

Prayer Gathering Three

Lent 2020
Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church

The Jesus Prayer

During our time together, I told a story about a young monk who pursues the Jesus Prayer with fervor. The story is from *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* by Tony Jones and I don't want to reproduce it here. It is a fun book and reasonably priced! Instead, I will focus on the practice of the prayer.

1. Find the right setting

As usual, find a quiet, solitary space in which you can be comfortable but not overly relaxed – the recliner you tend to fall asleep in isn't your best bet. Don't obsess over finding the perfect space and time, go with what you've got. If you remember the fellowship hall padded chairs, these are almost ideal – they are comfy and facilitate a good, relaxed posture.

2. The words

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner is the full version. Some omit "a sinner" but if you weren't a sinner you wouldn't need so much mercy. The words identify Jesus, state a need, and identify yourself. Other historic forms you could also use are *Christ, have mercy on me* and *Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy*. It's your prayer, so it's your call.

3. Breathe in, breathe out

The first two prayer practices we encountered required us to focus on our breathing in preparation for the prayer. The Jesus Prayer uses our breath for the purposes of the prayer. On your breath in say (silently, it's hard to talk and breathe in...), "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," and on your breath out, "have mercy on me, a sinner." Don't rush your breaths. They should be deep and increasingly calming.

4. Go for a number

Also unlike our first two prayer practices, the Jesus Prayer is not customarily done for an amount of time but rather a number of repetitions. Serious Jesus Prayer folks use a prayer rope to count the repetitions. You can buy them or find instructions to make one yourself online, if you would like one. However, if you want to do the prayer for an amount of time, there is nothing wrong with doing it that way.

Bonus!

While this still falls under contemplative prayer, this is a prayer you can do anytime, anywhere! You can pray it to yourself when the kids are screaming in the car (or even better, aloud). You can recite it while you walk down a tree-lined path. You can say it when you wake up in the morning!

More material on the next page...

II. Individual Prayer Development Time

We would spend several minutes in individual prayer and reflection if we were meeting in person. Instead, I'll give you these questions and you may reflect upon them during another prayer time. I'd encourage you *not* to spend it analyzing your Jesus Prayer time... let that time exist as it was. Instead, reflect on these questions:

How have I experienced God through others in the past week?

What has Jesus been teaching me during this unique time?

When will I rest in prayer this week?

III. Group Prayer Time

We are closing with a time of group prayer. Before we enter that time, take a moment to reflect upon who/what should be lifted up in prayer today: