

Sunday, August 21st, 2016

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am. The liturgist will enter and take his/her seat. The pastor will follow, step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.

PRELUDE

Dr. Dan Dykema

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 121 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Psalm 121)

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not sleep.

He who keeps Israel will never slumber.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Open to us your Word, gracious God, as we ask and seek and knock. Teach us to persist in prayer amid all the life’s distractions so that we may seek, recognize, and heed your wise and loving counsel. Help us to find in your Word a new sense of purpose and a fuller recognition of our sacred gifts so that we might do our part in making this world a better place for all your children. Prepare us in this hour for the joy of your presence and the fullness of life you intend. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “For the Beauty of the Earth”, number 473 in our *Hymnals*.

The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF PRAISE

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

The Hymnal #473

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Learning the language of prayer requires both speaking to and listening for God. As we confess our sin together, may we recall the many ways that we fall short as the Spirit of God moves us toward to a new sense of forgiveness. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing for a moment at its conclusion for a brief period of silent prayer. Let us pray...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful Lord, we confess our ignorance in not always praying for as we ought. We need your pardon for praying, “Our Father in heaven,” even as we fail to embrace all people as your children. Forgive us for asking that “Your kingdom come” without working for your kingdom on earth. Deliver us from begging for our daily bread without recognizing it as your gift when it comes. Excuse the arrogance of seeking forgiveness for ourselves, while we fail to pardon others. Overlook the foolishness we display when ask that you lead us not into times of trial, even as we walk willingly into temptation. Forgive us as well for honoring you with our lips and exalting ourselves with the rest of our lives. Help us to pray unceasingly and persistently, that we may be transformed by the renewing power of Your Spirit. Create spaces in our prayer, that our ears may hear and our lives display your power and your grace, your righteousness and your mercy. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Ask and it will be given to you; search, and you find; knock and the door will be opened for you. All who ask for pardon will be forgiven. All who seek a fresh start along Christ's way will find their way once more. And all who seek to return to the joy of salvation are welcomed into the joy of our Master. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Ransomed, healed, restored, and forgiven, we have been freed to live at peace with God and one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen.”

The liturgist will take a seat.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

(All Singing)

**Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.**

As the children leave, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

“Would all who are able, please stand and join in one voice to sing our next hymn, “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” #404 in our hymnals.”

***HYMN OF PREPARATION**

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”

The Hymnal #404

After the hymn, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say,

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Please be seated. . . All our wealth cannot buy the mercy and favor of God. Yet God is pleased to use our gifts to spread the good news that love is available to all for the asking. In grateful response to God's many gifts, let us give with joy and generosity as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Dan Dykema

***DOXOLOGY (In Unison)**

The Hymnal #592

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... Heavenly Father, for your healing love, for the goodly blessings we enjoy, and for life itself, we give thanks with these tokens of our gratitude. Dwell in us, that we may be moved to make all of life an offering to your glory. May we learn to give good gifts to all your children who need what we have to offer. Multiply our efforts to be faithful as you add others to our family of faith, in Christ's name. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"The Apostle's Creed"

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using the traditional words of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius

Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Dr. Dan Dykema

After the soloist finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the twelfth chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, beginning at the fourteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 1046 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!'

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

The liturgist will return to his seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thank you for your service.

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When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our sermon text today is taken from the eleventh Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #903 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

"He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread; ⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'?

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for ^b a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him 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!"

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"A Friend at Midnight"

It's the end of a long day, spent walking and teaching and teaching, and teaching..... He's had a good meal at the home of Lazarus, and taught some more. At the end of such a day, most of us would

just look forward to going to bed and sleeping the sleep of the dead as soon as our heads hit the pillow. But whether he is too tired for that or perhaps still has his mind fully engaged in the events of the day behind him or the day ahead with the rising of the morning sun, he cannot sleep yet, and retreats from the house alone to seek the presence of God the Father in prayer.

His disciples have seen this before, a worn and weary Jesus, who seemingly can go not one step farther, teach not one more lesson, heal not one more broken life, save not one more soul, summon the energy to seek the face of God in prayer.

They've seen it before, and no matter how great his exhaustion when he goes, he returns from that holy encounter with renewed purpose, energy, and peace. They see it and they want that ability for themselves. So they go and watch from a distance. And they see nothing. No flash of light, no heavenly sign, no halos or rainbows. Just a man kneeling as much from his exhaustion as from his humility, praying, and then rising with power emanating from him in every direction.

They want that.

So when he rises, his stalkers approach him and ask, teach us how you do that, Master. Teach us to pray like you do. Truth be told, they are not so interested in praying like he does, as they are in getting the results that he does. They don't want to just know how to pray, they want to know how to get their prayers ANSWERED immediately and affirmatively!

"So it happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

And Jesus starts by giving them a model prayer to serve as a pattern for their extemporaneous prayers which will follow. This is not unlike what we do when we teach our children their bedtime prayers, "Now I lay be down to sleep..." or a blessing before meals, "God is great, God is good. Let us thank him for our food..."

But having given them a start, Jesus knows that they are not just there so that He can teach them to pray. They want him to teach them to pray "AND GET WHAT THEY WANT!"

So he tells them a story about a man who has guests stop by unexpectedly. Pilgrims often traveled in the evening to avoid the heat of the afternoon sun, travelers might very well arrive at night. Villagers, having no electricity, go to bed early and most families share a single room, so a late arrival would awaken a sleeping family.

Nonetheless, He has a sacred obligation to feed them and house them for the night, and he has nothing to feed them with. He knows his neighbor the baker, has plenty of bread. And even though it is midnight, he goes there to get what he needs.

His poor neighbor, who has been sound asleep for hours, is suddenly roused from his dreams, by an unholy clamor at his door. Still half asleep, He lights a lamp and goes to see what the commotion is all about. From his side of the still closed door, he whispers loudly, "Who is it?"

And his needy neighbor answers, "It's me, Moishe, from next door. I need some bread to feed some late arriving guests."

And Jesus explains, "I tell you, although he will not rise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence (*anaideian autou*), he will get up and give him as many as he needs" (v. 8). The interpretation of this parable hangs on these words—*anaideian autou*. There are two issues here: First, what does *anaideian* mean? Second, to whom does *autou* refer—the host or the neighbor?

Ken Bailey says that *anaideian* had two meanings among Christians—shamelessness and persistence. However, in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament as well as secular Greek literature, it had only one meaning—shamelessness. Bailey further notes that the parable does not show the host acting persistently in verses 7-8—i.e., does not mention him continuing to pound on the neighbor's door. The host demonstrates no persistent action—does not plead or beg, unlike the widow in the parable of the Unjust Judge (18:1-8). Bailey then engages in a detailed study of the word *anaideian* to show that its roots have to do with shame or shamelessness rather than persistence.

Bailey then seeks to say that *autou* ("his") refers to the neighbor rather than the host. In other words, it is the neighbor's concern about being shamed rather than the host's persistence that turns the tide. If the neighbor refuses to help, the host will go to other neighbors for assistance, telling everyone about the neighbor's unseemly refusal—thus bringing shame on the neighbor and his house. It is to avoid this shame that the neighbor eventually acquiesces and gives the host whatever he needs (Bailey, Poet & Peasant, 125-133).

In Ezekiel 36:17, God expressed his displeasure with the Israelites who defiled their soil with their ways and deeds. Nevertheless, God promised to redeem Israel, saying, "Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: I don't do this for your sake, house of Israel, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, where you went" (v. 22).

God thus promises to cleanse the Israelites and to bring them into a land of their own and to give them prosperity. He says: "Then the nations that are left around you shall know that I, Yahweh, have built the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Yahweh, have spoken it, and I will do it" (v. 36).

In other words, God saves his people lest His own name be brought to shame. This passage, which would be familiar to Luke's readers, favors the interpretation that it is the neighbor's concern about being shamed that saves the day.

However, the "ask...seek... knock" passage (vv. 9-13) that follows these verses sounds like a call for persistence.

"Asking...seeking...knocking" (v. 9). The verbs are present tense, suggesting a continual asking, seeking, and knocking.

"For everyone who asks receives" (v. 10). Jesus seems to suggest that God will rubber-stamp every request, but our experience proves otherwise. Even Jesus prayed a prayer for deliverance, but was not delivered (22:42).

But bear in mind that our lesson on Prayer began with the words, "Our Father..." A loving Father listens to the child, but does not blindly endorse every request. To do so would please the child in the short-run, but would lead to trouble in the long-run. Instead, the loving Father provides what is needed, including limits and discipline.

Notice also where Luke ends his treatment of the Lord's prayer that leads us into this lesson on prayer. Forgive us... Help us forgive others.... Keep us from temptation... save us from evil....

Prayer is not a place for us to go to recite our shopping list of requested blessings. Do we really go to God and say, "Make me richer, smarter, better looking. Lord give me the best things of this world, even if they blind me to the riches and joy of the next." Or is this where we go to seek forgiveness, and seek to change our lives for the better, to prepare ourselves for life in the kingdom of God, knowing that if we do that, we will also be supremely happy here?

"Seek first the kingdom of God, and then everything else will be added unto them."

You don't seek to learn the great secrets of the universe in a single lesson. You must come back, and your Father in heaven will give you everything you can handle at that moment in time. Each time you go to God in prayer you get to spend time with him, and he will add another piece of the puzzle

So keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking.

For all the power that human love has to heal, there is something deep within me and within the people I know best that is not healed but aches with longing still. So if God's love is powerful enough to reach that deep, how do I find it? How?"

Have you been there? Have you asked that question? Have you known that you needed a deep healing, for God to apply a poultice of grace on wounds that never seem to heal? Do you want to be help by a love that will never let you go? An anchor that holds in every storm? A foundation on which you can build a life with a solid future?

If you are, if we are really seeking this power, then I have one thing to say-- ask for it. And don't just ask, keep asking, over and over. Ask, and you will receive.

