

Sunday, November 13th, 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 10:40am. After a brief prayer with the choir, 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 "Let All Things Now Living" - Gilbert M. Martin **Dr. Elizabeth Davis**

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP "Rejoice in the Day!" - Dan Dykema **The Choir**

After the choir is finished, 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 slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 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 going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Faithful and ever-listening God, evermore ready to hear us than we are to pray, meet us here, where we are, lest we decide that you are beyond our reach. We bring our disappointments and complaints, our cries for justice, our concern for the needy, asking for strength and courage to actually do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly through this life in your steps. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand and join in singing the hymn, “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun”, number 423 in our *Hymnals*.

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

***HYMN OF PRAISE** “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun” *The Hymnal #423*

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

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

God does not tire of our prayers. Rather, God feels neglected when we fail to pray. God does not write us off when we are careless. Instead, He calls us to renewed faithfulness. Bring to God in prayer all that causes you shame and let us confess our sins before God and one another using the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Holy God, we confess that we are a people more inclined to insist on our own way than to submit gracefully to yours. We are impatient and demand immediate gratification of our desires rather than allowing your will to shape our own over time. We expect answers and action on certain terms, and when, in your wisdom, this does not happen, we become discouraged. When it appears you are not coming to us, we stop coming to you. We lose heart, and perhaps even our trust in you. Forgive us for the unfaithful response we have made to your faithful love, and grant us a new spirit, we pray. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION** (*Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.*)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

The prophet Jeremiah writes, “I will forgive your iniquity and remember your sin no more. I will be your God and you will be my people. I will put my law within you; I will write it on your hearts.” 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

We have been reconciled to the Father by the gift of his Son. Let us now be reconciled one with another and share the peace of Christ. 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 step to the microphone and say....

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We are not to lose heart amid all the problems that compete for our attention. We have the resources to make a difference in our work of evangelism, teaching, and outreach. Our offering is an opportunity to commit our time and talents to the cause of Christ. Let us continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

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

THE OFFERTORY "All Things Bright and Beautiful" - Patricia Lou Harris Dr. Elizabeth Davis

*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... With thanksgiving for your presence in all our coming and going, through all our work and leisure, in our times of faithfulness and when we break covenant, we bring our offerings. May these resources help your people to know you more fully and serve you more effectively. Equip us for every good work, that your church may witness boldly and influence profoundly. 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.

THE ANTHEM

"I Trust in the Lord" - Joseph M. Martin

The Choir

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the thirty-second chapter of the book of Genesis, beginning at the twenty-second verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage

on page 28 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

Listen now for the word of God...

The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

And he said to him, "What is your name?"

And he said, "Jacob."

Then he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Then Jacob asked him, "Tell me, I pray, your name."

But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.

So Jacob called the name of the place Peni'el, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

The sun rose upon him as he passed Penu'el, limping because of his thigh.

Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh on the sinew of the hip."

The liturgist will return to her seat either on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation.

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

Our sermon text today is taken from the eighteenth Chapter of the Luke's Gospel, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #911 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.'

For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“Are We Really Supposed to Nag God?”

The way this widow persists in her search for justice, it is almost as if she is nagging the judge into giving her what she wants. And Jesus, seems to be telling us to do the same with God-- if you don't get what you want, keep asking, go back again and again until you get what you want from God. I don't know about you, but I hate being nagged. I hate being nagged. I think all people do-- whether it's a wife asking her husband to do something or a child endlessly pestering mom for a toy or candy or a new cereal at the supermarket check stand. We all hate it.

It sort of reminds me of the story of the old farmer who had a wife who nagged him unmercifully. From the moment she awoke in the morning until she finally closed her eyes and mouth that night, she was always complaining about something. The only time he got any relief was when he

was out plowing with his old mule. He tried to plow a lot.

