

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and you gladly give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us your abundant mercy. Forgive us those things that weigh on our conscience, and give us those good things that come only through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Luke 11:1-13

¹ [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."² So he said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, may your name be revered as holy.

May your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

⁵ And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹ "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for a fish, would give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asked for an egg, would give a scorpion? ¹³ If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

REFLECTIONS

I invite you to look at the sermon Bishop Susan Johnson prepared for the Sunday Sermon series. She shares her personal experience with prayer and then a reminder that we as people of faith are in the 'prayer business'. And

topping that off, she offers a rich variety of ways we can pray. As Thomas Merton, a revered figure in prayer and contemplation circles liked to say, "In prayer, we are all beginners".

Lord's Prayer...

The Lord's Prayer: Talk about taking a swipe at 'the powers that be'!
In a meeting this week I repeated a bit of writing I had seen about the

Praying in 'we/us' language repudiates our present cult of the individual ego.

Praying for God's will and realm is a rejection of Caesar's agenda.

Daily bread and wellbeing is God's provision...temporal rulers don't create anything (or even wealth) they merely distribute—some more fairly than others

Forgiveness is divine and contrasts a world celebrating vengeance and quid-pro-quo relationships.

Finally God alone spares us from the ultimate trial of despair and hopelessness.

The disciples' request to learn a prayer reflected the relationship between rabbi and follower. The followers patterned their lives after the rabbi they followed—knowing the prayer and living the life identify followers of a certain way (or teacher).

"Knocking late at Night"

Our world is all about learning how to get what we want. Jesus' points us to God's giving nature and de-emphasizes our skill as 'petitioner'. Imagine someone willing disturbs one's own household to provides bread to someone in immediate need.

"Ask, seek and knock"

Again we're speaking of the quality of relationship Jesus says we have with him and with God. And if people we know and love give appropriate and needed gifts, imagine how much more God gives!

The Pietist writer O. Hallesby says that when we think we 'should' pray or want to pray that's God knocking at OUR door.

Is God interested in the quality of our prayers (Luther says the shorter the better)?

There is a story hasidic folk tell that your pastor loves to repeat (in paraphrase). Once a woodcutter made it a practice to go deep into the forest, light a fire and recite treasured prayers. As he aged and life wore him down, this ritual became complicated. Once he walks into a clearing and says to God....*"I am a foolish woodcutter" I no longer remember the path to the sacred site. Today, I have forgotten kindling to start a fire. And this foolish old woodcutter can no longer remember the words to the special prayers. So today, I am going to speak and trust in your Divine wisdom to arrange the prayer in the right order—and the woodcutter prayed aleph, bet, gimmel, dahlet (a, b, c, and so on). The tale concludes by saying of all the prayers the Lord heard that day, the wood cutter's prayer was the Almighty's favourite.*

Finally an true story from nearly 40 years ago: A young man visited a monastery and one day at lunch prattled on about all he thought he knew about prayer. One of the brothers, reddened with indignation, fired back at the gobsmacked youth "I am tired of people like you coming here and talking about prayer. I wish you would just **do it!**"

So church, getting down to the business of prayer becomes the thing we do because the God who created us yearns to live in relationship WITH us.