The Fruit of the Faithful, part 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. If you've got your Bible open with me this morning to Mark chapter 11.

We took a number of weeks off while we were doing growth classes, and we've started back though on our evening service.
Started back last Sunday night, and I am teaching through Psalm 23. We're going to take one verse a week and purposely move a little slowly through the 23rd Psalm.
And I pray be able to provide great comfort and help and hope for you. If you're struggling and hurting today, then there's a message for you.
And if things are good today, you need to be prepared and to know that the Lord is near you and with you when the hard time comes beforehand. And so, we had a great time last Sunday night, and I pray you'll be back tonight.
[1:16] In addition to studying Psalm 23, our Passion Youth Choir will be back to lead us. And so, all of those middle school and high school students in our youth choir will be here.

Look forward to having them sing with us and to lead us. We'll be taking the Lord's Supper at the end of our worship service, which is always a very important time in the life of the local church.
And so, if you normally come on Sunday nights, please do. If you don't normally come on Sunday nights, this would be a great time to start. It's going to be a wonderful evening tonight.
We start at 5. We get done around 6. And you'll be blessed tonight. We'll sing. You'll hear our youth choir sing. We'll study Psalm 23. We'll take the Lord's Supper and have a great time of worship and fellowship.
So, I encourage you to come back tonight. We continue our study through Mark 11, and we are looking at verses 22 to 25.
[2:16] This is really part two from what we looked at last Sunday. Let's remind ourselves of what the Lord said here in Mark 11, verse 22. Jesus answered them, Have faith in God.

Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.
Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive.
If you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. And so, in this instruction the Lord gives to his apostles on prayer, remember, we are just a couple of days chronologically before the crucifixion.
These are some of the final words Jesus gives to his apostles, and he reminds them of the importance of prayer. And we're looking at this theme last week and today called the fruit of the faithful.
[3:32] Because, remember in context, Jesus, the day before, had cursed the fig tree. It had all leaves, no fruit. And he had a very clear point he was making to his disciples, that those who are truly connected to the Lord are not people who merely have ceremony and ritual and outer appearance, but they're people that bear fruit.

That we, as his people, cannot be like the fig tree, all leaves and no fruit. We are to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.
And one of the ways that we bear fruit as God's people would be people who pray, and pray according to God's word. So, there are four things that the Lord gives us for instructions here.
The first that we looked at last week was the admonition to have faith in God. We're to be people who are filled with faith in the Lord, not faith in ourselves, not ultimately faith in each other, but faith

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in God.
Two things specifically we looked at to have faith in God is to have faith in his word, and to have faith in his character. To trust his word as revealed in the Bible, and to trust his character that he is the sovereign God that we worship in all things.
[5:01] Number two, believe and do not doubt. Comes straight from verse 23, that we are to believe and not doubt.

Number three, he says, ask in prayer. That's from verse 24. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer. And when we ask in prayer, there are two things that we said must be true of us.
One is we should have complete confidence in God's power. And second, we should have complete surrender to his will.
We pray with confidence in his power, and we pray with a surrender to his will. Believing that when we pray, our God hears us, and our God moves on behalf of his people.
Yet, we surrender ourselves to his will, knowing that he knows what we don't know. Knowing there are some things he has revealed to us that we can know, and other things he has not revealed to us.
[6:10] And so, we yield. We submit ourselves. We surrender ourselves to his will in all things. So, let's keep building through this teaching the Lord gives us on prayer.

And we think about asking in prayer. So, we're continuing on this third heading of asking in prayer. How are we to do that? What does the Bible tell us about how we are to ask in prayer?
We know we've got to have confidence in his power. We know that we've got to surrender ourselves to his will. Once we've done those things, what guides us as we pray?
One is we make sure that our prayers are according to his word. We pray according to his word. 1 John 5, 14. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. So, when you pray, according to 1 John 5, we pray according to his will.
[7:17] His will is revealed to us in his word. So, to be a faithful prayer, we must be faithful readers.

Sometimes in the Christian life, people tend to divide right here. And some people say, I'm a Bible study guy. And other people say, I'm a prayer warrior.
One guy wants to read and study and know doctrine and theology. And somebody else says, I just love to pray. As if you could separate those. Because biblically, if you're a Bible study guy, then that means you're going to do what his word says.
And over and over, the Bible calls God's people to pray. So, if you are a reader of God's word, that should have a follow-through that you are faithful in prayer.
At the same time, if you're someone who loves to pray, and that comes pretty easily to you, make sure that you are filling your mind with the reading of God's word, or else your prayers will not be according to his word.
[8:26] So, when we ask in prayer, we pray according to his word and according to his will. We pray knowing what his word has told us.

