

Luke 11:5-13 Rogation Sunday. 17th May 2020. By Sharon Quinn

God hears our prayers

Today's reading from Luke is in answer to a question that was asked by a disciple.

Having witnessed Jesus so regularly going to pray on his own, a disciple asks him
"Lord, show *us* how to pray".

The 1st Century disciples were already steeped in traditional prayer, they knew how to pray - openly, lawfully, religiously, publicly.

In contrast Jesus continued to pray quietly, in solitude. This had obviously grabbed the attention of others.

A good reminder of the hope he shows us today. Although our churches have been closed, for so long, all our prayers, wherever they come from, are clearly, very important.

Human knocking

Jesus continues his teaching about prayer by telling a humorous parable.

He asks us to imagine that we were visited by a friend on their travels. They would expect us to be able to offer them at least some bread, which was the basic food. But we have nothing to give them.

The disciples would have related well to just how unthinkable that was in that culture. Not showing hospitality to a guest, whatever the time, was considered a shameful thing. It was an obligation and an honour to be able to fulfil this kind of hospitality.

Persistent Knocking

To solve this dilemma, we go and knock on another friend's door at midnight, to ask to borrow some bread.

This friend, not surprisingly, does not spring up and instantly answer the door to you to give it. They're bound to be a bit peeved with you for risking waking their whole household, especially when it has taken them ages to get settled.

The house that the disciples imagined would probably consist of 1 room, and then a higher level where all the family would sleep, along with all

their belongings. The lower level would be where the family livestock and domestic animals would be.

It was such an inconvenience to get up out of bed, stumble over a crowded floor of family, and clothing, then continue to trip over animals to get to the firmly latched door.

But you decide to keep on knocking anyway, until your friend is forced to have to get up, just to shut you up!

Contrasts

Jesus is trying to show contrast between who we are as humans, and who God is. More to the point he is trying to get us think about who *we* think God is. Because the answer to this could affect the way we pray.

The Greek word used to describe us if we are willing to knock on a friend's door in this way is to do it 'persistently' or 'shamelessly'.

Earthly relationships

We easily learn, even from a young age, that any relationship requires a growth, in trust, in belief, in love. The more time we commit to a relationship with others, the more we discover how emotionally complex, and challenging others can be.

We don't like to admit however, how complex our own emotions are, especially how others might see us. Especially when they disagree with us. It's not surprising then, that we often clash.

We find it easier to judge others for their behaviour towards *us*, conveniently forgetting any excuses *they* might have to defend themselves. What we tend to be not so good at, is judging *our* own behaviour, we can easily find many excuses for that!

We react emotionally first, ask questions later! We tend to put off solutions til even later still. Yet we do persevere out of love and hope for the future together.

What do you think of God right now? Don't overthink it!

The immediate answer that springs to our minds, reveals a lot about what attitude we will be bringing with us when we pray.

I'm sure most would agree that when it comes to human relationships, we admit "it's complicated". Yet when we pray to God, we are quite happy to try and simplify who he is. Why?

God is not 'in' competition

Well an obvious answer to that is that we live in a world where absolute scientific proof and technological advances, are clearly accepted as being the only logical belief, the only faith you should need in life.

So that can easily be our only expectation, as we pray. When Christians pray, we are not "throwing paper darts at an iron wall" or rejecting natural science.

Especially now more than ever during these times of crisis, we can all agree that they are indeed vital for our earthly physical survival.

It is not surprising then that many Christians find it difficult to, shamelessly, or persistently express their faith to others.

Jesus isn't asking us to shout it from the rooftops here, he is asking everyone to bring all that we are, right now, to God, in prayer, no matter what.

We dwell on the past and worry about the future. God longs to hear from us in *our* present. Whatever we think of him. For us to ask.

But what about our spiritual survival and wellbeing?

It is no surprise that many more people have been asking Christians to pray for them lately. I'm not surprised at all that people who don't have a faith are also praying, many for the first time.

Gift of the Holy Spirit

We don't need a spiritual faith in God to understand the expression "it will open up many doors for me" when thinking about our careers or academic success.

In verses 9 to 10 Jesus teaches us to:
ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.

Jesus is longing for us to ask for a spiritual gift. A gift that only a heavenly Father can give us, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is longing for us to spiritually seek. He is longing for us to keep knocking on a spiritual door, and to continue to do so, again and again.

Our human impatience makes us demand to have all the answers at once, to demand to jump straight to that final door that we are to knock on, to

find proof of what is behind it before committing; expecting to skip the seeking parts in between altogether. Receiving what we want instantly.

We don't expect to do that in our human relationships, so why do we expect it from God?

To grow our faith from one where we can say "God exists" into a faith where we can say "I believe and trust in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" requires a response from us, a persistence. A relationship.

A living faith is accepting not only knocking on the door expecting it to be opened, but "throwing open the doors of our lives and inviting God in."

Jesus came to teach us the way, one prayer at a time, one question at a time, one experience at a time, one door at a time.

How do we do this?

As you pray:

Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you;

Seek to find the face of Jesus;

Knock on the door where God resides

If you return, and pray in this way:

You will receive guidance towards peace, love and hope;

You will find the face of Jesus;

He will not only tell you 'the way' to the door,

he will take you by the hand and lead you there;

And never leave you to face what lies within, alone.

God will be there with His door forever open for you.

If you persist in praying this way:

You can trust in him as 'the' Heavenly Father of goodness, love, grace, and peace. To know him, not only as a light in the darkness on earth, but the one who has set aside a place for you forever, in eternal peace.

No matter how distant we may feel we are from all our loved ones, even the ones who are no longer here with us, we can be hopeful and comforted, in faith, that whatever storms we are to face, we are all safely anchored to God.

Amen