This sermon is about prayer. How we should pray? Which needs to be our attitude and petition toward God? How do we need to go in front of Him?

It is clear that many times God is the one who draws us to go to Him and He does His precious work in us that teaches us how to get closer to Him and shows us how much we need Him. But what kind of attitude we also need to have or what kind of feeling needs to be always present in us when we pray and when we get in front of Jesus?

* **For which reason we go to Jesus?**

We can get an example here from the story of the centurion’s servant who was healed by Jesus.

“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should com under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.”

Matthew 8:5-13

We see that the centurion asked Him to heal His servant. We can see a petition here, we can see a prayer. We also know that the position of a centurion in that time was a position of authority and power. We know how often the persons with power are usually not disposed to humble easily, but here we see a different reaction in this man. He was humble. Firstly He recognized that he is not worthy, that Jesus should come under His roof. And here we see not only that he recognized how small he is, but also the recognition of the greatness of Jesus, because He said that He is not worthy that **Jesus** should come under his roof. That means that he wasn’t looking at Him as a simple miracle maker or someone performing wonders and prodigies even if He really did so.

Many people in the crowd were looking at Him as someone just performing miracles, as a great man that everyone wanted to be with and follow. We can see in fact that not all of the people following Him endured till the end. It happened because they didn’t really understood the real purpose of His coming and His teachings. Until He was healing and multiplying the fish and the bread, everything was going fine, but when things became harder and He demanded something more from them, they retreated. They stopped following Him. It happens in this way with the people that just follow Him for the fame or for what they see. He said that a servant is not greater than his master and whoever follows Him must be like Him and go through the same trials. Few of them acknowledged His true greatness. The people in general are always looking for someone that can somehow draw their attention.

There were many people truly amazed by Jesus when He multiplied the bread, but yet few of them really understood the purpose of His coming. “Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.”” John 6:26

We see as well the next words of the centurion to Jesus, saying: “But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.” There is something different here than just a person looking for a healer or a man of miracles. Most people when hearing of someone performing miracles, want to be with Him, they want to be in the place where He is. If they have something to solve, they would like Him to be there, so that He can touch them or do something so that they can find a solution. This is because they believe more in the miracle itself, more in that exact moment that will give them solution. They would do anything just to obtain that. If it is a question of money, they would even pay.

* **The authority of Jesus**

But here we see this centurion attributing to Jesus the authority of God. Only God was the one who could heal and do something with such an authority. Even from a distance, just with a word. Remember that God created everything just by the word said by Him. So we see here the centurion attributing such a power and authority to Jesus. In this way he didn’t look at Him just as a simple miracle man, but as something more.

“…. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.

Many times we want to go to Jesus as a man that performs miracles only. We go to Him for something we wish to happen. Something that in itself might not be wrong, but we only remain at that point, asking Him to do something for us without caring for the rest. Here in this story we see that even though the centurion wanted something He wished to happen from Jesus, he didn’t simply asked Him for that, but also acknowledged something more. When someone only asks for a miracle or something he wished to happen, he remains disappointed when he doesn’t receive His answer. But it is a different attitude, we need to show in front of the King of the kings. He is not just a famous man that performs miracles. Many persons are looking for such persons today. Persons that can give them what they wish, most of the times just to satisfy their desires. But Jesus offers you salvation along with what you’re asking Him for, and the most important is obviously the salvation.

We can quickly see another example as well. The one of Esther. We know that she was a Jewish girl that became to be a queen by marrying the King of Assyria. The book of Ester is a beautiful story that represents the trials trough which the nation of Israel had to go through and the courage of Ester, but this book is having another great meaning as well. Even though this particular book doesn’t speak much about God, it is full of spiritual messages for our life. It is a comparison. The king in the story is often metaphorically seen as God and Ester represents us as believers and the church. As we know Christ is the bridegroom and the believer or the church is His bride. The story tells us that no one could approach the King without being summoned by him. The breaking of this law could have be punished with death. Nevertheless when Ester heard that her nation (Israel) were threatened with death and advised by her uncle, she decided to present herself in front of the king and to make a petition, so that her nation can be delivered. Imagine the fear and the respect she had to go to the king with! There is a entire chapter in the book of Esther that speaks about her preparation in approaching the king. (Esther 4) Obviously the Bible says that we need to be confident when we go in front of God and that we mustn’t hesitate of asking Him for something, but in the same way, we need to have the due respect when we approach the King, the same as the one Esther was having. We have to know that we are approaching the King of kings.

So we see the centurion approaching a Jesus as God Himself, the One that can heal with a word only, even from distance, because obviously He is omnipresent. Jesus is one with God. Hundred percent human and hundred percent God. He is the God man, as some people describe Him. Not the man-God, but the God man. His first nature is always God, even though He is hundred percent human as well. There have been many persons who wanted to become as God or who thought that they are a god. In the past we see leaders, kings and rulers that called themselves gods and people worshiped them as gods. People like Pharaoh from Egypt for example and other kings that considered themselves such or related with divinity. But nevertheless all of them wanted to represent just themselves and all of them past away. Not so with Jesus, who always represented God first (because He was) and still lives.

As the story continues, we see that the centurion expressed that he was a man with authority and as He commands to a soldier to do something, so in the same way he is ready to submit and acknowledges the authority of Jesus. Our prayer toward God might not be answered sometimes also because we ask according to our own will and we don’t submit to Him in our prayer.

“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

James 4:2,3

It doesn’t mean that we mustn’t ask Him for anything that's about our own need, but it means that it needs to be accompanied with fear and respect, knowing that He is above all. We mustn’t be as those people who are just interested in their own request and need and if it happens, then fine, and if it doesn’t, they just get upset, but in the both cases, they don’t show anything more. The same as it happened with the ten lepers healed by Jesus. All of them got fine, but only one had understood something more, came back to worship Jesus and got really saved and healed.

People who are just interested in their own things and purpose are like those who pay someone to perform something for them o solve their situation. Why? Because they are just focused on the miracle itself, on that particular situation only. They don’t care who will help them and in which way. They just want it done. **It is not so when it comes to a miracle performed by God. Here is very important Who is doing it. It is not only important, but is the most essential, it is of greatest importance. And it is also important in which way is done. Jesus is the purpose of all and knowing Him is eternal life. This is the benefit (if we can call it so) of knowing Him with our heart and serving Him. Everything else we can receive here on this earth, all other miracles and benefits are nothing compared to the knowledge of Him and the eternal life we can receive by that.** What happens is that most of the people are focused on what happens here on this earth. Their eyes need to be opened, so that they can see the real value of what God can give them and see His person. This is also a very important miracle that needs to happen in our life.

There were many persons asking for a miracle in the Bible. One of them was king Herod when he asked Jesus to do a miracle for him, but He didn’t, because there wasn’t any purpose there. **Because Jesus performs miracles not to draw attention, but with a specific purpose, for God’s glory.** Other persons perform miracles and prodigies just to draw attention. They were already there and more will come, because the scripture tells us that in the last times more of those people will come. All of this happens to mislead people. “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” Matthew 24:24

* **The sign of the prophet Jonah**

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Matthew 12:38-41

Here in this passage we see the scribes and Pharisees asking for a sign from Jesus. We have to know that He doesn’t perform a sign just because someone wants to see it. It can happen in certain situations where He will let someone to see a sign, but it always happens with a purpose. It can even happen sometimes to people who don’t expect it. But here Jesus called those persons a perverse generation. And they were in this way, because they actually wanted to test Him, because they were not sincere in their request. Better than anyone else He knows how sincere our desire is. He also told them that no other sign will be shown to them, but the sign of prophet Jonah who was three days in the womb of the fish. We know that this is a comparison with the son of God dying on the cross. Because He was also three days in the tomb and after He resurrected. Jesus told them that, because that was the most important that they had to understand and accept first. Much more important than any sign might be there. That was the sacrifice that was going to give them salvation.

**In the cross of Jesus we find what is essential, what is the most important. There we find humility, we find God’s love, we find God’s righteousness and justice poured on the Son. The cross was and is the center of all. This is the reason for which we exist.** This is the beginning and the end. That’s why Jesus told them that no other sign will be shown to them, but the sign of Jonah. They couldn’t receive a miracle because they were not sincere in their request, but the universal opportunity of the cross was still shown to them. It is shown to everyone. That’s the purpose of God. He wants everyone to hear the good news.

In the story of Jonah we see another similarity with the cross of Jesus. After being in the womb of the fish, Jonah went to Nineveh proclaiming repentance. Jesus died so that we can have opportunity to repent. After repenting and accepting Him in our life, we will be probably able to see signs and wonders. We will obviously see and receive according to what God wants to give us and according to His will, but what I mean is that our attitude of asking and praying will be different. It will be humble and acknowledging the greatness of Jesus.

However this is the attitude we need to have when we pray and ask Jesus for something. The Spirit of God is the one that can convince and help someone to have that kind of attitude. This is how the centurion went in front of Jesus. This is the attitude that we find in the cross. This is the attitude that the cross can bring to our life. Because this feeling of being humble and this way started right there. If someone today can humble himself and acknowledge His greatness is because of that.