One day, when he was out plowing, his wife brought him lunch in the field. He drove the old mule into the shade, sat down on a stump, and began to eat his lunch. Immediately, his wife began haranguing him again. Do this. Do that. Take me here. Take me there. Why don't you do it this way. Nag, nag, nag; it just went on and on.

All of a sudden, the old mule lashed out with both hind feet; caught her smack in the back of the head. Killed her dead on the spot.

At the funeral several days later, the minister noticed something rather odd. When a woman mourner would approach the old farmer, he would listen for a minute, then nod his head in agreement; but when a man mourner approached him, he would listen for a minute, then shake his head in disagreement. This was so consistent, the minister decided to ask the old farmer about it.

So after the funeral, the minister spoke to the old farmer, and asked him why he nodded his head and agreed with the women, but always shook his head and disagreed with all the men.

The old farmer said: "Well, the women would come up and say something about how nice my wife looked, or how pretty her dress was, so I'd nod my head in agreement."

"And what about the men?" the minister asked.

"They wanted to know if the mule was for sale."

There is just something in me that says, "Don't nag God. He loves you. You love Him. He's always been good about taking care of your needs. Why would you want to irritate him by nagging him. Can't you just trust him enough to do the right thing?"

Why would God invite folks to nag him when those same folks hate being nagged themselves?

If I walk into a room and flip the light switch, I expect the light to come on. If it doesn't, I don't curse Thomas Edison and say electricity is a lie. I start looking for the problem. Maybe the light bulb is burned out, or a breaker has been thrown, or the power is out. If it seems your prayers aren't answered, don't quit praying—start looking for the reason. It may be the wrong request, or you may have unconfessed sin in your life, or the timing may not be right.

Today's Gospel lesson deals with this latter reason for a delay in answering prayer and his counsel that we be persistent in prayer..

The story begins with a widow who had an adversary who was trying to take advantage of her. It's likely someone was trying to cheat her out of money or land her husband left her. This was prevalent in Bible times, because women had few legal rights. In Jesus' parable this widow not only had the hurdle of being a female, she faced a terrible judge. He had no fear of God, nor did he care what other people thought about him. He was probably a Gentile judge who purchased his judgeship from the Roman authorities. Judges could make a good living from the bribes that were common.

Our widow had no money to bribe this wicked judge, so her only recourse was to come before him repeatedly crying, "Grant me justice against my adversary! Grant me justice against my adversary!" He dismissed her claim, but she kept coming back, constantly begging him for justice. He must have thought, "Oh, no, not HER again!" In verse 5, he admits she bothered him. The word translated "bothering" literally means to "poke in the eye." He was upset because she was constantly in his face. This constant begging and nagging finally paid off—he ruled in her favor. There are at least three important prayer principles Jesus taught in the parable. They are:

First, "Pray and do not lose heart." The Greek word translated "give up" in verse one is *enkenkao*. It literally means to "be filled with bad thoughts." Worry is filling your mind with bad thoughts of the worst that could happen. Worry is like water. It begins as a trickle of doubts, and if it isn't stopped, it soon becomes a river of fear and still later a torrent of terror. And before you know it, a flood of worry has carved a Grand Canyon of anxiety in your mind!

Worry is faith in the negative, trust in the unpleasant, assurance of disaster, and belief in defeat...Worry is a magnet that attracts negative circumstances...Worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles. Worry is like rocking in a rocking chair—it gives

you something to do, but you never go anywhere with it.

Secondly, we are to keep Praying...

I have always appreciated Emmitt Smith the former star running back of the Dallas Cowboys, who set the NFL rushing record. He isn't as flashy as Walter Payton or Barry Sanders, and he never possessed true break-away speed. But his strength lies in his ability to persist— he just kept on running.

