

July 28 2013

Scripture Lessons ~ *Colossians 2:6-7, 16-19*

*Luke 11:1-13*

**Sermon** *Lord's Prayer: Reader's Digest Condensed Version*

Now I would like for all of us to imagine for just a moment that we are still in bed. Now this is going to be more difficult for you than others, because some of you are half way there already. You just put out your dog or cat, depending on what you do with your dog or cat, I hope you brushed your teeth, I hope you got your jammies on, bolted the doors, you have turned out all the lights, everything is secure for another night, you sink into bed warm and comfortable and content, but just as you get snuggled in and almost dozed off, you think you hear a light tapping, but you ignore it. You turn over. Soon though the tapping gets louder and louder and you know you hear that tapping. So reluctantly you crawl out of bed to find out what in the world the trouble is. You call thru the front door, who is it? What do you want? And the voice that answers is your next door neighbor and he has a sob story to tell. His cousin from Albuquerque has just arrived and there isn't a thing in the house to feed him. Could you spare a loaf of bread for sandwiches, and some lunch meat and some pickles and some chips and mayo, and mustard and while you are at it, some iced tea as well. It would be a difficult decision for many of us to make, all warm and cozy in bed, everything locked up, and your crazy neighbor shows up. Why didn't he go to the store earlier? Why doesn't he keep more food on hand? Why doesn't he go away and leave me alone? I am comfortable here, I am sure that the same thoughts were going thru the mind of the man in Jesus' parable in Luke's gospel as well. Jesus says the man's very first reaction was to tell his friend to get lost. But then Jesus says the initial anger of the man wore off, and he got out of bed to get his friend something to take home for the guest to eat.

What in the world does this connection have in learning how to pray with persistence? I would call with stubbornness in fact, which was the original question that Jesus was answering with his disciples in this parable that he told. I think the point that Jesus was trying to make here is this, even if this grouchy tired man will get up out of a sound sleep and answer the door for his crazy friend then how much more willing is God to answer us, God's children, God's beloved when we come before God to pray. This parable of the lost friend who asked for help, tells us that God does listen to our prayers, and that God does answer our prayers. And then coupled with the parable is a section of scripture which not only reinforces the notion that God answers prayers, but it also tells us how God answers our prayer. Luke's version of

**the Lord's Prayer, which I have called the Readers Digest Condensed version of the Lord's prayer is shorter than the familiar version that we use in worship from Matthews gospel that the children just helped us with a few minutes ago. But it does never the less remind us of God's deep love and deep caring for each one of us, during the course of life.**

**When Jesus' disciple's asked him how to pray, this was the first thing that came out of Jesus mouth. But what does it tell us about how God answers our prayers? First like the parable it tells us that God always answers prayers. Secondly and most importantly it tells us that God answers our prayers in ways that are far more appropriate to our situation than we could ever, ever imagine.**

**The opening word in Luke's version of the prayer, Father, assures us that we may come before God with a sense of confidence knowing that God, like a loving mother or father will listen to whatever we say, answer whenever we ask, and give us whatever is best for us. As Jesus says just a bit later in the passage, What in the world father among you, if his son asked for a fish and instead of a fish would give him a serpent, or if he asks for an egg, would give him a scorpion? Hallowed be thy name which follows the address tells us that there is only one in all the universe is there is only one in the entire universe that can answer our prayers in the way that is best for all of us Other avenues are not really enough to satisfy.**

**Don't get mixed up with this because I have had many a confirmation class that thought, hallowed be thy name, was just one word. But there are several there. Hallowed be thy name is not just one word, it is a lot. And once you have acknowledged God's willingness and God's ability to answer prayer we are free to come forward with our request. Thy Kingdom come is another way to say whatever you think is best God, let that come about. You and I both know that being intelligent beings we always think that we always know what the best course of action for our lives, but here Jesus says that another pattern is best. Try this on for size. Let God decide what is best for your life. And so 'give us each day our daily bread' which follows, is about the wealth which we surround ourselves in that pursuit. God wants us to be healthy and happy and wants to meet our needs, but God never promised that every desire that we have will be fulfilled. God is not a cosmic Santa Claus. Of course whenever we do come before God, we must always remember that the fact that we are loved by God, and forgiven by God for our past, but forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone that is indebted to us takes that whole concept a step further. God is always willing to forgive, but in order for us to accept God's forgiveness and love, we have to put aside our bitter feelings, we have to be able to put aside our un-forgiveness as well. As I came**

together with the boys and girls today I reminded them that some Christians pray with their hands open and that is the most wonderful symbol because we can't accept God's unconditional love for us if we are holding tight to the bitterness, tight to the hatred in our lives and that just doesn't work if we hold on and don't let go.

And finally, and lead us not into temptation, is that statement about the realism of prayer. To say this we admit that if we try to live a Christian life, there will be times of trial and times of testing, and hard times ahead. The Lord's Prayer however also teaches us that our God is not a God that enjoys seeing people suffer, but our God is a God that seeks to protect, our God is a God that seeks to preserve. Of course we can't expect that we will never have hard times in your life, but that is completely unrealistic too, but I will guarantee you that we can expect these things from God; that God will not be the one that will cause us to stumble thru those times, and the fact that God will be present and guide us when we go thru the tough times that we encounter in life. You know it is so easy when we go thru a difficult time in our lives, to turn our back on God, and say 'why bother to pray?' God isn't listening to what I have to say anyway. But the Lord's Prayer I think can be an inspiring guide for us as we find God's will in our lives in times of trouble and giving us the confidence we need to pray with a sense of boldness. And then the parable, the parable of the strange friend that asks for help, reminds us that if a sleeping homeowner can get out of bed to help his rude neighbor, then certainly, certainly that God, in God's never ending love for us will hear our prayers and answer our prayers. These are things that you can take home with you to live with the course of this week.

And together we say, Amen.