

LUKE 11 NLT

1 Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 Jesus said, "This is how you should pray:

"Father, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

3 Give us each day the food we need,

4 and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation."

We're in this **series called 40 DAYS**, where we're spending the Lenten season, these 40 days leading up to Easter, learning how to pray, and more specifically: Praying for 3 people in our lives that we feel God has placed on our hearts.

Mike kicked off last week looking at Luke 11, verse 1... Calling us to **pray**, to pray with **honest faith**, to **pray with and without words**, and to **pray first**.

And today, we're looking at verse 2.

2 Jesus said, "This is how you should pray:

"Father, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

And the big phrase I want you to remember today is to **"RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING."** But before we get there, we're going to look at one word in this verse: **HOLY**.

Jesus teaches us in this passage that we **begin** our time of prayer with an acknowledgment of God's holiness. *"May Your name be kept holy."* Other translations use the word **"Hallowed,"** which is a synonym for "holy." Today, we're going to use the NLT's translation and focus on the word: **HOLY**.

We use the word "Holy" more than we realize... Maybe most often, for some of us, in phrases we **WOULDN'T** want to share in church; for some of us it might be used as an **AMPLIFIER** for our favorite curse word... This word **HOLY** shows up a lot in our lives. Especially in the lives of Christians.

We sing songs about it. Our Bibles say "HOLY Bible" in the front. We might even use it in our prayer life, like Jesus instructs here... But what does it mean?

Most of us likely have a vague, working-definition of it... Something along the lines of being special; or being pure; or something to do with God. Most all of our definitions would revolve around God or church or the Bible... **But what does it actually mean?**

When I was 18, I traveled to England with my parents and my older sister... We spent a week exploring the countryside, we saw Stonehenge, we went in the London Eye (This massive Ferris wheel on the river by Parliament), and we were there during the World Cup, so we were

watching some England's matches in these small, countryside pubs with locals... It was very cool.

But the highlight of the trip, and one of the highlights of my life, was visiting Liverpool... You might know this about my family, but we are BIG Beatles fans. Even that is an understatement. **The Beatles have sort of been a religion for my family.** My father and my uncle have been in Beatles cover bands. We've followed every step of these 4 men for the past 54 years... Our family is far beyond your average Beatles fan kind of obsession.

SO we're in Liverpool, which is where the Beatles grew up. And we spent a handful of days traveling around their old stomping grounds. We walked through **Paul McCartney's childhood home**, we saw **Abbey Road studios, Strawberry Fields**... And we spent time inside John Lennon's childhood home. It was actually his Aunt Mimi's home, his mom sort of abandoned him and handed him over to Aunt Mimi and Uncle George... And at the home, there's a very small entryway, like a 6'x6' foot entrance with glass windows on all sides... And apparently this is where the young Beatles used to stand and **practice their harmonies.**

So this guy is there, telling us this, and all of a sudden he says, "*So go ahead, sing a few songs!*" And he shuts the door, **leaving just me and my father in the space...** And it was this wild feeling, thinking about the history of that space; everything that that little room had seen and heard over the years... **And for my father; this almost felt like 'holy ground.'** I know that sounds silly, but it was. This was the EXACT room where so much of his life's enjoyment had been birthed... **It was a pilgrimage of sorts, and I felt the weight of that as we stood in this small entryway.**

Have you ever felt like you were on "holy ground"? Like something about the space itself was special?

I want to go to a story back in the book of Exodus. The second book of the Bible, part of the **Torah**, that captures the **origins** and **history** of the Hebrew people... And this particular moment is recorded in Exodus 3, as a shepherd in his mid-80s wandered with his flock near Mount Sinai.

EXODUS 3:1-6 NLT

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. 3 "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

4 When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

5 “Do not come any closer,” the Lord warned. **“Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.** 6 I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

This is a fantastic moment... A miracle, really, in which Moses, an exiled murderer with a speech impediment encounters the Living God.

What we see here is a raw, unpolished, ugly moment of worship... No one looks cool when they're covering their face and trying to rip the sandals off their feet with the other hand.

Because at the end of the day, away from all these lights and production... This is what worship is: It's **recognizing** God and **responding** to Him. Recognizing and responding. Even if it's **ugly** or **overwhelming** or **unprepared**.

And here we see that word again: HOLY.

קֹדֶשׁ HOLY, kō'·desh - This word HOLY shows up in the Hebrew scriptures 519 times. And it means this:

- TO BE SET APART
- OTHERNESS
- SACREDNESS

Here we find a beautiful definition of “holy” – **to be ‘set apart.’ Moses demonstrates for us what it looks like to RECOGNIZE what is Holy (what is ‘set apart’) and then RESPOND to it.**

Jesus, back in Luke 11, is teaching us to pray, and He begins, first and foremost, with an immediate recognition of God's HOLINESS: His otherness; that He is “set apart.”

In prayer, we must BEGIN here... Not with **pride**, not **bringing our own ideas** to God, not **forcing expectations** or asking for things... But with **an immediate acknowledgement** that God is God, and we are not...