He has run for 16,743 yards. That's 9.5 miles! It has taken him 13 years to run only 9.5 miles. What's the big deal about that? I could do a quarter mile a day for a month and a half and I'd be there. The big difference is, I wouldn't have had 11 huge defensive players trying to take my head off when I ran! Emmitt's average run over those 9.5 miles was 4.3 yards at a time. That means he has been tackled and knocked down 3,983 times. And do you know what he did after every tackle? He got back up and ran the ball again. Sure, he was injured a few times, but he always returned. I'm impressed that someone would be knocked down almost 4,000 times and still they get up and run again.

Even the best of people get knocked down in life, but what sets them apart from the quitters is that they get right back up. Life is full of adversarial people who will tackle you. You will face difficult circumstances that trip your feet out from under you. The poor widow in Jesus' parable had been knocked flat— but she refused to stay down. She got up and persistently made her request to the judge. You have an adversary who opposes you on every hand. The devil doesn't want you to pray and he'll do everything he can to make you stop praying!

The third point to remember is this-- sometimes God delays his answer because he is waiting to give us something better.

Ruth Bell Graham, the wife of Billy Graham once said, "If God granted every request I made of him, I would have married the wrong man seven times!"

Our praying should be like the story of Jacob wrestling the angel in Genesis 32. They wrestled all night and toward morning, Jacob had the angel in a full Nelson grip. The angel said, "Jacob, let me go." Now, I think it was like WWF, it was a fixed fight. The mighty angel could have tossed Jacob off in a heartbeat, but God was teaching Jacob (and us) a valuable lesson about the power of persistent, tenacious praying.

Imagine Jacob hanging onto that angel. He said, "I won't let you go until you bless me." So the angel said, "Okay, your name has been Jacob (which means "grabber"). From now on you will be named Israel (which means prince of God). What a great prayer lesson! Have you ever grabbed onto God in prayer and begged Him saying, "I'm not going to quit praying until you answer me?"

"Father," we say, "my finances are low. I need bread." And although He is a Father who will indeed provide our daily bread, He also knows bread will not satisfy us ultimately. So He sent His Son to be the Bread of Life for us.

"I need direction," we pray. "I am the Way," Jesus says.

"I need peace," we cry. "You'll find peace in Me," Jesus answers.

What we really need is rarely that for which we pray. What we need is the Lord Himself.

Prayer is not to get the goods. It is to enjoy the One who is good.

Prayer is not to get the gifts. It is to have fellowship with the Giver of all gifts.

Prayer is not to claim the promises of God. It is to embrace the Person of God.

Prayer is not the asking for and the receiving of Justice. It is asking for justice, and receiving Grace.

Goodness gives me what I don't deserve; grace spares me from what I do deserve!

GRACE is what God gives out of the goodness of his heart, not out of the perfection of yours.

The greatest thing about Grace is that it makes life not fair.

Don't ever tell God it isn't fair. Of course it isn't.

Aren't you glad? Aren't you grateful?

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray... We thank you, God, for the faith and perseverance of the saints before us, those who have testified to the experience of your power released in their lives through maintaining spiritual disciplines; for the community of the church where we can encourage one another to endurance, persistence, and faithful discipleship; that to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, you will give eternal life.

Grant us your help in understanding the benefits and blessings of living a disciplined Christian life, and for persistence in doing it; that we commit ourselves to coming to you earnestly and regularly, making ourselves available to what you would do in and through us; that you revive us in the wonder of our first love for Christ, and write your will for our ongoing relationship with Jesus on our hearts.

Grant your loving correction to those who expect grace to pour upon them without putting themselves in the way of receiving through faithful prayer. Encourage those who have given up on prayer as a channel for your blessing; for those who miss seeing that denied desires and closed doors are most often for their highest good, through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

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.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Sweet Hour of Prayer" printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Sweet Hour of Prayer"

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants & wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer the joys I feel, the bliss I share,
Of those whose anxious spirits burn with strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place where God my Savior shows His face,
And gladly take my station there, and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer, thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face, believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care, and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

*THE BLESSING

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Turn Your eyes Upon Jesus"

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis