

“Genie or Jesus?”

The Gospel Lesson for today is read from Luke 11:1-13

Hear the words from the disciple, Luke:

Read Luke 11:1-13

“The Word of God for the people of God.”

“Thanks be to God”

Intro:

Today I want to preach on what I think is as Christians the most significant and underappreciated gift given to us in all of creation. Prayer.

Prayer is the most mysterious and powerful gift given to us. When writing this sermon and reading the gospel lesson for today I found that there are things prayer is and prayer is not, and what prayer needs to be in our everyday lives. My hope is that from these several points I make this morning that you may glean from them and take with you to be good stewards of prayer.

1. Prayer is private and personal just as much as it is public and personal. As believers we are to live a life of prayer just as Jesus did. In the book of Luke, prayer occurs at every major point in Jesus’ life: at his baptism, at his choosing of the Twelve, Peter’s confession, his transfiguration, the teaching of the Lord’s Prayer (which we’ll be talking about today), Peter’s denial and before his capturing in the garden of Gethsemane at Mt. of Olives where he prayed so earnestly that his sweat turned to blood. So we too must find our place for prayer that is private and personal that connects us with our relationship with God as Jesus did.
2. Prayer needs to be persistent. As we’ve just read from Luke’s gospel Jesus teaches His disciples the Lord’s Prayer and following that prayer Jesus gives a parable of a friend in need. And so the friend goes to his neighbor in need and the neighbor says to the friend, “it’s

“Genie or Jesus?”

the middle of the night I’m not getting out of bed for you.” But then Jesus uses a word that is found only once in all of the New Testament “a-nah-ee-die-ah” which means without shame or better translated shamelessly persistent. The friend is shamelessly persistent in which causes the neighbor to get out of bed and give the friend what he needs. The point Jesus is trying to make is if even a person will respond to his neighbor with shameless persistence, then we as Christians should go to God with any need we face in the same bold manner. For God is more gracious and kind than any human than any neighbor. Prayer is being shamelessly persistent. Do NOT give up on communicating to God your needs.

3. Prayer needs to be purposeful. Jesus tells his disciples that everyone who asks receives in verse 9-10. But some of you may know as I know that not everyone who asks receives what they ask for. This is a dangerous place to be in as a Christian. To have the faith and in prayer as for something and not receive it hurts. It makes us feel as though God is not listening. And for many this is a reason for you to stop praying all together. For so many asking the question, “Where is God, and why can’t I hear Him?” I wonder if God is asking the same question, “Where are my people, and what am I hearing?” Friends what are we praying for? Is it thy will be done, or is it my will be done?
4. Prayer needs to be practical. Sometimes our wants get mixed in with our needs in prayer. Perhaps the reason some of those prayers are indeed heard by God but are going unanswered is because they don’t need to be. I’m not saying all wants and desires prayed to God are bad, but I am here to tell you God is not our proverbial Santa Claus, He is not a genie in a lamp granting three wishes, He is not the Wheel of Fortune being spun to land a car or a trip to the Bahamas. And sometimes friends we just have to face the music that the wants and desires we are sending up to Him are not the same as God’s wants and desires He’s laying down for

“Genie or Jesus?”

us. So yes, biblically speaking there may be some truth to Mick Jagger’s words, “you can’t always get what you want, but if you try praying sometimes, you just might find you get what you need.” As some of you are parents you might understand this, we always want what is best for our children. And knowing what is best for them IS what they need but not necessarily what they want. I’m a prime example of this with my own father and his decision to send me to The Citadel. He gave me three choices. “Get a job, go to The Citadel, or go to Paris Island for marine boot camp.” I am a better man for having gone there and I am that much more grateful to my father for giving me what I needed rather than letting me succumb to my wants. My father allowed me to succeed wherein he knew that I’d allow myself to fail. This is what Jesus meant by saying if you parents know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will he give you the power of the Holy Spirit when you pray.

5. Prayer is powerful. In Mark 11 and Matthew 21 when Jesus curses the fruitless fig tree it withers away. When the disciples marvel at what Jesus had done to the fig tree so quickly Jesus says to them, “if you have faith do not doubt you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea’ it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer you will receive, if you have faith.” What Jesus is saying is that if you have faith in your prayers you can do the impossible. And what is so crazy to believe that we as Christians today can’t pray faithfully and see the impossible done like the apostles did in the book of Acts? I believe healing the blind and sick can in fact happen when there is no doubt. If you need proof that there is power in prayer just look at the rings on my ring fingers. By God’s grace and through fervent prayers on the one hand I graduated from The Citadel, and on the other I got married to a wonderful awesome woman.

“Genie or Jesus?”

6. Prayer is a promise of the Holy Spirit. To be honest I’m bad at prayer. I pray only when it’s needed or when something big happens. I don’t necessarily pray daily. But when I was writing this sermon I found that every time we pray it is a daily sustaining covenant that we get to remember. Paul says in the epistle lesson that as believers we share in Christ’s power over every rule and authority. Once we were trapped dead in our sins, but through Christ’s baptism, death, and resurrection that we all share in as believers we are made new and filled with the Holy Spirit that guides us and intercedes for us when we do not know what to pray. This is the awesome power and promise hidden in the mystery of prayer. The promise in prayer is this: That no matter what, God knows our needs and fulfills them even when we don’t know what to say, even when we don’t say anything because the Holy Spirit is always with us!
7. Finally, prayer needs to be priority. Is prayer a part of our everyday lives other than when we sit down to eat? Is it used so often that it’s easily accessible at the forefront of our minds? If it’s not, we need to reprioritize our way of thinking and place prayer first in all we think and do.

Let us pray:

Almighty God,
Forgive me. So often I act as if prayer isn’t really all that important. Teach me in my heart of hearts the power of prayer, the intimacy of prayer, that I might be used by you to influence others for Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen