

# Life in the Red Letters (3)

## “Praying in the Harvest”

Reading through the red-letter teachings of Christ has helped me discover just how amazing the prayer life of Jesus truly was.

We need to learn to Pray like Jesus prayed.

Perhaps this will be the year that you and I develop a vibrant prayer life!

- 1) Jesus prayed in all kinds of situations.
  - a) Jesus prayed publically and He prayed privately.
    - i) His public prayers were not very long. Prayers don't have to be long to be powerful.
    - ii) Many of his private prayers were long! Some times he prayed all night.
  - b) Jesus prayed the scriptures.
    - i) On the cross he prayed Psalm 22:1. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1)
    - ii) Prayer and Bible reading go together. This why we are encouraging you to read the One Year Bible.
  - c) Jesus prayed painful prayers.
    - i) I love this about Jesus, he doesn't just pray about all his victories. He prays in the hard, painful, difficult moments of life. And he's honest about it.
    - ii) Here's what Jesus says in John 12:27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.
  - d) Jesus prayed right up to the end of His life.
    - i) The Lord's final breath was prayer.

- ii) Luke's gospel at the end records this, "Jesus prayed, 'Father into your hands I commit my spirit.'" And in the Bible says, "And then Jesus breathed his last breath." (Luke 23:46)

2) Jesus prayed for all kinds of people.

a) He prayed for little children

Matthew 19:13 says they brought the little kids to Jesus. He laid hands on them that he might pray for them. The disciples complained to the parents (rebuked them). Jesus said, let them come... and he laid his hands on them and prayed.

- i) You don't even need to be a parent to bless children in the Kingdom of God.
- ii) Children often learn to pray by being prayed for.

b) Jesus prayed for his friends

Luke 22:31 and 32, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

c) He prayed for His enemies

- i) In Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you."
- ii) Jesus did that very thing on the cross. He did that on the cross as he was being tortured.

Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

d) Jesus prayed for you and for me.

- i) In His High Priestly Prayer in John 17 Jesus is praying for his followers:

Another Powerful Prayer Outline:

- (1) To be protected from the evil one (17:15)
- (2) To be sanctified with the truth of God's word (17:17).
- (3) To be unified with one another (17:21)

(4) To know the Father the way he does (17:21).

ii) And He prays for us.

Look at John 17:20,21 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

(1) When you were lost, Jesus prayed for you!

(2) Before you were even alive, Jesus prayed for you!

*Jesus knew something then, that we need to know now: there are people who will believe in the resurrected Christ, and all they need is the Word!*

e) We must Pray in the Harvest

Mt 9:35-38, “**35** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. **36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; **38** therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

i) Jesus is proclaiming the Kingdom and emphasizing prayer.

(1) Obviously there is a connection between praying for the Kingdom to come and praying for harvesters.

ii) Jesus is moved by the lost-ness of people without Christ.

(1) Prayer is God’s way of bringing our priorities into line with his.

(2) God wills to make great things happen as the result of our prayers when our prayers are prayed in alignment with his great purposes.

iii) Your prayers matter because God wills that they matter.

(1) The harvest Jesus saw was beyond our comprehension! So we must pray!

(2) The harvest we want is impossible with man! So we must pray!

(3) The harvest will not be one gotten by one person or one church! So we must pray!

3) An unprecedented harvest is occurring now!

a) The first things Jesus teaches us to pray is “Let your Kingdom Come and Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”.

i) Notice that God wants his Kingdom to come TO EARTH – not just heaven

ii) He wants the Kingdom of God to grow and advance HERE ON EARTH.

b) Today I want you to understand what you have become involved in:

i) The Bible assures us that the Kingdom of God will replace all other Kingdoms.

Isaiah 9:7 “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this”.

ii) There will never be a time on earth when the Kingdom stops increasing.

(1) Today more people identify with Jesus as their King than any other religion, philosophy or movement.

(2) Already over a third of the earth’s population would say it is Christian.

(3) Christianity is the earth’s largest religion or movement and it is growing.

Note: according the research done by Barry Wisler of Harvest Net Inc.:

- (a) In 100 there were 360 non-Christians for every Christian
- (b) In 1000 there were 220 non-Christians for every Christian
- (c) In 1500 there were 69 non-Christians for every Christian
- (d) In 1900 there were 29 non-Christians for every Christian
- (e) In 1950 there were 21 non-Christians for every Christian

- (f) In 1989 there were 7 non-Christians for every Christian
- (g) Now there are only a 3 non-Christians for every Christian

And the ratio continues to change as Christianity grows.

- iii) Christianity is still the fastest growing movement in the world.
  - (1) We have heard from some that Islam is growing fast & Christianity while Christianity is declining.
  - (2) The explosive growth of Christianity proves these predictions wrong.
    - (a) Africa for example had 8.7 million Christians in 1900. That was only 9%. By 1985 there were 16,500 conversions a day in Africa or 6 million per year. Today in Africa there are still 20,000 conversions happening per day.
    - (b) In 1900 Korea had no protestant church but today Korea is 30-40% Christian. Some say there is even more than that. Everyday in China 28,000 people become Christians. Some say 30,000. Just a few decades ago in 1950 China had only one million believers. Today there are more than 60 million Christians – in just 60 years.
    - (c) In Indonesia the percentage of Christians is so high the government will not print the statistics. We think it could be as high as 25%
    - (d) In the Soviet Union, even after decades of government oppression, Christians now number 100 million. That's 5 times the size of the communist party
- iv) The Kingdom of God is still expanding and will always continue to expand.
  - (1) Half of Christian believers who have ever lived are alive right now.
    - (a) Jesus said, "the gates of hell will not prevail against the church". Hell cannot stop the true church of Jesus Christ.
    - (b) We can storm the gates of hell, and plunder hell as much as we choose.

Hell cannot stop the Kingdom. The only thing that can hinder the kingdom is us.

- (i) If Christians in a nation are sleepy, preoccupied with their own things and refuse to pray we will see the Kingdom decline.
- (ii) This is why the kingdom is advancing other places and may be declining here.

Lets not let that happen on our watch! Not in America.

- (2) One reason it does not seem like Christianity is prevailing is because there has been a geographical shift in the growth of the church.
  - (a) This Sunday more Christian believers have attended church in China than in all of so-called "Christian Europe." Yet in 1970 there were no legally functioning churches in all of China; only in 1971 did the communist regime allow 1 Protestant & 1 Roman Catholic Church.
  - (b) Today more Anglicans attended church in each of Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda than did Anglicans in Britain and Canada and Episcopalians in the United States combined.
  - (c) Today more Presbyterians were at church in Ghana than in Scotland, and more in Southern Africa than in the United States.
  - (d) There were more Christians worshipping in Brazil's Pentecostal Assemblies of God than the combined total in the two largest U.S. Pentecostal denominations, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ in the United States.
  - (e) Today the churches with the largest attendance in England and France had mostly black congregations. About half of the churchgoers in London were African or African-Caribbean.
  - (f) Today, the largest Christian congregation in Europe is in Kiev, and it is pastored by a Nigerian of Pentecostal background.

Jesus saw an incomprehensible harvest. And he said we must pray for harvesters. The people are ripe unto harvest. Let obey Christ and pray for harvesters.