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Hear Thou In Heaven
Series: Divided Heart, Divided Nation
The Village Church at Shell Point
Evening Service
September 29, 2024

- I. Some prayers are popular
 - A. **Prayer of Jabez** (2000)
 - 1. **1 Chronicles 4:9–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 Jabez was more honorable than his brothers;
 - b. and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.”
 - c. 10 Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying,
 - d. “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border,
 - e. and that your hand might be with me,
 - f. and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!”
 - g. And God granted what he asked.
 - 2. One verse constitutes the prayer
 - 3. Legitimate prayer
 - a. Biblical
 - b. Jabez was an honorable man
 - c. God answered it
 - 4. Bruce Wilkinson wrote a little book about it
 - a. “The Prayer of Jabez”
 - 5. Why it should have sold millions of copies – great mystery
 - a. Books
 - (1) Jabez for men
 - (2) Jabez for women
 - (3) Jabez for teens
 - (4) Probably even Jabez for dogs and cats
 - b. Calendars
 - c. Bumper stickers
 - d. T-shirts
 - e. Wall hangings
 - B. Maybe not so much of a mystery considering contemporary American Christianity
 - 1. Feeds into the rampant materialism of our age – enlarge my borders
 - a. Pervaded the church
 - 2. Feeds fundamental selfishness of our age
 - a. Bless *me*
 - 3. Short – fits neatly within the attention span of American Christians
 - a. We can handle one verse

4. Colson – American Christianity is 3,000 miles wide and an inch deep
- C. Why aren't there millions of copies sold of "The Prayer of Solomon"
 1. That book hasn't been written
 2. No publisher would touch it
 - a. No one would buy it
- D. Jabez is a legitimate prayer
 1. Simplicity is appropriate for certain occasions
- E. *On the Proper Way to Pray*
 1. "The proper way for man to pray,"
 - a. Said deacon Lamuel Keyes,
 - b. "The only proper attitude
 - c. Is down upon his knees."
 2. "Nay, I should say the way to pray,"
 - a. Said Reverend Doctor Wise,
 - b. "Is standing straight with outstretched arms,
 - c. With rapt and upturned eyes."
 3. "Oh, no, no, no," said elder Snow,
 - a. "Such posture is too proud.
 - b. A man should pray with eyes fast closed
 - c. And head contritely bowed."
 4. "It seems to me his hands should be
 - a. Austerely clasped in front,
 - b. With both thumbs pointing to the ground,"
 - c. Said Reverend Doctor Blount.
 5. "Last year I fell in Hodgkins' well,
 - a. Head first," said Cyril Brown,
 - b. "With both my heals a-stickin' up,
 - c. my head a pointin' down."
 6. "And I done prayed right then and there
 - a. Best prayer I ever said;
 - b. The prayinest prayer I ever prayed
 - c. A-standin' on me head."
- F. Sometimes simple is fine
- G. But the reason why Jabez is so popular (and Solomon not) is...
 1. No recognition of the holiness of God
 2. No confession of sin
 3. No understanding of the discipline of God
 4. No recognition of the conditional nature of many of the promises of God
- H. But you desire to really learn how to pray, there are many other prayers in both OT and NT that are much better
 1. Pastor-friend's benefactor
 - a. Gave cases of Jabez to them for every family in their church
 2. Felt obligated to distribute them
 - a. After all – legitimate prayer in the Bible
 3. Also felt the same misgivings about it

4. Included an addition in the inside cover
 - a. “If you find Jabez interesting, check out all these other prayers in scripture...”

II. Prayer of Solomon

A. Holiness of God

1. We often misunderstand holiness
 - a. Not only moral purity
2. Holy = other
 - a. Includes all attributes which distinguish God from any pretender
3. 1 Kings 8:22–24 (ESV) —
 - a. 22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven,
 - b. 23 and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart;
 - c. 24 you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him.
 - d. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.
4. No God like You
 - a. You shall have no other Gods before You
 - (1) God is truly “other”
5. Faithful – covenant keeping
 - a. Speaks and fulfills
6. Steadfast Love (Heb = chesed)
 - a. Merciful and gracious in showing love to undeserving sinners
7. 1 Kings 8:27 (ESV) —
 - a. 27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth?
 - b. Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you;
 - c. how much less this house that I have built!
8. Omnipresent
 - a. Ubiquitous – everywhere all of the time
9. Prayer directed at heaven (vv 22, 27)
 - a. Throne room of the universe
 - b. Sovereignty, rule, reign, majesty
 - c. Psalm 115:3 (ESV) — 3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.
 - d. Psalm 135:5–6 (ESV) — 5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.
10. Lord’s prayer
 - a. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name...

B. **Promises of God**

1. We often presume upon the promises
 - a. Assume God wants us to have the things we want to have
 - b. Where we get into trouble
 - (1) Sometimes God lets us have them; they cause us all kinds of trouble
2. Solomon prays based on the promises that he knows God has made through his father David
3. **1 Kings 8:25–26** (ESV) —
 - a. 25 Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him,
 - b. saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel,
 - c. if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’
 - d. 26 Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.
4. Solomon recognizes that many of God’s promises are conditional
 - a. 8.25b: “... if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.”
5. We should pray based on the promises of God
 - a. Or at least, based on what we know to be the will of God for us
6. **2 Peter 1:2–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
 - b. 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,
 - c. 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises,
 - d. so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,
 - e. having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
 - f. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,
 - g. 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,
 - h. 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.
 - i. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - j. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

- k. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.
 - l. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - 7. Promises of God – 2 Pet 3.13
 - a. **2 Peter 3:13** (ESV) — 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
 - b. Promises heaven for all who trust in Christ
 - 8. God doesn't promise that we will be free from trouble
 - a. **2 Timothy 3:12** (ESV) — 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
 - b. **Acts 14:21–22** (ESV) — 21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.
 - 9. God does promise a rich welcome into His eternal kingdom
 - a. If we pursue godliness in all of its manifestations
 - C. **Confession of sin and genuine repentance**
 - 1. **1 Kings 8:28–30** (ESV) —
 - a. 28 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day,
 - b. 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place.
 - c. 30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place.
 - d. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.
 - 2. Once he gains a hearing from God, he wants God to forgive
 - a. That's the first thing on his mind
 - 3. Most of the rest of this prayer concerns confession and repentance
 - 4. **1 Kings 8:34–36** (ESV) —
 - a. 34 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers.
 - b. 35 "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them,
 - c. 36 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

5. **1 Kings 8:37–40** (ESV) —
 - a. 37 “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar,
 - b. if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is,
 - c. 38 whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house,
 - d. 39 then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind),
 - e. 40 that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.
6. **1 Kings 8:46–50** (ESV) —
 - a. 46 “If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near,
 - b. 47 yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,’
 - c. 48 if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name,
 - d. 49 then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause
 - e. 50 and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them
7. Not just confession alone – a turning, repentance is necessary in this prayer before God will act
8. **1 John 1:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
9. John the Baptist
 - a. **Matthew 3:1–2** (ESV) — 1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
10. Jesus
 - a. **Matthew 4:17** (ESV) — 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- b. **Mark 1:14–15** (ESV) — 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
 - c. Repentance and faith comprise the gospel
 - 11. Peter
 - a. **Acts 2:38** (ESV) — 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- D. **Concern for justice**
- 1. **1 Kings 8:31–32** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 “If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house,
 - b. 32 then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.
 - 2. Context – man sins; swears he didn’t do it
 - a. Like Solomon’s test with the two women with one child
 - 3. God would distinguish between the guilty and the innocent
 - 4. Ministry of Jesus does entail a concern for justice
 - 5. **Matthew 12:15–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all
 - b. 16 and ordered them not to make him known.
 - c. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:
 - d. 18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
 - e. 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
 - f. 20 a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory;
 - g. 21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”
 - 6. **Isaiah 42:1–4** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
 - b. I have put my Spirit upon him;
 - c. he will bring forth justice to the nations.
 - d. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;
 - e. 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
 - f. he will faithfully bring forth justice.

- g. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.
- 7. Jesus castigated the Pharisees for their lack of concern for justice
 - a. **Luke 11:42** (ESV) — 42 “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.
- 8. **Micah 6:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you
 - b. but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- E. **Discipline of God**
 - 1. Pray in recognition that God may act in discipline leading to repentance
 - 2. **1 Kings 8:33** (ESV) —
 - a. 33 “When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house,
 - 3. **1 Kings 8:35** (ESV) —
 - a. 35 “When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them...
 - 4. **1 Kings 8:37–40** (ESV) —
 - a. 37 “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is,
 - b. 38 whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house,
 - c. 39 then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind),
 - d. 40 that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.
 - 5. **1 Kings 8:46** (ESV) —
 - a. 46 “If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near...
 - 6. Their confession and repentance is in response to the discipline of God
 - 7. Discipline is good
 - 8. **Hebrews 12:4–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

- b. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.
 - c. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
 - d. 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
 - e. 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
 - f. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?
 - g. 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.
 - h. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
9. When afflicted...
10. **James 5:13–16** (ESV) —
- a. 13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.
 - b. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
 - c. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.
 - d. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
 - e. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
11. Healing – difficult area
- a. People are sick for various reasons
 - b. Most often – live in a fallen world
 - c. God sometimes uses sickness to get our attention; causes us to see our sin
 - d. We should examine ourselves when we are sick
12. But God disciplines whom He loves
- F. **Concern for the outsider**
1. **1 Kings 8:41–43** (ESV) —
- a. 41 “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake
 - b. 42 (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house,

- c. 43 hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.
2. God's concern, even in the OT, is for all nations, all peoples
 - a. That they would all know Him and fear Him
3. This is an evangelistic prayer
4. There is always a concern for the alien and stranger in scripture
5. **Exodus 22:21** (ESV) —
 - a. 21 “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.
6. **Exodus 23:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 “You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.
7. **Leviticus 19:33–34** (ESV) —
 - a. 33 “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.
 - b. 34 You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
8. **Jeremiah 7:4–7** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’
 - b. 5 “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another,
 - c. 6 if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm,
 - d. 7 then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.
9. **Zechariah 7:8–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying,
 - b. 9 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another,
 - c. 10 do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”
 - d. 11 But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.
 - e. 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.
 - f. 13 “As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts,

- g. 14 “and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”

G. **Warfare**

1. **1 Kings 8:44–45** (ESV) —
 - a. 44 “If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name,
 - b. 45 then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.
2. Unique – no sin mentioned
 - a. Israel is viewed as engaged in legitimate warfare
3. Their enemies were flesh and blood
 - a. Not the case with us
4. Prayer always recognizes that we are on the front lines of a battle
5. **Ephesians 6:10–20** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
 - b. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
 - c. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
 - d. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
 - e. 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
 - f. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;
 - g. 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,
 - h. **18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,**
 - i. **19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,**
 - j. **20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.**
6. Problem with American Christianity – we don’t pray with the urgency of a foxhole

7. Piper: Could it be that many of our problems with prayer and much of our weakness in prayer come from the fact that we are not all on active duty, and yet we still try to use the transmitter? We have taken a wartime walkie-talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den.
 8. We are in a war
 - a. Enemies
 - (1) World
 - (2) Flesh
 - (3) Devil
 - b. World
 - (1) Anti-God system which seeks to entice us to live without regard for God
 - (a) Residence of temptation
 - c. Flesh
 - (1) Sinful nature which so easily responds to the temptations
 - d. Devil
 - (1) Seeks to use the world's enticements to evoke the flesh to sin
 9. We need to pray as if we are in a war all of the time
 - a. Difficult for American Christians to do
 - (1) We live in Disneyland compared to the rest of the world's Christians
 - b. Make no mistake – there is still a war
- H. Luther – *A Mighty Fortress*
1. A mighty fortress is our God,
 - a. A bulwark never failing;
 - b. Our helper He amid the flood
 - c. Of mortal ills prevailing;
 - d. For still our ancient foe
 - e. Doth seek to work us woe;
 - f. His craft and pow'r are great,
 - g. And armed with cruel hate,
 - h. On earth is not His equal.
 2. Did we in our own strength confide,
 - a. Our striving would be losing;
 - b. Were not the right Man on our side,
 - c. The Man of God's own choosing;
 - d. Dost ask who that may be?
 - e. Christ Jesus, it is He;
 - f. Lord Sabbaoth, His name,
 - g. From age to age the same,
 - h. And He must win the battle.
 3. And tho' this world, with devils filled,
 - a. Should threaten to undo us,

- b. We will not fear, for God hath willed
 - c. His truth to triumph thro' us;
 - d. The prince of Darkness grim,
 - e. We tremble not for him;
 - f. His rage we can endure,
 - g. For lo, his doom is sure,
 - h. One little word shall fell him.
 - 4. That word above all earthly pow'rs,
 - a. No thanks to them, abideth;
 - b. The Spirit and the gifts are ours
 - c. Thro' Him who with us sideth:
 - d. Let goods and kindred go,
 - e. This mortal life also;
 - f. The body they may kill:
 - g. God's truth abideth still,
 - h. His kingdom is forever.
- I. How many contemporary praise choruses capture those images?
 - 1. We don't write like that anymore – we live in Disneyland
 - a. We have no consciousness of a war
 - 2. But there is a war – Solomon's prayer reminds us of that

III. The Prayers of the Church in a Divided Nation

- A. Holiness
- B. Promises
- C. Confession and repentance
- D. Concern for justice
- E. Discipline
- F. Concern for the outsider
- G. Warfare