stand*", Watchman Nee describes a preaching mission to an island off the South China coast. There were seven in the ministering group, including a sixteen-year-old new convert whom he calls Brother Wu. The island was fairly large, containing about 6,000 homes. Nee had a contact there, an old schoolmate of his who was headmaster of the village school, but he refused to house the group when he discovered they had come to preach the Gospel. Finally, they found lodging with a Chinese herbalist, who became their first convert. Preaching seemed quite fruitless on the island, and Nee discovered it was because of the dedication of the people there to an idol they called Ta-wang. They were convinced of his power because on the day of his festival and parade each year the weather was always near perfect.

"When is the procession this year?" young Wu asked a group that had gathered to hear them preach.

"It is fixed for January 11th at 8 in the morning," was the reply.

"Then," said the new convert, "I promise you that it will certainly rain on the 11th."

At that there was an outburst of cries from the crowd: "That is enough! We don't want to hear any more preaching. If there is rain on the 11th, then your God is God!"

Watchman Nee had been elsewhere in the village when this confrontation had taken place. Upon being informed about it, he saw that the situation was serious and called the group to prayer. On the morning of the 11th, there was not a cloud in the sky, but during grace for breakfast, sprinkles began to fall and these were followed by heavy rain. Worshipers of the idol Ta-wang were so upset that they placed it in a sedan chair and carried it outdoors, hoping this would stop the rain. Then the rain increased. After only a short distance, the carriers of the idol stumbled and fell, dropping the idol and fracturing its jaw and left arm.

A number of young people turned to Christ as a result of the rain coming in answer to prayer, but the elders of the village made divination and said that the wrong day had been chosen. The proper day of the procession, they said, should have been the 14th. When Nee and his friends heard this, they again went to prayer, asking for rain on the 14th and for clear days for preaching until then. That afternoon the sky cleared and on the good days that followed there were thirty converts. Of the crucial test day, Nee says: The 14th broke, another perfect day, and we had good meetings. As the evening approached we met again at the appointed hour. We quietly brought the matter to the Lord's remembrance. Not a minute late, His answer came with torrential rain and floods as before.

The power of the idol over the islanders was broken; the enemy was defeated. Believing prayer had brought a great victory. Conversions followed. And the impact upon the servants of God who had witnessed His power would continue to enrich their Christian service from that time on.

OBSERVATION:

God answers prayers. God answers our prayers. God answers all prayers. That is a reality. It is central to the gospel. The central motivational factor in prayer must be God's will. Are we asking for something that Jesus would ask for? Is it a Kingdom matter? Is it focused on others?

Reread the story above and pay attention to where Nee and Brother Wu's focus was in their prayers. And, because of that centered focus, God answered their prayers in a mighty and powerful way.

So much of our effort in our faith journey is placed upon us and our needs, wishes, desires, and wants. Prayer takes us, or at least it should, beyond ourselves to the larger purpose of God's Kingdom. All too often when I share this particular spiritual reality the person doesn't hear me and feels that somehow I'm being insensitive to "their needs" and desires. We need to lift our eyes off of ourselves, as did Nee and Brother Wu, and place it in upon the souls of those around us. Not their physical or emotional needs. This spiritual step can be and often is very challenging. It can be a hard spiritual lesson to learn, but God's blessings wait just beyond the horizon.

PRAYER:

Gracious and most merciful God, to you who answers our prayers, we seek your guidance in our prayer life. Help us to focus in on Jesus' desires for our life and out of that relationship turn to you in prayer.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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Join us tomorrow via Facebook (Manatee United Methodist Church) for our worship service.

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