

Sermon by Lex Breckinridge July 28, 2019

Pentecost 7

Luke 11:1-13

Who taught you to pray? Do you remember? Was it your mother or your father? A grandparent? A priest, or a minister? Who taught you to pray? What else do you remember about learning to pray? Was it at bedtime? Maybe around the dinner table? Was it on Sunday morning?

I certainly remember my mother's well worn prayer book and the marked up copies of the little paperback called *Forward Day by Day*. That sat on her bedside table. And I remember my dad, all 6'3" and 230 pounds of him, sitting on the side of my bed saying the Lord's Prayer with me. On other nights, my mother would invite me to say with her, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take". I remember gathering around the dinner table, hungry as I could be, having to "say the blessing," that's what we called it in my family, before I could dig in.

For me, what these memories all have in common is not so much the words of the prayers themselves – after all, what sense can a 4 year old make out of "Our Father, who art in Heaven?" The thread that runs through each of these memories is the **experience** of prayer. And it was experience grounded in a relationship. The experience of father love. The experience of mother love. The experience of family love. Each of these experiences in themselves, these prayer experiences became for me experiences of relationship with God – God as strong and secure protector, God as mothering, God as stable and loving community, family. Each of these experiences of God" in the most primal way, was made known to me in prayer.

Now that's just my experience. You each have your own. But for each of us, prayer, real prayer, is the way we put into words our experience of God. And that's what we hear the disciple asking Jesus this morning. "Lord, give us the words to describe the experience of God" Lord, teach us to pray" And so he does, first beginning with the description of God. Father. Abba. In Aramaic, it means "Daddy." It's an intimate name; to call God, "Father," is to call God strong, loving, wise – the attributes we experience from a father, whether an ideal one or one as close to us as our own hearts. And then, in the same sentence, the transcendence of God is recognized. **Holy** is your name, Father. **Your** kingdom come. "We acknowledge that God is God and we are not. And that's a **huge** piece of good news.

We ask that God's kingdom might come. Now that's in a pretty sharp contrast to what our secret prayer really is. You know, if we're honest with ourselves, our secret prayer really is My kingdom come, my will be done." That's our secret wish. But, really, isn't it a great relief to know that it is God's kingdom that is coming? That it is God's reign that is on its way and not ours? It's a great relief to know that you are not in charge either!

Next comes instruction on how to talk with God about some basic wants. First, is our want for food that we might also express as a want for security. "Give us each day our daily bread. We ask for enough for today. We ask for enough in the present moment. It's really another way of acknowledging our trust that God will provide for our needs in each and every moment. It would also have been a reminder to the disciples about a familiar event to them in the story of the people of Israel in the wilderness. When they were hungry and on the verge of starvation, God provided manna for them each day. The manna was food and sweet and nourishing. And it was enough. But then some began to gather up the manna, to store it, and hoard it. When they did that, they found the manna got sour. Trusting in their own devices didn't work. Instead, they learned to trust in God to provide for their needs each day, day by day. It's another way that God reminds us not to be anxious about the future. Stay grounded in the present. It's in the present that God is present to us. It's in the present that God meets our need.

The next basic want that God meets is our want for forgiveness, for healing, and reconciliation. And do you see the pattern here? As we are asking God to forgive and heal us, in all our own flaws and faults and imperfections, at the same time, we are offering the same forgiveness and healing to those who have hurt us. We can't be truly healed ourselves without offering God's healing grace to others; without becoming agents of God's healing grace ourselves. What a relief! We all know the perverse pleasure in hanging onto a hurt or a slight. It's only in letting go of all that so that we can ever be truly and completely healed.

The final basic want we express in the prayer is the want for faith. We are asking to be delivered from those moments where our faith is tested and challenged and maybe shaken.

So the prayer is to stay present, trusting that God will provide enough for each day; to be healed of our failures and to offer healing grace to others in their own failures; to be steady and grounded in faith. And these are all experiences of being in relationship with God, the experience of living in trust, of

living in grace, living in steadiness and balance. Who among us doesn't want all of this? And, Jesus reminds his friends, and reminds us, it's **here**, right **here**. Our work is to ask, to seek, to knock with persistence – you know the better translation of “persistence” is really shamelessness – Ask, seek, knock shamelessly – you know it's really our own resistance that gets in the way of our relationship with God – it's our own resistance to intimacy with God that needs to be battered down by our shameless knocking at the door. It's never that God is absent to us. It's that we're absent to God. Absent in the variety of ways that God is made known to us.

We are all in want. Acknowledging our want for trust, our want for healing, our want for stability. Acknowledging, that is to say, our want for God, is the first step to realizing these as the living experience of God. We're invited to do it every day. It's why we come together here this morning so, as sisters and brothers in Christ, we can acknowledge our need. And then turn our need over to God.

What are your wants in this very moment? In our quiet here, see if you can be really specific about at least one want. Chances are that underneath that specific want lays the want for trust, the want for healing grace, the want for stability. Then, as we say the Lord's Prayer in a few minutes, take that specific want and lift it up to God, God your Abba, God your mother, God your family. Allow God to take that want from you. Know that underneath all your wanting, is really your wanting for your heart's true home.

Amen