



THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 28, 2019

LUKE 11: 1-13

“PEACE OR MIND”

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

He said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.”

Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your friend’s integrity, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

“So, I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- A family is having guests to dinner. When everyone is seated, the mother asks her six-year old daughter to say grace.
 “But mommy, I don’t know what to say.”
 “Just say what you hear mommy say, sweetie,” replies the mother.
 The little girl bows her head, takes a deep breath and prays, “Oh lord, why in the world did I invite all these people to dinner?”
- There’s about as much bad teaching about prayer than about anything else in the world of religion and spirituality.
- And, this morning, there is a wealth of good teaching about prayer that, ultimately, we want to connect to the Baptism of Scarlett Ophelia. Because in her baptism we see our own Baptism.
- Jesus begins teaching his disciples about prayer by calling God “Our Father.”
 - Jesus uses an Aramaic word, *Abba*, for father.
 - *Abba* is what children in the middle east call their father: it means *daddy*.
- The Greek-speaking early church continues to use the Aramaic word **Abba** for God because it is a precious word that affirms a special relationship between the worshipper and God.
- Our human fathers are never adequate to give this word *Abba*, “daddy,” its proper meaning.
- “Our Father” is best defined by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son where the portrait of God is one whose goodness, love, forgiveness, care, and compassion have no limits at all.
- And this God is “Our Father.” Not “my father.”

- At CLC, we are not a loosely knit group of individuals who gather to pray to god about our personal concerns.
- **We are a family of God.**
- We are one community, one people, **one tribe** gathered under eye of **our** father. We are in this together. Or we are not in it at all.
- Beyond our tribe, we are obliged to look across the country and world to see brothers and sisters in every land with this same Father.
- It is only with this intimate sense of being one tribe, one faith community that we can understand our parable.
- **Because** the crucial element of the parable is that the guest at midnight is a guest of the **entire community**, not just the individual....
- The guest must leave the village with a good feeling about the hospitality of the village as a community.
- In going to his neighbor for bread, the host is asking the sleeper to fulfill his duty to the guest of the village. Refusal is unthinkable.
- The middle eastern family gathers and prepares food supplies on a yearly basis. They are then stored in a raised loft at the end of their one-room peasant dwelling.
- The host examines his storage room and decides that he has nothing adequate to honor the guest. Again, the appeal to community responsibility is the main point.
- The host will go around the village asking for the best tray, the best pitcher, the best cloth, and the best goblets....

- So, the question Jesus is posing to his first listeners is: “Can you imagine having a friend and going to him with the sacred request to help you provide hospitality to a guest, and he offers the absurd excuse that his children are sleeping and the door has been locked?”
- The first listeners would have replied, ‘No way, Jesus.’”
- Jesus is using the parable to tell us something about the true nature of God.
 - So, let me see if I can make sense of this.
- First, a friend comes to visit. Knowing the village is responsible for exceptional hospitality. You go to a neighbor for three loaves of bread.
- And everything is against you. It is night. He is asleep. He thinks you’re a jagoff. **And yet**, you will receive more than you ask for.
- Why? He is a man who will not compromise his integrity.
- Jesus is telling us that the Father to whom you pray also has an integrity that He will not violate and, beyond this, *Abba* loves you.
- Second, if you are confident of having your needs met when you go to such a neighbor in the night, how much more can you rest assured when you take your requests to a loving Father?
- Next comes a short poem about asking and receiving; seeking and finding; knocking and having it opened for you.
- Now here’s where we can lose our way. Not intentionally, but these biblical texts are in Aramaic and Greek (I know about three words of each) and these texts weren’t always initially accurately translated.
- Just like everything else in our world, we learn more about the meaning of Jesus’ teaching over the centuries.

- The critical issue for this poem is who is the audience? Is it the disciples, is it the crowds, or is it those who are hostile to the gospel Jesus is preaching?
- The short answer is that it is a hostile audience, most likely the Pharisees, who hold onto a very short list of who is included in God's favor. And the list does not include the people who are following Jesus: outcasts, the poor, women, shepherds, leather workers, people who don't come to worship, racial enemies, the sick, lawbreakers, foreigners, and more.
- Don't you know people who exclude others out of their own insecurities and uninformed judgments? Other races, those Muslims, those gays, those dykes, those foreigners.
- Jesus is sticking it in their faces. Jesus is asserting: **everyone** who asks, receives. **Everyone** who seeks, finds. **Everyone** who knocks has the door opened.
- We all tend to exclude people based on our own prejudices, fears, and small-minded opinions. Just like the Pharisees.
- We all have those aspects of ourselves that are not very pretty. But we can act as though our waste material has no odor....
- **The parable/poem states that a gracious Father always gives good gifts to all who seek him.**
- But what are the good gifts? That's the key.
- Do we love our spouse because of what we get from him or her?
- Income, security, safety, a familiar presence.
- Or do we want to be in a real relationship?

- If we've been praying to get something from God, then God is little more than a Santa Claus in the sky. We imagine we've been good enough—which is an illusion—to warrant God giving us what our egos want. Whatever we want: get me out of the mess I've created, how about a raise, how about intervening and healing my illness after I've not taken care of myself for decades, how about solving climate change, straighten out my kid, Steeler season tickets, more money to get me out of the debt I've created for myself, fix my marriage even though we're refusing to see a marriage counselor....
- Save me from myself. Maybe God can do that!
- Which brings us to the baptism of Scarlett Ophelia. Please notice that we will not pray for health, wealth, good looks, or a volleyball scholarship.
- What we will pray for are the Seven Gifts of Holy Spirit. Hate to disappoint you.
- These are the **good gifts** referenced by Jesus—**we are to pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and we are assured that a good and gracious God will give them to us.**
- Wisdom, understanding, counsel, endurance, knowledge, wonder, and joy.
- Peace of mind is an oxymoron. We do not have peace of mind as long as we are in the mind, the ego. The ego is never satisfied. The ego always wants more. The ego does not want to change. The ego is full of wants, desires, imagined needs. The ego is an acronym for **Edging God Out.**
- Prayer is meant to take us out of our (crazed) mind into a deeper sense of ourselves. A deeper self relationally connected to our Father. A loving daddy who gifts us with those qualities that move us through life peacefully no matter what is happening to us.

- We pray **wisdom** for Scarlett Ophelia and for all of our tribe. This is the first and greatest gift. Wisdom allows us to experience god in our lives and develop our own hard-fought insight into the purpose for our life.
- We pray **understanding** for Scarlett Ophelia and for our tribe. That we deepen into god's truth and how the sacred operates in the world. That is why baptism is only the first step. Understanding will come for Scarlett and all of our children only as they attend worship, CLC Kids, First Communion, Confirmation, Youth Group, Work Camp. As they connect to the CLC tribe and the love and care that surrounds them. Life-giving spirituality only comes if, as adults, we deepen into worship, prayer, fellowship, and ways that deepen our lives in the Father. True religion is not about going through the motions.
- We pray **counsel** for Scarlett Ophelia and for our tribe, which is the gift to discern the right path, particularly in difficult situations.
- We pray **endurance** for Scarlett Ophelia and our tribe. Life is tough and there is no way to prevent this little girl from suffering her own trials and tribulations. Endurance is related to courage and the strength of god that enables us not to be broken by life's difficulties.
- We pray **knowledge** for Scarlett Ophelia and for our tribe, which is the capacity to see things from god's perspective. With this gift, we develop compassion rather than judgment for one another and others.
- We pray **wonder** for Scarlett Ophelia and for our tribe, which pope francis recently stated is an awareness that only in god do our hearts find true peace.
- And we pray **joy** for Scarlett Ophelia and for our tribe. Happiness is an illusion. A fleeting feeling that we can mistakenly pursue as the goal of life.

- Joy is a gift of God, breaking through in the most surprising moments, filling us with a sense of well-being that goes well beyond any happiness we imagine....
- We all have a choice. To be in our mind or to rest in peace. To remain in our mind praying for mistaken wants and desires that only lead to disappointment and the mistaken belief that God does not care.
- The purpose of prayer, prayer of few words and much silence, is to take us out of our minds and into the realm of the kingdom where God's good gifts await us.
- It is into this kingdom that we baptize Scarlett Ophelia.
- SERMON SONG: **OPHELIA** BY THE BAND