

25JUL10 Text: Luke 11:5-10 ***"And [Jesus] said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise up and give him whatever he needs.***

***"And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks it will be opened."***

A businessman was late for an important meeting and he couldn't find a parking space. As he frantically circled around the block, the man became so desperate that he decided to pray. Looking upward toward heaven, he said, *"Lord, take pity on me. If you find me a parking space, I'll go to church every Sunday for the rest of my life, and not only that, I'll give up my drinking."* Miraculously, at just that moment, a car pulled out of a parking space right in front of him. The guy looked up to heaven again and said, *"Never mind, Lord, I found one."*

A woman in Colorado by the name of Denise Boone tells the story about her eight-year-old son Jonathan who played on a hockey team. One day his coach announced a contest. The winner would receive two tickets for a Colorado Avalanche National Hockey League game. Her son competed hard, but the tickets went to another boy. On the drive home there were lots of tears of disappointment. Denise said to her son, *"If the desire of your heart is to go to an Avalanche game, you should pray about it."* They discussed that God was not a Santa Claus, who gave us everything we wanted, but that we should tell Him our desires and leave them in His hands. At bedtime that night Jonathan made his requests known to God. *"God, this is Jonathan,"* he prayed, *"I'd like to go to an Avalanche game. I know you are busy with a lot of other things, but I'd really like that."* Denise's husband didn't know about their son's prayer. The next day Jonathan's father came home from work and announced that a friend had given him tickets to watch the Avalanche practice. It wasn't a real game, but Jonathan was excited nonetheless. The practice was held at the Pepsi Center in downtown Denver. Their seats were only eight rows up from the glass surrounding the ice, right above the players' bench. Seeing that some other boys were standing by the glass, Jonathan went down and joined them. Thrilled to be so close, he watched his favorite player, the legendary goalie Patrick Roy, at work. Suddenly, Patrick Roy skated over to the bench. He had broken the blade on his hockey stick. As the trainer handed him a new stick, Roy looked at Jonathan and pointed. The trainer took the broken stick and handed it over the glass to Jonathan. Jonathan held the stick above

his head as if he had won the Stanley Cup. Patrick Roy's broken hockey stick now hangs on the wall in Jonathan's bedroom, but it is more than just a precious souvenir. It reminds Jonathan of God's goodness. **God always has our best in mind, and he is able to answer our prayers with more than we could ask or imagine.**

What are our prayers like? Are we more like the man in the first story...when God provides for our needs, do we end up taking the credit ourselves? Or are we more like the little boy in the second story? Do we trust that God hears our prayers will answer our prayers as He best sees fit? Again and again in the Bible God **invites** us to pray because He graciously stands ready and willing to hear and answer our every prayer. Yes, God **invites** us to speak with Him in prayer and has filled His Word with many **promises** pertaining to prayer. One of the most beautiful is in our Gospel lesson today, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks it will be opened."* What comforting words! This morning then, on the basis of Jesus' parable about prayer, let us spend a few minutes thinking about **OUR own PRAYER LIFE, meant to be a blessing to our lives and to our faith.**

The first aspect of OUR PRAYER LIFE that we see in our text from the parable Jesus told about prayer is that we can be **bold** and **persistent** in our prayers. We can boldly approach God because of what Jesus has done for each of us. He has removed the barrier of sin that stood between us and God and has revealed God to us as an all-loving Father! That's also the message contained in our epistle lesson this morning, *"And you who were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with [Christ.] having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."* (Col. 2:13,14) **GOD MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST! All of our sins have been nailed to Calvary's cross and the debt of sin that stood accusing us has been paid in full! God has done this for each of us and it is this God who invites us to pray!** Luther writes: *"Left to ourselves here in the world, we become bogged down in the mundane and the routine and are paralyzed by our own fears. Prayer is the **invitation** to leave fear and routine behind and to enter again and again into our true identity as the children of God and `to ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father."* **Prayer is nothing more than crawling again into the lap of our heavenly Father to speak with Him about the very things that are uppermost in our hearts and minds.** Hal Senkbeil, Lutheran pastor, writes these wonderful words: *"No apprehensions*

*here, no holding back. Throwing caution to the wind, we rush where angels fear to tread: to the very throne of God, there to offer the prayers and praises of our broken hearts in the confidence of His healing love. Our focus is not on our fears, but on our gracious God. We need not tremble before Him, for there is peace in Christ.”* (Dying to Live, Senkbeil CPH, p. 140.) We dare to be **bold** and **persistent** in our prayers because of what God Himself has done for each of us in and through Jesus Christ our Savior.

