

Grace, Mercy, & peace from God our Father & our Lord, Jesus Christ.

This morning Jesus' **disciples make a request of Him**. Without looking down at your bulletin, **can you tell me what their request is?** Raise your hand if you think you know. I'll poll the room to see what you think they ask of Jesus.

Take answers:

Raise your hand if you think their request is:

"Lord, teach us how to pray, as John taught his disciples."

Okay, now Raise your hand if you think their request is:

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

Is there a difference between the two requests?

What's the difference?

*It's important to understand what they're asking Jesus **if we want to understand Jesus' answer.***

They ***don't ask***, "Teach us how to pray." What I mean is, they know how to pray. They are ***not looking for a new formula, or a new method of prayer, and I doubt they're asking for a prayer to repeat.***

Jesus' friends are *asking as people who don't understand how Jesus' prayer can be so healing, so powerful, so clearly life-giving. **They do not know how to pray like this, but they want this – sound familiar?***

The Lord's Prayer become the example of prayer Christians have used for thousands of years, ***but the words of the Lord's prayer are not the complete answer in themselves.*** It occurs to me *that as willingly as*

we accept the formulaic answer – the words of the Lord’s Prayer themselves, *what follows Jesus’ example of “the things to pray for”* – the parable of the man asking for bread at midnight – *answers their intent, which is* “How can we pray so that our prayers have the power your prayers have?”

Jesus addresses that question itself in the parable. *Prayer’s power and ability to address a situation has its roots in two things: (1) expectation based on the relationship between the one requesting and the one being asked; AND (2) tenacity and persistence in the asking – making a nuisance of ourselves.* The Lord’s exemplifies and demonstrates that prayer is simple, straight forward, expectant, hopeful, *shameless* – *as though the one hearing has already promised to give us what we ask for.*

The NRSV translates this word *anaideia* as “persistence”, but that *doesn’t really get at the meaning.* Jesus says,

“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”.

Okay, so it’s three o’clock in the morning in a small village where the houses are close together and have no glass in the windows, and someone starts banging on a door and yelling, “Give me some bread for my visitors” *Everyone in the village knows both people, and everyone in the village wants the same thing – for the man to shut up so they can go back to sleep.*

The fact that this drama is being played out in front of everyone changes the dynamics. If the guy in bed ignores his friend, *what will everyone think?*

I'd say they think, "*What a selfish heel. Not only does he not care about his friends, he also doesn't care about us his neighbors because he's too lazy to answer the door and shut this moron up.*" *The one asking for bread would doubtless get hostile bleary eyed stares the next morning, but the guy in bed who didn't shut him up is also going to get daggers.* He could have quickly and easily shut the guy up, which he should have anyway because they're friends.

Luther was known to pray in just this way, *unabashedly holding God to Jesus' promises that God will hear our prayers*, and saying *God will look like a liar if God does not respond.* Take the time Luther prays when his good friend *Philip Melancthon is on his death bed.* Luther told his friend, **Julius Koestlin** the success of his prayer came by "*throwing the sack before the door and giving His [God's] ears a good drubbing with all the promises from His own word.*"

Jesus seems to be saying, **keep after God, wear God down, make a nuisance of yourself**, so that all else failing *God will grant your prayer just to shut you up.*

To clear up any possible misunderstanding, I must add *God is under no obligation to answer our prayers.* God is God after all. *We shouldn't take from the parable the familiarity of friend asking friend because God is the creator of the universe.* And we cannot approach God with any sense of entitlement as though God owes us something. However, *we can remind God that the integrity of God's promises are at stake as Luther did.*

Finally, with regard to persistence and tenacity it must be said, *“If we are not sufficiently invested in the proposition and practice of praying to God, what’s to suggest that God should in any way listen to us when we do pray.”*

We are not on equal footing in this relationship, and **suggesting that God – the creator of the universe – should do our bidding, be our man Friday, our butler, our fixer is patently absurd.**

Let’s face it, ***we say thousands of words a day that have little or no purpose or effect on things.*** We **spout off political opinions** *ad nauseum*, and we know they change nothing. We **share our opinions** about everything, just to hear ourselves talk. We **complain endlessly** about the state of the world as though doing so will change something. So ***why not focus more of our thoughts, energy and words towards the LORD, where they might actually make a difference.***

“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. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? 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!”

AMEN !!!