

Prayer

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Thank you. Thank you. Your pastor is an easy man to love, and you're an easy church to love.

I'll tell you, something very special is going on here. It's been a joy to interact with so many of you and to be back. I thought it was a big risk for Jarrett to do this once before—to actually do some prayer elements in the service—but the Lord blessed, and now here we are again, and we're looking forward to it.

We're going to be praying from Mark chapter 12. I know you've been in Nehemiah. If you want to find a Bible or device and turn there, we'll look at it in just a moment.

But today I wanted to mention one thing briefly, and that is that we are hosting our truly international conference here in October. Maybe you've heard about it. It's called Resurgence, and you can see some of the faces. There will be many more who will be a part of it, but you may have heard of some of them: Alistair Begg, Joni Eareckson Tada, H.B. Charles, R.T. Kendall, Shane & Shane. This famous preacher called Jarrett Stephens will be here as a special guest.

Every session will be packed not only with the Word, but also with incredible moments of prayer, workshops, an entire Spanish track, and interpretation for all of those things. So it is going to be wonderful.

Now, here's the deal. It's not on the slide, but there is a code. If you're part of Champion Forest, you get half off, all right? How many of you are old enough to remember a Blue Light Special? Oh, man. All right. Some of you don't know what I'm talking about.

Anyway, we have a Blue Light Special, and the code is ****CFMEMBER****. I bet you know what CF stands for. Yeah, that's right. You got it: Champion Forest member. So you want to write that down. There's a QR code. The cards are at our book table as well.

We would love to have you join us. It's going to be an extraordinary, extraordinary time with Christ-loving, hungry-hearted people from all around the country and the world, and we're so grateful that you are hosting that with us.

Now, you may say, "Well, why are we doing this again?" I don't know how many of you remember when we did this before, but one reason is because Jesus said, "My house shall be a house of—"

All right. If I ask a question, by the way, the right answer is either "prayer" or "Jesus," so you have a 50 percent chance, all right?

"My house shall be a house of prayer." Well, that means we should kind of do that. It's a good idea, right? It's

something that maybe, in a lot of places, we don't do as much of: calling on the Lord.

I often say that the best way to apply the Bible is to pray it. So we're going to be looking at the Scripture, but we're also going to have some moments of prayer. Some of those will just be personal moments. Some of those we're going to pray together based on some ideas on the screen. But we're actually going to encourage you to pray with other people.

I've often said praying with other people is kind of like the experience of stepping onto an elevator. You know what that's like? You can be talking about the Texans with your buddies, and then you step onto an elevator, and it's like a totem pole, right? Because that's intimate space, isn't it?

But have you ever noticed that once you start talking to people, you almost hate getting off the elevator? That happened last night. I talked to this mom and dad and their little boy. They'd been to the rodeo, and I hated to get off on my floor. We'd become such good friends in three floors, right?

That happens when we pray together. So turn to your neighbor and say, "Hey, I'm safe." Just tell them, "I'm safe to pray with, all right?" Tell them, "I'm nervous too, so let's get over it and have a good time, all right?"

It is a beautiful thing, and the Lord will help you. Now, you don't have to pray with someone when we suggest that, but I would encourage you to. Even if you don't pray out loud, just hearing their prayers will bless your heart, right? If your whole group is introverted, the group next to you will pray in a beautiful way, and you'll be blessed as you listen in on them, all right?

But I think it'll be a wonderful time. These aren't going to be long, 15-minute, King James-only diatribes, all right? They'll be very simple prayers based on the Bible. We're really just talking to God from His own Word, and I think you'll find that to be a great blessing.

The God Who Sees

I want to note for you Mark chapter 12. Pastor Jarrett said, "Daniel, do anything you want." I knew you were in this campaign, and I just felt so compelled that we would pray out of this wonderful biblical story that will be familiar to some of you.

I'm going to pick up in chapter 12, verse 41. It says:

And he—speaking of Jesus—sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

What an amazing story.

Prior to this, Jesus had been looking at some of the religious leaders and all of their pomp and circumstance and talking about the hypocrisy and pride of what they were doing. Now He pivots to one of the most beautiful recognitions of humility, sacrifice, and grace. I know I need that encouragement on a regular basis, and I hope

you will as well.

This is occurring in a place called the Court of the Women. It was a public court where people would come and make their gifts to the temple. Jesus sits down intentionally. Nothing is random. He takes a moment to see something that no one else would notice, because He's Jesus, and it matters.

You see something on your screen here:

In a world filled with comparison, competition, and criticism, many of us quietly wrestle with feelings of inadequacy, invisibility, and insignificance.

Would you agree with that?

We can begin to wonder whether our lives really matter—if our efforts make any lasting difference. But Scripture tells us a different and better story, and today's passage reveals the heart and values of Jesus.

Way back in Genesis, Hagar, who felt rejected and isolated, recognized that God is El Roi, the God who sees.

Aren't you glad God sees? Aren't you glad He knows everything about you and it matters?

Psalms 139 says it this way:

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

In this moment, Jesus literally sits down, watches this lady in the middle of a big crowd, and says to the disciples, "Guys, come here. Take a look at this. This is important. Truly, I say to you, what she has done matters to Me. It matters even more than what the others have done because of the attitude of her heart and the trust that she has in Me."

Today, I'm guessing there are some of you here who are going through moments in life when it seems like maybe nobody cares. Maybe nobody sees.

You might be taking care of a spouse with dementia. Maybe you're raising young children day after day. Maybe you've been in the same job for years, and it seems like you'll never get a promotion. Maybe you've been serving people in a nursing home. Or maybe you're a businessman, and you come home and it seems like nobody appreciates your sacrifice. Your wife just wants you to take out the trash and mow the lawn, right? We know how those things work.

Maybe today you've been volunteering without much recognition. Perhaps you're here and you've recently retired, and you don't know if you still have much influence that matters. Maybe you're in school and you're trying to stand up for the Lord, but you feel like a misfit.

Jesus cares, and He sees. Aren't you grateful for that?

I'm going to ask us to pray into that truth. So, here we go. Now that you've got your pens and pads out, I'm going to ask you to stand up again, all right? We're going to stay active today.

I want to give you a very simple entry point for prayer. If you are willing, find someone to pray with. Again, these are going to be very short prayers.

As we think about the heart of Jesus—the things He values, what He notices, and what He cares about—friends, you're never alone. People may ignore you. They may not care about what you do, but aren't you glad He does?

There's a little prompt on the screen to make it easy:

Jesus, thank You that You see, and my life matters to You even when...

Pause for a moment. It doesn't matter if you're a businessman or a young mother. There are those moments when we just need to remember: Jesus sees, and it matters.

If you would, just turn to someone next to you and jump right into that simple prayer. We're just going to do this for a minute or so. Let's thank Jesus that He sees and that it matters to Him, even when it doesn't matter to other people.

Would you pray that right now? If you would, gather together. Thank Him. Thank the Lord who sees and who cares. It matters even when others may not notice, because He does.

Thank You, Lord.

So, Jesus, in a world that can be so harsh and so judgmental, in places where we feel ignored and invisible, and in times when we wonder if it ever matters, You care. You see. You know.

I thank You for the simple acts of service represented by Your people in this room. I thank You for those who sacrifice every day, and even though they never get a pat on the back, You have a sure, eternal reward.

[Music]

Lord, as we have looked at the story of this widow and continue to pray through it, we're glad that just as You noticed her and just as it mattered so much that You put it in Your Word, what we do matters to You. We love You for it. In Jesus' name.

Our God is so good. He is so good.

[Applause and music]

Jesus, in this story, we see Your goodness. Lord, You see what others don't see. You care about things that others never notice. It matters, and we're grateful that this is the kind of Savior we serve today. Your goodness, indeed, has always been with us.

[Music]

We pray this for Your glory. Amen.

Go ahead and have a seat for a moment.

The Heart Matters to God

One of the interesting elements of this story is that, in this particular court, they would bring their offerings. Some versions say there was a box, but these were literally brass receptacles. There were about 13 of them in the court, and they looked kind of like big trumpets.

The interesting thing about this is that, back in the day, they didn't have paper money. They didn't have checks. They couldn't Venmo money to the temple. They had coins.

What's interesting is that the wealthy people—and there's no condemnation there; praise God for people who have abundance and care about the things of God—would put their coins in, and it was quite noisy.

Clang, clang! You know, all the coins they put in.

I can imagine maybe Jesus and the disciples sitting around, saying, “Hey, wait for this one. This is going to be a loud one. Do you see that purse she's got and those designer shoes he has? This will be a good one, right?”

But then this widow comes up, and it's just a “tinkle, tinkle.” But again, Jesus notices, right?

What this passage tells us is that our heart matters so much to the Lord. It's not the noise we make. It's not the impression that's given. It's the sincerity of the heart when the Lord has called us to serve Him, to give to Him, and to honor Him with our lives.

This woman exhibited not only sincerity, but also great trust in the Lord. The Bible makes it clear that our hearts matter to Him.

[Music]

You've been in the NEXT campaign, and we're excited about what the Lord is going to do and how He is going to use it to advance the kingdom. But ultimately, He still looks on our hearts, doesn't He?

Second Chronicles 16:9 is very familiar:

*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose—
what?—whose heart is blameless toward Him.*

We remember from the story of God's selection of David to be the next king that the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Last week, Pastor Jarrett made a statement that purity leads to power. Of course, that includes the purity of our hearts and why we do what we do.

I've learned in my own journey that you can do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. Do you get that?

Again, we don't know the motives of those who gave out of abundance, and we're glad they did. But what we do know is that the sincerity of this woman's heart brought the pleasure and commendation of the Lord.

As we think about how the Lord looks on our hearts, I'm going to ask you to pause for just a moment. Perhaps this is a simple prayer you can pray as you feel led. As I looked at this text, this is what my heart said:

Lord, would You forgive me for trying to impress people instead of seeking to please You, especially when...

Again, that helps us to be specific, doesn't it? None of us has arrived in the arena of humility to the point that we don't need a prayer like this periodically.

Would you just bow right now and open your heart to the Lord?

"Would You forgive me when I've tried to impress people instead of simply seeking to please You?"

[Music]

Allow the Holy Spirit today—if you know Christ, His Spirit will lead you into truth—to reveal those ways in which we sometimes do what we do to make an impression or to please people.

Lord, search us. Take our hearts.

Lord, some of us here today are in public roles where, again, we're more worried about the watching eyes of people than the tender look of our Savior. Whether it's in the small jobs that we do and we find ourselves resentful because we didn't get the recognition we wanted, we realize that our hearts need to be surrendered afresh.

Lord, as we think about this widow, she didn't know Jesus was watching. She was just doing what she knew she should do from a heart of trust. I pray, Lord, that You would help us do the same—at home, at work, in ministry, among friends, and in all aspects of life.

Hear our hearts. We surrender them to You, and we ask that You would purify all that we do, that we will live for Your glory and Your glory alone.

Now we're going to transition to a corporate prayer. You're going to see it on the screen. Maybe you grew up in some traditions where they did this. Out of this, let's make this our prayer together. I'll be the leader; you will obviously be the congregation. Let's unite our voices in a prayer that represents what we've just focused on.

Join me, if you will:

***Leader:** We confess that our motives can sometimes be a mess.*

***Congregation:** Forgive us.*

***Leader:** When our acts seem small, give us wisdom and assurance to know that You see.*

***Congregation:** May it always be enough to please You alone.*

***Leader:** For those who feel unseen in their sacrifice,*

***Congregation:** Help us affirm the small and simple acts of obedience.*

***Leader:** For those in seasons of scarcity,*

***Congregation:** Be their provider.*

***Leader:** For those entrusted with abundance,*

***Congregation:** Give them growing trust and joyful surrender.*

***Leader:** Holy Spirit, teach us to see like Jesus sees.*

***Congregation:** Give us eyes and hearts to recognize quiet faithfulness.*

***Leader:** May our lives consistently declare that honoring You is all that matters.*

***Congregation:** May our hearts always assure us that You can be trusted and You are enough.*

Let's unite our voices in song as an expression of this prayer. Amen.

[Music]

Grace for Every Good Work

What a joy to surrender our hearts to a kind and loving Savior.

People all around the world are having to submit their will to governments that are anything but kind. People are being compelled to do things that would go against perhaps their desires or what they know to be right. But we have a Savior who invites us to give our hearts to Him and trust Him.

I don't know if you've ever had this experience as a parent, or maybe even as a grandparent. I remember, as a parent, the first time one of my kids wanted me to give them money so that they could buy me a birthday present.

[Laughter]

Do you remember that? Of course, you want to do it. It's teaching them a lesson, and you want the birthday present, I guess—whatever it is.

But the Bible tells us in 1 Chronicles, where David prayed this:

Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.

Of course, the analogy breaks down because we are not perfect fathers, but the Lord has given to us so that we may give back to Him. What a gracious God He is.

Second Corinthians chapter 8 talks about the grace of knowing the Lord and following the Lord, but it's rooted in the grace that Jesus has given to us. You may know this passage. It says:

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.

What a great thought.

The Bible says that Jesus has grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. He never runs out of the grace He wants to give us, so that not only may we be enriched and strengthened, but we can give back to Him and to His kingdom that which He has given to us.

Second Corinthians 9:8 elaborates on that. It says this:

And God is able—

Say, “Able.”

Amen.

How able is He to make how much grace?

All grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

I've learned over the years that God has tailor-made grace for everything I face. It doesn't matter what it is. He's ready. He doesn't always give it ahead of time, but He's never late. He gives me grace for any need in my life based upon His sacrifice and what He has done for us.

Over the years, people have asked, “Pastor, how much should I give?”

My answer is always the same: more.

Yeah, more. That's pretty easy, right?

Why is that? Well, one of my favorite verses—and I'll just read it—says in 2 Corinthians 8:

As you excel in everything...

How many of you want to excel in every way in your Christian life? Anybody? I sure do.

He mentions faith. Oh, yes, I want greater faith.

He mentions speech. Oh, I want my speech to be richer, stronger, and bolder.

Knowledge. Oh, yes, I want to know You more.

Diligence. Yes, Lord, I want the grace to be diligent.

In your love. Oh, Lord, I want to love more.

But He also says, “In this grace also.” That is the grace of living sacrificially for the Lord—not just with our money, but with our time and everything we do.

Aren't you glad that everything He calls you to do, He has already provided all that is needed in order to see it

accomplished for His glory?

Today, I want us to understand—it's been said already—that Jesus' concern is not equal amounts, but equal sacrifice. I didn't even know that was the theme, Jeff. But it's all empowered by His what? By His grace.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound.

Again, in this story, it's not the sum; it's the sacrifice. She was not only an example of willing sacrifice, but also of faith. It says in the story that she put in everything she had.

The Greek word there is **bios**, from which we get the word **biology**. It literally refers to the means by which life is sustained.

Here's what's interesting: she put in her two coins. She could have kept one back, but she didn't have a pantry full of food back home. That's not the way it was back then. She literally gave everything she needed for that day.

Why? Because she knew God was able.

We do that because we know His grace is sufficient for everything. We often use the phrase "all in." Well, she was what? She was all in.

Jesus says, "What a wonderful example this is for how we should live for Him."

I'm going to ask you to pray together one more time, all right? If you didn't like the people you prayed with the first time, just find somebody else. But just gather briefly, if you will.

Here is a very simple entry point. I think you'll understand how it comes right out of this text:

Jesus, because You gave Your all for me, give me grace to...

It may be related to this campaign, but it may not. It may be a challenge you're facing tomorrow. It may be a demand that you just feel is more than you can bear. It may be a window of opportunity in ministry.

There are all kinds of things the Lord calls us to, but aren't you glad He has already front-loaded them with sufficient grace?

Let's make that our prayer right now. Would you find someone with whom you can pray, if you're willing? Otherwise, just talk to the Lord from your own heart.

Let this be our uniting entry point from His Word. You see it on the screen. Pray as you feel led:

Jesus, because You gave Your all for me, give me grace to...

Make that your prayer right now.

[Music]

Trust His grace. Take Him at His Word. Know that He is sufficient.

[Music]

Thank You, Lord.

We thank You for the grace that has saved us, the grace that strengthens, the grace that provides all that we need, and the grace that calls us to honor You, serve You, and love You.

We thank You, Lord, for grace that will be unleashed in the coming years in ministry. We're trusting You, Lord, for a great work and exhibition of Your grace in our lives.

We thank You.

[Music]

Caring for the Vulnerable

As you stand there for a moment, one last brief focus before we sing.

[Music]

There's a widow in this story, and I don't want to miss that, because in that day widows were very vulnerable. In fact, Jesus had just said earlier that these scribes "devour widows' houses."

I've never seen anybody eat a house, but it's really the idea that they take advantage of the vulnerable—in the name of religion, in that case.

But the Bible tells us this. In fact, you see it. Let's read this verse aloud for a moment. It's from James. Some of you will recognize it. Share that with me:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Champion Forest, while you trust the Lord to help you expand areas of ministry that are so vital to accelerating the mission around the world, we can't forget the ones, can we?

This week, I'm guessing there's probably going to be someone who crosses your path who is vulnerable and has a need. It may be a widow. It might be an orphan. It might just be someone who is down and out.

Let's pause for a moment in personal prayer, and let's make this our prayer:

Lord, would You lead me to minister to...

Think of the people in your life today. Think of maybe a widow, maybe an orphan, maybe a child whose parents don't care, or maybe a friend at school whom you know is kind of an outcast.

Lord, would You bring to mind right now people toward whom we can express Your heart, even as You cared

for this widow?

Maybe it's someone we meet in a gas station, a friend down the street, or a person at work. Lord, we do ask, in the spirit of what we read here about Your heart, that this week You will help us, one-on-one, to be available to You to minister to people in their time of need.

Lord, we thank You. We thank You that You will give us all the grace we need to serve You faithfully and sacrificially, with full trust, because of who You are: a God of great grace.

Amen. Amen.

Let's lift our voices: "Be magnified, Lord."

[Music]

Lord, in these coming days, we are so grateful to be a part of Your kingdom. Lord, we look not at the things that are seen. We know there are many things that are going to be visible in the expression of ministry, but, Lord, it's the things that are unseen. It's invisible, unstoppable grace in our hearts and through us into a community.

Lord, I pray that in the coming days and years, as we look back at what You have accomplished through each and every one of us—whatever the size of our gifts and whatever the expression of our ministry—that there will be this unbelievable, undeniable unleashing of grace to widows, to orphans, for Your kingdom, for Your glory, and for the mission.

So, Lord, we give our lives to You, saying, "Please be magnified, Lord."

[Music]

That's why You've left us here, Lord. Let us stay on mission. Let us make every day count.

God, when no one else notices, we know You do. It matters, and You will help us to honor Your name for the sake of the gospel, we pray.

Amen.

All for Your Glory

Remain standing for this final moment of prayer. You see a little phrase on the screen that summarizes what we have thought about today from the story, what we've prayed about, and what we've prayed together:

*We know obedience is costly.
Let us trust Christ to help us live to please Him alone,
relying on His grace,
hoping in His promise,
and trusting in His sure reward.*

Amen.

How many of you know His promise is true? His reward is sure. His grace is sufficient.

Amen. Amen.

As we did a moment ago, we're going to pray a collective prayer. I trust this is biblical, but it also represents what we hope the Lord will do as we prepare to leave here today.

Just a final word: if you're here today and you say, "Man, that's a different kind of service. But these people actually know God. They pray. They talk to Him. Wow, it's like He's real."

Guess what? He is real.

If you don't know Christ, if you've never met Him, and if you've never been transformed by that grace, today there will be people available to pray with you and answer your questions.

Friends, I hope this week, as you move on from this Sunday, just by way of review, you will pray:

"Lord, everything matters to You, and I thank You.

"Lord, help my motives continue to be pure in all that I do.

"Because You gave Your all, I know You're going to give me all the grace I need to serve You, to advance Your kingdom, and to play my part.

"Lord, when it's all said and done, we want it to be for Your praise."

Join me in this final prayer:

***Leader:** We praise You as the God who sees and the God who cares.*

***Congregation:** We praise You as the God who acts on our behalf. You are our God. We praise You.*

***Leader:** Our Lord, by Your grace, make us ready to walk in obedience and faith.*

***Congregation:** We have prayed; You will answer.*

***Leader:** If You call us to obscurity,*

***Congregation:** We will embrace it.*

***Leader:** If You lead us beyond our comfort zone,*

***Congregation:** We will trust You.*

I always say the comfort zone is a danger zone. Amen?

***Leader:** If You bless us with greater influence,*

***Congregation:** We will steward it humbly.*

***Leader:** If You ask for more,*

***Congregation:** It is Yours.*

***All:** Here we are, Lord—all we are, all we have, all for Your glory. You are worthy. To You be the glory.*

Amen and amen.

Thank you for joining us for Champion Forest Online.

[Music]

We hope today's message encouraged and inspired you. At Champion Forest, we focus on advancing the kingdom of God by making disciples, loving our community, and strengthening the church.

We would love the opportunity to get to know you. To connect with us, just go to [championforest.org/connect] (<https://championforest.org/connect>).

We're so glad you joined us today, and we'll see you again next time.