And we pray submitting ourself to his will. Second, as we ask in prayer, we pray according to the name of Jesus, in accord with his work and his ways.
John 14, 13 and 14. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. We ask in his name.
To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray in a way consistent with his character, consistent with his person. So, in other words, we absolutely lift our request to the Lord.
But biblically, as we pray, our deepest desire, our highest request is not that our will be done, but that his will be done.
[9:34] That his name be glorified. So, when you bring any request to the Lord, part of that prayer is, Lord, you know my heart. You know what I feel like I need in this moment.

But I submit myself to your authority, knowing you know better than I do. Lord, here is the request I present to you.
But above everything else, I want your name to be magnified. And this is the kind of prayer you know the Lord answers, because it's according to the name of Christ.
Lord, may your name be magnified in my family. May your name be magnified in our church. May your name be magnified in this ministry.
May your name be magnified in this season of suffering. May your name be magnified in my trial. That's how God's people pray. Because the truth of the matter is, that whatever season of difficulty

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you may go through at some point, if your only focus is just on your comfort, Lord, make me more comfortable.
[10:59] Lord, remove this pain so I'm comfortable. Lord, take this trial away so I'm comfortable. If that's your only aim, then you're missing what God is doing there.

Lord, I want your name to be magnified. Lord, I do pray that you would remove this pain. I do pray you would remove this suffering.
But not just so that I would be comfortable. I do pray, Lord, that your name would be magnified so that people would see how I endure this season and that Christ would be shown to be as great as he is.
It's praying in accordance with God's word and it's praying according to the name of Jesus. To pray according to the name of Jesus is to pray with his glory in mind.
That's how you pray. With the glory of Christ in mind. And then thirdly, we ask in prayer in obedience to the Lord.
[12:05] 1 John 3, 21 says, Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God and whatever we ask, we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

In other words, as we pray, as we ask in prayer, we are careful to obey what he has revealed to us. One of the things that we have to be careful of is that we don't fall into this place where we are asking God to teach us, asking God to show us, asking God to lead us, and we do it with closed Bibles.
Understand that the way the Lord speaks to his people is through his word. So the prayer, God show me, God lead me, God help me to know, is a prayer to say, God, as I'm in your word, I'm asking your Holy Spirit to open my eyes to see what you would have me to understand.
The prayer for God's direction and the prayer for God to speak to you is a prayer with an open Bible. And so we've got to be readers if we're going to be faithful in prayer.
We've got to be students of the word to be faithful prayer warriors. Lord, let me pray according to your will. Lord, help me pray in the name of Jesus and help me pray in obedience to the Lord.
[13:46] And if your answer is yes, let me rejoice. And if your answer is no, let me rejoice. And if your answer is wait, let me rejoice.

But understand, God is always doing more than you see. God is always doing more than you know. God is always preparing you not only to bring Him glory today, but preparing you for what is coming down the line that you don't even know yet that He does know.
And so if you're going to be faithful in ministry, you have to be faithful in prayer. But if you're going to be faithful in prayer, you have to know His word. They are inextricably linked together.
And we see an example of the folly of doing ministry without prayer. Turn back to the left to chapter 9. We went through this a couple of months ago.
This is right after the transfiguration. A father has come with his son and the Lord was on the Mount of Transfiguration with a few of His disciples.
[15:00] The remaining disciples could not cast out this demon. And in verse 28 of chapter 9, when He had entered the house, His disciples asked Him privately, why could we not cast it out?

And Jesus said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. They had been given the gift to do the work.
They had the ability to do it, but they were prayerless. It's a gift to do it, which reminds us that gifts and calling are never a substitute for prayer.
Some of you have taught Sunday school in this church for years, and you have the gift of teaching. And the Lord has called you to be a Bible teacher.
But that gift and that calling and that experience is never a substitute for being a person of prayer.
[16:03] Whatever gifts God has given you, whatever talents and abilities you have, whatever experience you have in serving God's people, those things are wonderful blessings of the Lord, but they are never to be a substitute for being a praying people, dependent upon the Lord, reminding yourself that ultimately the power is not in your gift, and the power is not in your experience, and the power is not in your creativity or your intellect.

The power is from God. And because of that, God's people must be praying people. And a prayerless life is our best indicator of self-reliance.

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If you go through life without being faithful in prayer, that is an indication that should alert you that you're living life to self-reliance.
If you drive your vehicle, everything looks fine, everything seems fine, and you get a warning light. That warning light says, change your oil.
You say, why would I do that? The car is running just fine. It started. It's not shaking or rattling. It's not making any strange noise. I'm going down the highway.
[17:34] Why do I need to change my oil? Everything is perfectly fine. Well, here's why. Because if you continue to do this, danger is coming.

And it's a foolish thing to say, I'm doing fine today. I'll always do fine if things just stay as they are. That warning light says, no, danger's coming. You're driving down the road, and the light comes on that says, you need to fill up your tank with gas.
And you say, why do I need to do that? I'm doing just fine. Car started this morning. Been driving it all day. I'm doing just fine. And the warning light says, you need to refuel.
And you think, why would I spend money on putting gas in my tank? My vehicle's doing just fine. And the reason is because if you're not refueled, and if you don't take care of the things you cannot see, danger is waiting.
In the same way, as you're going through life, if you are going through your life without faithful and fervent prayer, danger awaits.
[18:43] Why? Because that is a red light indicator to us that we are living with self-reliance. And you say, but things are going fine. My family's doing fine.

My ministry's fine. My class is fine. It doesn't seem like prayerlessness is hurting me. And this is a warning from the Lord to you to say, danger awaits when you rely on your gifts, or your talent, or your experience, or your ingenuity, instead of relying on the power source that only comes from God.
So we ask in prayer, but we ask according to His will and His word in the name of Jesus. We pray, asking of God, lifting up our requests to the Lord and obedience to His word.
And then there's a fourth thing. First, have faith in God. Second, believe and do not doubt. Third, ask in prayer. And then there's this fourth part at the end here in verse 25, that at first glance may seem like it's a little out of place.
What does this have to do with prayer? Verse 25, whenever you stand praying, forgive. So we are fourth, when we think about the fruit of the faithful, we are to be quick to forgive.
[20:14] And you think, well, what does forgiveness have to do with our prayer life? And according to Jesus, they are linked together. The warning here is, is not to be someone who asks for forgiveness from God, yet fails to grant forgiveness to others.

It would be the height of hypocrisy to say, Lord, I know I messed up. Would you please forgive me? Would you please give me grace? But somebody else in your life who's hurt you, you won't forgive them.
And Jesus says that's not how the believer lives. The Christian is not someone who is always asking the Lord to do for them, yet failing to give that same grace to others.
That should not be true of us. This is reminiscent of Matthew 6, where Jesus says that we pray this way, forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Matthew 6, verse 14, for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Part of being effective in prayer is having a heart that's quick to forgive.
[21:33] In other words, biblically speaking, one of the reasons why your prayer life may seem ineffective, and one of the reasons why you may not sense the power from the Lord at work in your life the way that you would desire it to be may be because of an unforgiving spirit.

Because you are asking God to forgive you, but you refuse to forgive your spouse when they hurt you. You want God to give you grace when you've done wrong, but you refuse to forgive your friend who disappointed you.
And Jesus says, part of effective praying is that you are quick to forgive. Now, sometimes we don't like to forgive those who hurt us for a couple of reasons.
One of them is we feel like if we forgive someone who hurt us, then is that in some way saying that they didn't really hurt us?
Or are we letting them off too easy? Shouldn't they have to kind of pay for what they did to us? And here's what I want you to understand. And biblically speaking, when you forgive someone who hurt

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you, you're not saying that the hurt wasn't real.
[23:16] And you're not saying that what your friend said about you or what your spouse did to you or what your co-worker said about you or the way that your friend treated you, you're not saying that that did not hurt you deeply.

What you are saying, though, is that what you did did wound me. But I believe the gospel is stronger than my wounds.
What you're saying is what you said about me and the way you treated me and the way that you neglected me and the way that you weren't there for me and the way that you lied about me and the way that you stole from me and the way that you injured me, the way that you hurt my heart, the way that you wounded me, what you're saying is it's real and it hurt me deeply.
But I really do believe, I really do believe that the grace of God is stronger than anything else.
And the Lord has forgiven me and the Lord has forgiven me of even more than I'm forgiving you for.
And so, with confidence in the gospel and trust in the power of God, I choose to forgive you because I know firsthand how grace can set a person free.
[24:59] your forgiveness of somebody else speaks far more of what you believe about the gospel than it does what somebody did to you.

And so, Jesus reminds His people here that when you're praying, be quick to forgive. Have a forgiving heart.
As one faithful pastor says about this verse, he says, here's your choice. Hold a grudge or have your prayers answered.
You take your pick. That's well said. Hold a grudge or have your prayers answered.
Jesus says that as you're praying, you've got to pray with faith. You've got to believe and not doubt. You've got to pray with confidence in His power. You've got to pray with a surrender to the Lord's sovereign will.
[26:13] But what you also must do is make sure that your heart is quick to forgive. And just think of how the Lord has forgiven you.

Think of your sin. Think of your guilt. And think of how free you are because of the grace the Lord has given to you.
How did the Lord forgive you? He forgave you fully. He forgave you freely. And He forgave you forever.
He's taken your sin through the work of His Son on the cross and He has separated it from you as far as the east is from the west.
He has forgiven you in full. He has forgiven you freely. It's not about your work. It's not about what you have done. It's all about His grace and mercy. And if He has forgiven you, you are His child forever.
[27:27] The effects of the cross are for all eternity. You've been forgiven fully and freely and forever. With that in mind, when you pray to the Lord, make sure that you have a heart that is quick to forgive others.

You must be a forgiving person. That is consistent with the gospel. So, you take last week, you take this week, you put it all together.
Let me just leave you with some questions to consider here for some helpful application of what we should do with God's Word. Number one, let me ask you three questions to consider.
Number one, does my prayer life show that it's a priority? Does my prayer life show that it's a priority?
My guess is there's no one in this room who would say that prayer is not a priority, but my suspicion is if we were to examine our lives and our time, we might find the reality to be different.
[28:44] Does your time in prayer show that it's a priority? James 4 verse 2 says, you do not have because you do not ask.

There are things the Lord is ready and willing to give to you, but you've not asked. You do not have because you do not ask. That's very clear.
That's very simple. That doesn't take much work to understand it. You do not have because you do not ask. We should ask in prayer. Second question, am I praying for things according to God's will?
This is a beautiful thing here in James 4 verse 2 and verse 3. He just gives you, he takes prayer and he just summarizes the theology of prayer in two sentences.

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Number one, you don't have because you don't ask. Verse 3, you ask, but you don't receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.
[29:49] So James 4 makes it very simple. Sometimes you don't have because you don't ask and sometimes you don't have because you do ask, but everything you ask is selfish. If you ever wondered, why is my prayer life not effective?

Well, maybe because you're not praying or it may be that you pray, but everything you're asking for is all about you. Or it may be that you're praying and you're asking for other things, but you're not forgiving.
You're harboring unforgiveness in your heart. The Bible is so clear and so helpful about what biblical prayer is. Am I praying according to God's will?
How would I know? James 4 verse 3, you don't want to ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. By the way, the word translated here to spend means to use up completely.
It's a word that's used in Luke 15 to describe the prodigal son who used and wasted what he was given on selfish worldly things.
[31:07] If your prayer life is only about asking for things for you, for you to be able to indulge in your will and your way and your goal and your hopes and everything the Lord gives you, you spend on yourself.

You're missing the fruit of the Christian life. And then a third question I would ask you about prayer and it's this, is there any sin that is affecting your prayer life?
Is there any sin that is affecting your prayer life? Make note of 1 Peter 3, 7. I just want to give you one quick example. 1 Peter 3, 7.
Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not hindered.
In other words, 1 Peter 3, 7 says, husbands, if you're not honoring your wife, if you're not treating your wife with love and respect, if you're not handling her carefully with grace, if you don't see her as a joint heir in the grace of life, if the way you treat your wife, speak to your wife, think of your wife, if it's not right, if it's not biblical, if the way you treat your wife is not in a godly way, the end of the verse is so clear, your prayers will be hindered.
[33:09] Sometimes you don't have because you don't ask. Sometimes you don't have because you ask, but you ask for selfish things. And sometimes you don't have because you ask for the right things, but you're tolerating sin in your life.

And you say, the way that I treat my wife affects my prayer life? It's exactly what the Bible says. That if you don't honor the Lord in your relationships, if you're not quick to forgive, if you're not quick to serve and treat others the way that you should, your prayers will be hindered.
Now as we close, let's go back here to Mark 11 and keep this in its context. Jesus has cursed the fig tree.
He's cleansed the temple. Peter looks at the fig tree the next morning and says, look, that fig tree has withered away. And Jesus said, that fig tree represents a people with lots of activity and no fruit.
So let me teach you about prayer because prayer is the obvious fruit of one delighting in God.
[34:46] Have faith in God. God, believe and do not doubt. Ask in prayer and be quick to forgive so that the gospel you have received is lived out for the world to see.

so when people take a close look at your heart as Jesus did the fig tree, they won't find a bunch of fluff.
They will find the fruit of prayer because only people depending on the Lord will be faithful in prayer. So when you pray believe and do not doubt and pray according to God's word in the name of Jesus for the glory of our Savior.
that's the fruit of God's people. That's the fruit people.

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