



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

June 4, 2017

"Mountain-Moving Prayers" - How to Pray Sermon Series

Jenny Sung

**W**ill you pray with me this morning as we prepare our hearts to receive God's Word:

*Lord, we lift up this time to You.  
You are our teacher; we long to follow You. We want to hear Your voice, Your insight and truth. May we surrender the things that block us from receiving, and we ask that You open our hearts and minds and be filled with Your Holy Spirit. Thank You. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.*

There's a popular song called, "The Climb". It's a pretty song and the lyrics are downright inspiring. It's about reaching for your dreams and fighting the obstacles in life. Let's listen to the chorus together, you'll see the words up on the screen:

*There's always gonna be  
another mountain  
I'm always gonna wanna  
make it move  
Always gonna be a uphill battle  
Sometimes I'm gonna have to lose*

*It ain't about how fast I get there  
Ain't about what's waiting  
on the other side  
Oh, It's the climb!*

It is an inspiring song about keeping your chin up when facing struggles, to keep moving, because it's about the journey, not the destination.

And yes, our lives are about the journey, the process of who we are becoming, but like this song says about life, "There's always gonna be another mountain, and we are gonna want to make it move. It's going to be an uphill battle, sometimes I'm gonna have to lose." The lyrics go on to say, "Just keep pushing on, And we gotta be strong, I'm not breaking, gotta keep going." It's like, "I can do this! It's the climb!"

So many times in our lives we do everything we can to muster up the strength to climb, and for many of us, we try, try, and try. We try and figure it out on our own. We rely on our strengths, our talents—what we are good at. We may even see some success, maybe receive some accolades. We say, "Hey, it's been working!" so we try even harder. We're good at using logic and pride in our abilities to reason through things, and the reliance on self can be a perpetuating cycle as we try to climb those mountains all on our own.

But Christ calls us to live differently. In the Christian walk, the mountain-moving song is not by tackling the climb, but rather, it's done on our knees in prayer. It's a surrender and release, in close connection with the God who created us, the God who knows us. This is the posture of prayer

that moves mountains, the theme of our sermon today. We're in the sermon series called "How to Pray" and today focuses on the perspective of the mountains in our lives.

Let me preface by saying that there isn't really a formula for moving mountains. There is no equation like, 54% prayer plus 46% faith equals = TADA! "Your mountain is moved!"

No, rather it is about the perspective of the mountains in our lives. Ultimately, it boils down to one thing: our relationship with God. It's about doing life with, and surrendered to the One who designed us to be in perfect loving communion with Him.

Now why do we even talk about prayer and moving mountains?

**1) Because, well, there are mountains in life.** No matter what we do to protect ourselves, align things just right, avoid situations or people...there will be struggles, obstacles and trials in life, often in conflict with the values of a life lived in Christ.

1 Peter 4:12 says, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

In, John 16:33, Jesus Himself says, *“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

These are the words for tribulation in the dictionary: trouble, difficulty, worry, anxiety, ordeal, burden, trauma, hardship, tragedy, setback. In this world, we will have these things.

The other reason why we talk about prayer and moving mountains is because it's in prayer that the battle is fought.

## **2) The relationship between prayer and moving mountains is a spiritual battle.**

I was recently at a leadership conference where Priscilla Shirer was teaching. She shared a powerful illustration and I would like to share it with you. Priscilla describes herself as a pretty easy-going person and it's hard for her to be offended easily. She said, “If someone does me wrong, I can get over it real quickly and move on. It's my temperament. But if someone has been scheming and planning to do me wrong, that's another story.”

And she goes on to say, “If I find out the person has been studying me, watching my tendencies and inclinations so they can take advantage of me for my demise; and has been looking at my past history, my past abuses and suffering so that they can take advantage of it for my demise; and then not only has this person been studying me and my past, but also my husband, to see what the inclinations of his flesh are so they can take advantage of him and have us crash against each other; and then this person has the nerve to target my children and study their fears and anxieties, all for our

demise...oh, then the gloves are off!”

Her talk was about the spiritual battle. The scheming one in that story is satan, the devil. The apostle Paul says the devil is scheming against us. There is an enemy, a personal evil in the world that is actively working against us. We fight a spiritual battle that is done not with earthly weapons. It is not a fight against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities in a spiritual realm.

This is what the book of Ephesians talks about in chapter 6: **12** *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

We are in spiritual battle, and the battle is done in prayer.

You may have heard of the phrase, “Fight your battles on your knees, and you will win every time.”

Now I know that we don't always literally pray on our knees (some of us have a hard time getting back up once we're down on our knees)! and we don't have to be on our knees to pray. God speaks to us in all sorts of ways and whereabouts. He is God. He's everywhere all at once. But when I speak about mountain-moving prayer on our knees, we start off with the posture of prayer. We acknowledge the One we're praying to, give Him glory and honor, and surrender to Him.

Let me tell you a story about posture. I used to spend summer vacations in Seoul, South Korea with other diplomat kids in high school. We'd take summer classes together and have fun.

Now, as a preface, let me give you some background on greetings in the Korean culture. If you are greeting an elder, you bow your head and bend over almost perpendicular to the ground. So when my friends would visit and greet my parents, this was the standard greeting of showing respect to my parents. (demonstration)

But there was this one kid, whose posture of greeting was like this, (demonstration). Instead of his head going down, he would jerk his head up like, “Whatever”. My mom was like, “What's up with that kid? What kind of an attitude is that? This is not the posture of respect!”

So in the Bible, when we read verses like Psalm 95:6, where it says, *“Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker”*; it's in reverence for our God, our Maker and Creator. It is truly giving the honor and tribute to our God. When we are kneeling, or heads are bowed, there is a surrender of self to the One we are kneeling for. So, who are we kneeling for?

In the book of Isaiah 45:23 God says, *“By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.”*

The main point of this passage was that God is the only One who can save His people, not idols or other things in our lives. God is God and there is no other.

If you begin to study the qualities of God and His character, it becomes an almost overwhelming awe-ness of who God is.

**F**or example, here are some of the names for God in the Bible:

God is *Jehovah*, the name of the independent, self-complete being—"I AM WHO I AM"

God is *Jehovah-jireh*. This name means "the God who provides."

God is *Jehovah-shalom*. This name means "the God of peace."

God is *Jehovah-rophe*. This name means "Jehovah heals."

God is *El-Shaddai* - "God Almighty."

God is *Jehovah-Raah* - "The Lord is my shepherd."

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul refers to this passage again when describing Jesus in Philippians chapter 2:

**5** *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:*

**6** *Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to cling to,  
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

**8** *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.*

**9** *Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place, and gave Him the name above all names,*

**10** *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

**11** *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus, the Son of God, surrendered to the Father in humility and servanthood, and as followers of Christ we bow down to our Lord.

Mountain-moving prayers are done in this posture of surrender and trust in our God.

The posture of prayer that moves mountains doesn't fix our eyes on the mountain, or on ourselves, or on other people—but solely on one thing—our God. El Shaddai. Jehovah-jireh. The great I AM.

This heart is the posture of prayer that acknowledges God for who He is and worships Him.

At the beginning of the sermon, we started earlier with a song called, "The Climb"—a song about mustering up the will to keep going. Now compare that posture with this song called, "The Heart of Worship". Many of you may be familiar with the song by Matt Redman.

I want to invite you to close your eyes and worship God, opening up your heart and inviting Him in. You'll see the beginning of the lyrics go up on the screen, and then as it continues through the first verse, just listen to the lyrics.

*When the music fades  
All is stripped away  
And I simply come  
Longing just to bring  
Something that's of worth  
That will bless Your heart*

*I'll bring You more than a song  
For a song in itself  
Is not what You have required  
You search much deeper within  
Through the way things appear  
You're looking into my heart*

*I'm coming back to the  
heart of worship  
And it's all about You,  
It's all about You, Jesus*

One of the greatest things to do when tempted to focus more on the mountain or ourselves than on God, is to worship. It's all about our Lord and Savior.

Now I know when we talk about worship, a huge part of that are songs. That's true, singing is a huge part of worship, whether that be contemporary worship songs, hymns, gospel music, singing psalms, Gregorian chants, Taizé worship, etc.

But worship extends beyond just the singing. Worship is an entire body thing. It's an entire life thing—your life lived and expressed for the glory and praise of God! Worship is to live your life as an outpouring of love and declaration of God's glory. Worship is a lifestyle of love. Worship lifts everything to its appropriate place—towards God, His kingdom and what He's doing in the world.

We are a part of something much larger than ourselves, and we begin to realize our part as the family of God, that as daughters and sons in Christ, our purpose extends much beyond ourselves, our daily lives, and our interests. We simply connect with our Father in participation with what He's already doing in the world. He calls us to be with Him and join Him in what He's doing.

Through the mountains of life, God gives us comfort, grace and fills us with an everlasting peace that defies understanding. His Holy Spirit guides us, strengthens us, and consoles us. He will never leave us; He will never forsake us, no matter how hard the climb.

**W**hat I'm describing is the total pureness, the authenticity of a love relationship with God. It is an affair of the heart, a devotion and passion for *being* with God, not *doing* for God; not getting what you want from God, but loving God and wanting to be with Him.

It's often in prayer that we become more aware of this and in tune with God's presence and direction, and we can recalibrate our focus. The more we do this the more it becomes familiar, like breathing air in and out. It's like prayer becomes the oxygen for life. We begin to understand the scripture, "pray without ceasing..."

**16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Looking back, it was in the times of prayer that God recalibrated my focus. It was spending time in His presence, praying and listening. When there were mountains in my life, only by giving the problem to God in prayer did I experience victory in any difficult situation.

I want to end with a story about some major mountains last year. It was not too long ago when I had come off a difficult winter after my mom was hospitalized with sepsis and kidney failure. Within four days an infection had ravaged through her body and shut down both kidneys. For a month, up until Christmas, it was a battlefield.

She went through a wide range of antibiotics, dialysis treatments, blood transfusions, and I didn't know if she would pull through. I was there, day in and day out. Some days she was barely coherent, and I would read aloud the Bible in Korean, sometimes not even

understanding some Korean words but praying that she could hear it. (My mother did eventually pull through; she got well enough to fly back home to South Korea and recover.)

After that I started 2016 a bit thin, like too little butter spread over too much bread. Throughout the year major things kept happening, and I felt like I was in a war zone. Even though the grenades were not falling directly on me, they hit those very close to me, and many were wounded, with illness, depression, loss, disappointments and betrayal. The pain was intense. It was in the times of prayer that I could recalibrate my focus on Jesus.

I remember one significant time of prayer when there was a major breakthrough. I was praying, "Jesus, I'm exhausted. I don't know if I can absorb the pain anymore. I don't know if I can do this. I can't absorb any more pain. I can't carry this, I don't think I can live like this."

As I sat there, praying with my palms faced up, I heard Jesus clearly say, "You were never designed to absorb all the pain and carry the burden. That's not the way you were designed. That's why I'm here. That's why I died on the cross, once and for all. Give it all to Me."

Maybe you've absorbed a lot of pain and trauma. Perhaps you've been carrying the weight of a strained relationship, a devastating illness, a betrayal, loss and burdens. Jesus came and died on the cross, absorbing all sin, and He also absorbs our pain and suffering, and takes that burden.

Jesus is referred to as the suffering servant. Isaiah 53:5 says, "*But He was pierced for our*

*transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*"

That's why He knows our pain and struggle so deeply. He lived in the midst of humanity, He suffered for us, and He continues to intercede for us. He asks us to surrender the pain and burden to Him.

Jesus says, "*Come unto me all who are weary and burdened and I shall give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" Matthew 11:28-29

Jesus suggests another way when He says, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in Me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from Me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5

We were never designed to be alone. We were never designed to absorb the pain and carry the burden on our own. Rather, we were designed to be grafted into the vine. We were designed to be in perfect communion with our Savior. We were designed to be with Him.

And He gives us the Holy Spirit, called the Counselor, who lives in us and gives us boldness, conviction, direction, and guides us. We are to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, in service and in life, as we are being poured out in loving communion with God and one another. And as we reach out into the world, into the pain, the messiness and the muck of life, we don't absorb that pain onto ourselves, but we pour out the love of God onto others, and draw them closer to the One whom we draw close to.

In the mountains of life, God continues to provide peace, comfort and wisdom as you go to Him in prayer, surrendering the pain and burdens, giving Him your worship and devotion.

Today is Communion, and we remember that day when Jesus was with His disciples in the upper room. He prayed with His disciples, and said, **33** *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* John 16:33

On the same evening, he Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

And as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

If you would like to receive prayer about anything you might have heard from the Lord today, if you want a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, if you long to surrender your life in a deeper way—come up to the front after the service so we can pray with you.

Let's pray together: Lord, we thank You, for recalibrating our focus, for loving us whenever we turn to You. You will never forsake us or leave us. We worship You and give You the glory.

And as Jesus taught us to pray, we now say the Lord's prayer together as the body of Christ:

Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our debts as we  
forgive our debtors,  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil,  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the  
power and the glory forever,  
Amen!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at [fpchawaii.org](http://fpchawaii.org) The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: [fpchkoolau@gmail.com](mailto:fpchkoolau@gmail.com)*