In our parable today, such **boldness** and **persistence** is shown by the **impudence** of the friend who approaches his friend at midnight needing three loaves of bread. We can picture him knocking at the locked door, yelling for his friend to wake up and help him. We too can be bold, persistent and confident in OUR PRAYER LIFE, knowing that God will hear and (at the very right time) answer our prayers. In our Old Testament lesson today we have a great example of **bold** and **persistent** prayer as Abraham interceded on behalf of the righteous people living in Sodom and Gomorrah. The LORD appeared to Abraham with two of His angels before He was about to destroy these two wicked cities. With impudent boldness, Abraham approaches the Lord: “*Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?*” And the Lord responds that He will spare Sodom if fifty righteous people live there. Abraham now begins his **persistent** whittling down of that number...*For the sake of forty-five will you spare the city?...For the sake of forty?* Abraham had doubts that there were even forty righteous people. *For the sake of thirty will you destroy the cities? For the sake of twenty?* Finally Abraham approaches the Lord and asks one more time, “*What if only ten can be found there?*” God answered, “*For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.*” (Gen 18:23-32) OUR PRAYER LIFE, like Abraham’s and like the man in Jesus’ parable today, can be impudently **bold** and **persistent**.

We must also recognize that in OUR PRAYER LIFE such **persistence** doesn’t mean we are to repeat our prayers **mindlessly**. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Himself says, “*And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*” (Matt. 6:7) We can also learn more about OUR PRAYER LIFE when we look at Jesus’ parable in today’s Gospel lesson and **contrast** the man in the house with our gracious God. God is **not** like the man’s friend who was asleep at midnight. God does not sleep as we read in Psalm 121: “*He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*” (3,4) In OUR PRAYER LIFE as Christians we do not have to yell at God repeatedly in order to be heard, badgering God because He is

**somehow reluctant to respond to us.** Indeed, we read in the prophet Isaiah, *“Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”* (Is. 65:24) **God’s door is always open to us!** He is always able, willing and eager to hear and answer our prayers. It very truly could be said that in contrast to the midnight householder, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the One who stands at our door and knocks and asks, “May I help you? May I enter and dine with you?” The stained glass window to the right of the altar so beautifully portrays for us each time we gather for worship the familiar passage from the third chapter of Revelation: *“Behold! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”* (Rev. 3:20) Yes, in OUR PRAYER LIFE, God is so much **better** than some reluctant neighbor who will give a friend what he needs only to keep him quiet so that he can go back to sleep. **God’s heart is forever open to us in Jesus Christ and He gives us exactly what we need according to His will, His good and gracious purpose for our lives as His beloved children!**

OUR PRAYER LIFE is also meant to be a blessing to us and to our faith. **Prayer is simply speaking to God.** While Christians do not have prescribed times from the Word of God when they should pray or how often they should pray, like the Muslim who must pray five times a day bowing to the ground toward Mecca, **our own need and God’s precious promises to us ought to encourage us to pray regularly and often, not only in times of trouble.** The psalmist writes, *“Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous laws.”* (119:164) In the New Testament, we read that Peter and John went up to the Temple at the time of prayer--*“at three in the afternoon.”* (Acts. 3:1) What are **your** times of daily prayer? Do you speak to God in prayer **each day**, or **only** when things are **going poorly?**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, find times during the day that are good for you so that you can regularly commune with God in prayer.

Go to a **place set apart** from the hustle of your busy life.

Go with a **purpose in your mind** and heart to be about the important work of prayer.

Know that God stands **ready and willing to hear and answer** your prayers according to His will that always has only your best in mind.

**Pray in the name of Jesus**, with faith in Him as your Redeemer.

Yes, *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and [the door] will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, [the door] will be opened.”* Amen.

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