

## Sermon, July 24, 2022 – Pentecost 7

### Luke 11:1-13

1 He 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.”<sup>2</sup> He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.<sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread.<sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”<sup>5</sup> 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;<sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’<sup>7</sup> 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.’<sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.<sup>9</sup> “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.<sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.<sup>11</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish?<sup>12</sup> Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?<sup>13</sup> 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!”

## Sermon

This morning, I am going to talk to you about prayer.

Do you remember the opening scene in the holiday classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*?

It is night time and it is snowing. From every house on just about every block of the city we hear people praying for George Bailey. With voices tumbling on top of one another, we hear over and over again, "Dear Lord, be with George, with George, bless George, O God, be with George, George Bailey, bless George." Then we hear the murmuring of the Angels...all present and praying too. Let's just watch it. Let's watch it.

The people in the video were all praying for the same thing. But a chorus of prayer is taking place all of the time, right now even, except the requests and petitions are ours - all *different* from one another. At the same moment you are praying for your child or grandchild to recover from Covid, your neighbor next door may be praying for her son in hospital. Meanwhile, the folks in the house across the street are begging God to help them make ends meet even as the people in the house next to that are praying for good MRI results. Prayer is a universal constant, the sheer volume of which staggers the imagination. Our Lord is infinite...vast and so it is beyond our comprehension how our Lord can hear it all. Our Lord **WANTS** to hear it all. We are **invited** to pray, to communicate. And you know what? I think our Lord just loves all the chatter...I think it is precisely what our Lord wants. An expression I've heard is 'Pray for me as I will pray for you.'

Jesus says "...Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." Jesus instructs us to pray to 'Abba'... Abba is a term of endearment...like 'Daddy'. He also says that like a good father (for actually he is the perfect Father or Daddy) he wants to give us good things. He wants to open doors. 'God is listening' is the message. After all...later in Luke's Gospel he writes God knows us, even to the number of hairs on our heads. We are invited to ask...don't be shy. Seems our heavenly Father or Daddy will answer! Maybe not in exactly the way we expect, but always there will be an answer, a door opened...and we will find something.

At the end of this morning's Gospel our Lord Jesus says the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" and that reminds me of another passage from Romans which says...**Romans 8:26-27**

“... the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words...the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

I find that one of the most comforting verses in the Bible. The Spirit knows we are weak and that we do not know how to pray and the Spirit helps us with that very thing. The Spirit intercedes or speaks for us with sighs that transcend words. We have the gift of the Spirit...dwelling within each of us... Jesus says. It is a bombshell really. We needn't be anxious about the right way to pray. The Spirit breathes within us and helps us, even when we don't know what to say.

But saying that...I would like to share with you something that has helped me pray. It is prayer beads. If we're honest, it is as the scripture says. We often feel weak and inadequate and do not know what to pray or how to pray. So these prayer beads can help us have a form, something we can touch, something to focus on, as we hold them in our hands. Prayer beads are ancient. We may think of the Roman Catholic Rosary. But Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists have prayer beads, so do Orthodox Christians. Did you know Anglicans also have our own version. Here are some Anglican Prayer beads.

Anglicans can pray with this beads in a number of ways. I have prayer beads for those who would like to have them.

How I do it is use each group of beads for one of our children and their families. One can say 'God Bless Adam' next bead, 'God bless Riva' or use Julian of Norwich little prayer 'All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.' Please take a set of beads of there are some you can make up ourself.

On this warm summer day, let us join the disciples and say 'Lord, teach me to pray.' Thankful and confident that our Lord is as close to us as our breath.amen