Moses understood this, first hand. His conversation starts and immediately he's made aware that this is no ordinary conversation... Something has to change. He has to change his **posture**... He went from leisurely walking with his flock in the wilderness to shaking on the ground, covering his face and ripping the sandals off his feet.

And when Jesus taught us to pray, He called to follow that same progression... But we're not very good at that, are we? When was the last time you were overwhelmed by God's presence? In fact, if we're honest, sometimes when we pray, **we're not awestruck at all.** *I'm not going to name names, but I know someone that even FALLS ASLEEP when she's praying sometimes... And her name is Elyse and she's my wife.*

But we're all guilty of this, to some extent, aren't we? We don't recognize the majesty, we're unaware of the glory, or insensitive to God's holiness... We just say, "*Ok, let's pray...*" Not acknowledging that we're approaching **a spiritual being that has the power to erase us from the face of the earth.**

If you read through the Bible, I don't think you'll find any interactions between God and man where the man doesn't crumble in the presence of God. **As tough as you are, as special or as confident as you may be...** Standing before a perfect, powerful, Creator God will absolutely crush us.

This is where our "**Jesus is my Homeboy**" attitude falls a bit short. Yes, Jesus does show us an image of God that we can approach, and know, and be held close by... But if there's ever a seed of arrogance or entitlement in how we approach God... We're in trouble. If we approach prayer with flippancy, we have gotten it wrong somewhere along the way.

My favorite moment of this whole exchange is this: "**Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.**" God speaks to Moses and the first thing He says is, "*Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.*"

Why take his shoes off? Seems sort of weird, doesn't it? I guess God could've said anything at that point... "*Moses, don't come any closer, I command you to braid your beard.*" and Moses would be like... ok... or "*Moses, I command you to do the Macarena!*"

But He says, "*Take off your sandals...*"

Makes me think of Karate class growing up. I was pretty special, made it all the way to YELLOW belt. I was a pretty big deal... Here's a chart of how the belts go in Karate... You start with white, and I made it all the way to yellow; pretty proud of that. Black belts are totally overrated.

But I distinctly remember the first time going to Karate class and having to remove my shoes when I entered the "Dojo." It felt so weird to me... to be somewhere in public and walking around with bare feet. **But this isn't weird in Karate.** This is tradition.

This is an ancient tradition in Japan.

The **inside** of a house is clearly distinguished from the **outside**. Japanese children are taught that evil things stick to the bottom of their shoes, and to keep these evil things from entering the house, children are taught to remove their shoes before entering.

But it's not only Japan. The Muslim world practices this as well. Many mosques require their congregations to remove their shoes before entering, to keep the Mosque clean, and to symbolically set the space apart as "different."

And many Chassidic Jews practice this as well, in response to Moses at the Burning Bush, and **they remove their shoes when they approach the gravesite of any revered Rabbi or Holy person.**

Removing his sandals wouldn't have been as weird a request for Moses... As he was an Egyptian, and he grew up in a culture in which Egyptian priests removed their shoes before entering their Temples.

So Moses removes his sandals... But not because it was HOLY SOIL... The ground upon which Moses was standing wasn't HOLY. It was **the presence of a Holy God** that made that ground holy. In fact, it probably made EVERYTHING around the bush holy. Holy air, holy leaves, holy fire... It was proximity. **It was proximity to the presence that made that ground holy.**

To better understand what it means to be HOLY, I want to spend a minute looking at the Sun. We're going to have a little 5th-grade Astronomy class here: **Lesson 1: The sun is the star at the center of our Solar System.** OK, class dismissed. That's all you need to know.

Understanding the word **HOLY** to mean "*set apart, completely unique, otherness,*" we could say that the SUN, by definition, is HOLY. The Sun, in our solar system, is **completely** unique. It's incredibly powerful, and it's the source of all this beautiful life on our planet. **You could say that the sun is holy.**

And, just like the Burning Bush and God's presence making the SOIL under Moses' feet holy... **you could say that the area AROUND the sun is also holy, because the closer you get to the sun, the more intense it gets.** The PROXIMITY... And it's worth noting that the **POWER** and **FORCE** that creates this light and heat is *also* what makes it really dangerous... If you get too close the Sun, it will annihilate you. It's a bit of a paradox, isn't it?

This wonderful, powerful thing that brings **life** and **vibrancy** and **energy** to our world is also completely capable of destroying it. The Sun's temperature at its' core is 27 million degrees Fahrenheit... We can't even fathom those numbers. If it's 100 degrees outside we get sunburned... And the sun is 270,000 times hotter than that. And it's so big that 1.3 million earths could fit inside of it.

There's a similar paradox with God, isn't there? This loving, all-knowing, approachable, compassionate God that we know, also has the ability to **completely decimate** us. He can crush us. He has the power to do anything He desires... (Thank GOD that He doesn't desire to destroy us, right?)

Back in Luke 11, when Jesus is teaching us to pray, the Author capturing Jesus' words is writing in Greek, so he doesn't use the word **שָׁדֵךְ - HOLY, kō'desh**, he uses the word **ἁγιάζω - HOLY/HALLOWED, hagiázō**, and it means something very similar, but it's more of an ACTIVE word. It's a verb. It means to "*separate from the profane and dedicate to God.*" Other verses using this word "hagiozo" translate it to English as "sanctify." **It's participatory...**

ἁγιάζω hagiázō; to make holy, i.e. (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate:—hallow, be holy, sanctify.

When we approach God in prayer, (this Holy, powerful God), Jesus teaches us that we begin by participating in keeping God's name holy.

"Father, may your name be kept holy..."

Our prayers must begin with a desire to keep God holy; to **KEEP** Him "set apart" in our lives; to keep a reverence and awe when we approach Him... We begin with a deep desire to protect the sanctity of our relationship with Him. Think about that... It's beautiful.

The first words out of our mouths are declaring His holiness, and our intention to **CONTINUE** to **RECOGNIZE** His holiness.

I have a friend that could classify as a "Sneaker Head." Have you guys heard of these people? Sneaker Heads... *Again, I'm not going to name names, but his name is Jake Scott and he's a pastor in Lowell.* (This is NOT him, just some other Sneakerhead, and Jake doesn't have this many pairs of shoes...) But Sneakerheads are BIG-TIME, unexplainable **sneaker enthusiasts**. They love shoes. More than Carrie Bradshaw loved her strappy sandals... (Little 'Sex and the City' shout out!) **Sneakerheads LOVE shoes.**

Now I can't speak for Jake Scott, because I think he actually holds his love for sneakers in a healthy place, but I think most Sneakerheads love sneakers because they find some part of **their identity** in their shoes... Maybe they grew up in a rough neighborhood or with a parent that couldn't afford to buy new shoes, and now that they're successful, they buy hundreds and hundreds of pairs in every color.

Maybe the fact that some of these sneakers are **rare** and **expensive** makes them feel as if they're part of something exclusive; **that because the SHOES are special, they, in turn, are special.** We might laugh about someone doing this with shoes, but we do this with all sorts of things.

Shoes can become a status symbol for us. Think about it, if you're interviewing someone for an executive position and they walk in with dirty New Balance sneakers on... You're going to immediately place them in a box in your mind. Or, likewise, if you're interviewing someone for a Drive-Thru position at Dunks and they show up in \$700 dress shoes... You're going to think they're crazy.

We remove our shoes, because we're standing on holy ground... This becomes **even more** beautiful when you look at it this way: When we approach God, removing our shoes is symbolic of us **abandoning** our earthly identity. By removing our shoes, we're releasing the grip that materialism has on our identities. Like **Job 1:21**

NLT, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave." When we approach God, we don't bring anything impressive with us. He's not impressed with our Air Jordans or Manolo Blahniks. **He wants us in most genuine, least 'tethered to the world' form.**

This symbolic gesture of removing our shoes is powerful. And it's a great **tool** to keep in our back pockets when we need to have special time with the Lord. You might not do this every time you pray, but if you and your **spouse** are really seeking after the Lord for a specific thing; or if you're gathering together with a **small group** to pray for one another, removing your shoes can

help lead your minds into that place of humility and recognition of God's holiness. It's not a **rule**; just a helpful **tool** to use whenever appropriate.

As we were creating this sermon series, considering these 40 days leading up to Easter, and looking at the big idea of each week... We decided that this week, Week 2 in verse 2, is primarily about **WORSHIP**... Jesus teaching us to recognize God's holiness at the beginning of our prayers is fundamentally: **WORSHIP**.

This is what worship is. It's **recognizing** God and **responding** to Him.

What did Moses do with the Burning Bush? He **recognized** it, and he **responded** to it.

Throughout the days and weeks, what do you typically **RECOGNIZE** and **RESPOND** to? Is it God? Or is it something much **less worthy** of our attention (and affection)?

- *Are you **noticing the beauty** that God has placed in your life?*
- *Are you aware of the different ways **God provides for you**?*
- *Do you **recognize the amazing people** He's placed in your life?*
- *Are you grateful for them?*

Or is the default of your heart to race past that stuff and **ask for more**? Or ask for something different?

What are you **recognizing** most often in your life?

Because, if we're honest, the things that we most often recognize and respond to are NOT things that warrant our attention (or our affection). In a day and age of push notifications and smart watches... We're being bombarded with little dings and buzzes, all saying "Notice me! Recognize me! Click me!" ... Back in 2015, a study showed that the average American spends over 4.5 hours a day on their smart phone... I bet it's even more than that today... Would we even recognize a burning bush today?

And when we **DO recognize the right things**; the good things; the things that God has done for us; or if we catch a glimpse of God's character and holiness... How are we **responding**? Are we being restrained in our worship? Are we putting guard-rails around our joy?

Or are we worshiping with total abandon; giving our whole selves back to God in gratitude?

Harbor, I want our lives to be marked by awareness of God's holiness... If we're walking by a Burning Bush, I pray to God that we recognize it, and that we respond to it wholeheartedly... May we be people that constantly **RECOGNIZE** and **RESPOND**... If we're walking by a Burning Bush, I pray to God that we recognize it, and that we respond to it wholeheartedly... In our love for one another, in this church, and in our homes...

Let's pray...