

God Centred Prayer

2Samuel 7:18-29

How many of you have ever heard the name Nicolas Copernicus?

According to the website earthobservatory.nasa.gov the prevailing view in western civilization for nearly 1000 years had been the view held by the famous philosopher Aristotle.

Aristotle's view was that the sun orbited around the earth.

It is easy to see why people believed that, I mean we still talk about the sun rising and setting right.

From our perspective it looks like the sun is going around us.

It looks just like the moon travelling through the sky and the moon is orbiting around us.

Most people accepted that idea for a really long time and then Copernicus came along and suggested that the sun was actually the center of the solar system and the earth was travelling around the sun.

He published his book in 1543 and it was received rather poorly to say the least.

After a while a guy named Galileo came along and made some observations that pointed to Copernicus being correct.

Following Galileo a mathematician named Johannes Kepler was able to calculate that the best way to make sense of the solar system is that the planets do in fact travel around the sun.

After Kepler came Isaac Newton and there was no going back to the idea that the earth was the centre of the solar system.

I'm guessing most of us hear that and we think to ourselves, "Of course the earth travels around the sun and not the other way around."

I'm guessing most of us might be tempted to think the people who believed that the earth was the center of the solar system were foolish and uneducated.

It is tempting to think poorly of people who were wrong about something that seems so important and obvious to us, but the lesson that we should take away from that is how easy it is to be wrong about something that so fundamentally shapes reality.

I want to suggest to you that it is easy to make that mistake with the LORD.

If we think of our lives like a solar system who or what is at the centre?

The world conditions us to put ourselves at the centre of our universe, but the scriptures show us that God is supposed to be at the centre.

Our natural desire to put ourselves at the centre of our universe is at war with the Holy Spirit Who wants us to see the truth, which is far better, that God is the centre of all things.

So the question is, how do we fight that war?

[Our text for this morning **2Samuel 7:18-29** gives us a power weapon in that fight, perhaps the most powerful of all which is the power of prayer. In this passage we see King David going before the LORD in prayer in response to God saying no to him building a temple for the ark and making a promise to David that his kingdom would be established forever. Looking at this prayer, I believe, there is something that stands out from beginning to end. What stands out in this prayer is that it is God centred. The LORD is the clear focus of David's petition before the throne of heaven. That might seem strange if we normally think about prayer as asking God to do stuff for us. I want to suggest to you this morning that if we pray with ourselves at the centre of our own attention, then we are missing out and we are spiritually unhealthy. David's prayer though is full of help for us. He shows us a better way to pray, he gives us four lessons on praying God centred prayers. We all need to take to heart these lessons on prayer. Lesson one is this...]

Point #1 – God centred prayers come from humility. (Verses 18-19)

When our attention is focused upon ourselves our prayers will be messed up and the only remedy to that is to put our attention on the LORD.

The LORD has said a lot to the king through the prophet Nathan and verse 18 tells us what the king does.

Most commentators agree that the phrase 'David went in and sat before the LORD' means he went to the tent that had been setup for the Ark of the Covenant.

Going there is a tangible way to express his desire to be close to the visible presence of God.

David comes before the LORD and says, "Who am I LORD and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"

He is overwhelmed by the greatness of God and his own insignificance.

Any right thinking person who has even the most basic grasp of creation will have a sense of their own smallness.

How many nights do you think David spent out with his dad's sheep looking up at the stars?

Have you ever done that? Even with all the light pollution that we have these days we can still see more than enough to know that we are just a speck of dust in the vastness of creation.

David's question of "Who am I?" is a rhetorical one. The obvious answer is that he is an insignificant nobody in the vast scheme of things.

The only reason he has made it as far as he has is because Almighty God has brought him there.

I love what he says in **verse 19**.

In David's eyes the journey from the pasture to the throne has been an incredible work, but he knows that it was an easy thing for God to accomplish.

Not only that, there is much more to come because God has committed Himself to establishing the throne of David forever.

At the end of verse 19 it says this work of God in and through David is "instruction for mankind"!

There is something for all people to learn from David's experience.

I believe the lesson is for all people to understand how we should respond to the LORD who works His will in the lives of His people.

The human default is to respond in pride.

How wonderful and amazing we must be for the LORD to take notice of us and choose us for His purposes?

[It is sort of like a father and son making a bird house together. Imagine the dad cuts all the pieces out, puts them together in the right order, drives every nail eighty percent of the way, and when the project is done the boy says, "Look what I have made."]

We are good at making the focus us. Look at how amazing I must be...

The right response is to think, 'How amazing is the LORD that he knows me, loves me, and uses me despite the fact that I am just a speck in the universe.

David's prayer gives us a much better perspective.

From an earthy perspective he had lots of reasons to put his attention on himself, but instead when he hears what God has in store his focus is on how great God is.

That is true humility. It is taking our attention off of ourselves and it is putting it on the LORD.

[This text presents us with an opportunity to evaluate our thinking and our prayers can be a great way to examine our hearts. We should all ask ourselves, "What/who is the focus of my prayers?" Think about the worship we bring to the LORD. Is it filled with me/I/us or is our attention fixed on God? I love what Matthew Henry says about these verses, he says, "*Even the greatest of men are worms, the best are sinners, and those of highest advance have nothing but what they have received.*" That is true and it ought to drive us to God centred prayers. Here is another source of this kind of prayer...]

Point #2 – God centred prayers come from good theology. (Verses 20-22)

If we are thinking rightly we will know that the LORD is beyond our understanding and we will see that what we can understand of Him shows us that He is where our focus ought to be.

As he reflected on his smallness and God's greatness, David has already touched on the power of God and as he continues on in prayer he talks more about what the LORD is like. (Verse 20)

Again he asks a rhetorical question at the beginning of the verse. "What more can I say to you?" Nothing is the expected answer.

It could be he is expressing the idea of being speechless. It could be that he is just so overwhelmed that he is saying to the LORD, "I don't know what to say!"

It could also be that he is saying nothing more needs to be said, not because there is a shortage of things to say, but because God knows all that can be said and He also knows the sincerity with which it is said.

As he is praying, he is amazed at the knowledge of God.

How much does God know? Everything! I bet there are some kids here who know the big word for God being all knowing.

God knows everything there is to know. Amazing.

He goes on in verse 21 with some more good theology.

God promises stuff, did you know that? No doubt David remembers God's promises from when he a boy and he knows that when God promises something He delivers.

Why? Because God is faithful and His faithfulness never changes. It is because of God's unchanging nature that He can be trusted forever. That is good theology.

He brings about his promise "according to [his] own heart."

That is according to His own desire or will. What God is determined to do He will do and nothing can keep Him from it. That is what we can call God's sovereignty.

He rules over everything all the time. Good theology. (Verse 22)

All powerful, all knowing, unchanging, and ruler over all is enough for David to marvel at the greatness of God and conclude there is "no one like God" He is the only one who is like Him and therefore He is the only God there is.

The big word for that is called transcendence. It means that God is completely different and immeasurably superior to everything else that exists.

That is good theology and if we know and believe that, I mean really believe that it puts God and the centre of everything especially our prayers.

Some might say, "Why would we pray like that and tell God about Who He is, He already knows that."

Of course, He already knows everything we will pray.

Psalm 139:4 says, "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD."

The point of prayer is not to inform God of stuff. The point of prayer is to exercise our faith. It is believing in who God is and that He responds to the pleas of His people.

It is an act of worship intended to stir in our hearts awe and wonder and love for the only one worthy of our highest affection.

[Good theology will change the way we pray because good theology shows us the only One worth praying to. Can I ask you, if someone came up to you on the street or at work and said, “Hey, I heard you are a Christian, tell me what is God like?” What would you say? Do you have a basic understanding of how awesome He is? If you do, He is going to be at the centre of your prayers. Here is the third lesson...]

Point #3 – God centred prayers come from understanding salvation. (Verses 23-24)

How we answer the question of “Why does God rescue His people?” has a dramatic impact on how we pray.

Having touched on the greatness and uniqueness of the LORD, David reflects on the people of Israel at the beginning of verse 23a (stop at ‘redeem to be his people’).

That is another rhetorical question. The answer is no one is like Israel.

What makes them unique is that God redeemed them, He rescued them and made them His own.

He chose Abraham out of idolatry and made a covenant with Him to give him a land and make a nation from his offspring.

He maintained that promise too Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob.

Because of that promise He brought them up out of slavery in Egypt by doing miracles, He kept them as they wandered the wilderness, He brought them into the Promised Land, and he rescued them time and again from their enemies.

Why? David tells us in his prayer. **(Verse 23-24)**

Did you hear God’s reason? “Making a name for Himself” another way of saying that is “Making His greatness/glory known”, David says to God, ‘you redeemed [your people] for yourself, and again in verse 24 he says “you established for yourself your people Israel.”

Why does God save His people? For His own sake in order to display His glory.

There is nothing that drives God’s redeeming work outside of His sovereign will according to His own desire by which He displays His infinite grace, mercy, and affection towards His people.

This goes way beyond getting out of Egypt and going into the Promised Land.

God’s saving work of Israel in the Old Testament is all about Jesus coming into the world to redeem a people for Himself from every tribe

tongue and nation by dying in our place, taking God's wrath on the cross for us, and conquering the grave on our behalf forever.

There is no division between Old Testament saints and New Testament saints.

There is one people of God saved by grace through faith alone in Christ alone.

Why does He do it? For His glory!

That puts God at the centre of salvation which is vastly different from what many have been taught regarding salvation.

How many Christians when asked the question, "Why does God save people?" put people at the centre of their answer?

How often is the heart of the gospel proclaimed to be how special and wonderful people are?

How often is the love of God turned into a celebration of people?

Jesus saw it very differently. If you doubt that read John 17 and the prayer that He prays just hours before He goes to the cross to redeem His people.

He prays a God centred prayer with the glory of the Father being His chief concern.

[Do you know why that is so important to get? Because it is firm ground on which to plant our hope. It is something that can satisfy our souls to the fullest. If God's love is based on me then there is nothing there worth loving. If God's love is based on His glory then it is based on infinite worth that cannot change. If we get that we will find ourselves praying, "God thank you for your glory, thank you for being Who you are, thank you for being gracious beyond what I can understand, God thank you for being able to do what is impossible to my mind in your Son Jesus Christ, thank you for giving us the gift of yourself forever, and so much more. If we understand salvation our prayers are going to be God centred. That brings us to one more lesson from David's prayer. The lesson is that...]

Point #4 – God centred prayers come from trusting the Bible. (Verses 25-29)

When we come to the LORD to plead with Him we ought to come knowing and trusting what He has said.

David continues this Holy Spirit inspired prayer in verses 25-27, let's listen in together.

That is an amazing way to pray!

In verse 25 David basically says, "God do what you have said you will do."

Why does he pray that way? Is he concerned about the LORD forgetting? No.

Is he concerned about the LORD changing His mind? We will see in verse 28 that he isn't worried about that.

Why pray like that? Because he knows the importance of praying in accordance with what God wants and the best way to do that is to pray in accordance with what God has said.

His delight comes through in verses 26-27 where he recounts to the LORD the promise He has made and how by keeping the promise God's 'name will be magnified forever'.

Think about how amazing that is? David here gets a glimpse into the future because God has told him about what He is going to do.

That is one of the distinguishing features of God's word. He tells people what is going to happen in the future and then it happens.

The Bible will sometimes speak of future events in the past tense.

That is astounding! God talking about something that He is going to do with such certainty that He says it like it has already happened.

That is tremendous and David shows here that he has a sense of that the end of verse 27, look there again, it says, "*Therefore [because you have spoken], your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you.*"

To that he adds this in **verses 28-29**.

God's words are true!

That statement is true whether we believe it or not, but if we believe it, I mean really believe it, then we have a solid foundation upon which to place our hope.

He says in verse 29, "For you have spoken" what an amazing statement.

Do you know what Isaiah 40:8 says? It says, "*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*"

God's word is true yesterday, today, and for all eternity.

That is amazing and it raises a good question.

What is God's word about?

If we answer that question rightly, then everything David prays here will make sense.

We make a huge mistake if we turn the bible into a self-help book.

We make a huge mistake if we turn the bible into a daily dose of inspiration.

We make a huge mistake if we turn the bible into a how to book.

The mistake we make in turning the bible into those things is we make it into a book about us.

Yes the Bible has a lot to say to us about how to live, but those things all serve the main purpose of the Scriptures.

God inspired the Bible to make Himself known to His people.

That is why we read it from cover to cover, that is why we wrestle with hard to understand passages,

and that is why we read it as listeners rather than editors, because it is making God known to us.

If we pray with an open Bible that we trust, and we should, then we are going to pray God centred prayers.

I confess I really needed to hear from this text today.

One of the things that I constantly wrestle with is having my attention focus on me.

When that happens it produces all kinds of bad things in my heart.

Fear, doubt, helplessness, anxiousness, weariness, and the list goes on.

Can you relate to that?

Praying like David prays here is a powerful way to fight against that.

It is good to remember that we are nothing in the vast scheme of things, but even so our God is so amazing that He knows us and has made glorious promises to us in Christ.

Praying in humility puts our attention on the LORD.

When our attention is on the LORD and we are thinking rightly about Him then our prayers will be right and good.

If our theology is good we should have a good understanding of salvation and that ought to lead to endless thanksgiving of what God has done in Jesus for the sake of His glory.

And where do we get all this? We get it from the bible.

Pray with open bibles brothers and sisters and you will pray God centred prayers and that can change your life and it can change the world.