

Sermon – 07/28/19

Text – Luke 11:1-13

Theme – “Godly Impudence”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus tells an interesting story to illustrate prayer for us. He tells of a man who comes to his friend at midnight, asking for bread to feed a guest. Midnight, when everyone is asleep. Midnight, when the doors are shut and locked. Midnight, when all good folks are home and safely tucked into their beds. And yet THAT is when this man shows up at his friend’s house, knocking and calling and asking. And yet, Jesus says, the homeowner will eventually get up and get him the bread – not because he is his friend, but rather because of his “impudence”. Because of the man’s chutzpah, his nerve, his audacity. If only to shut him up, the homeowner satisfies the cries and demands of the man.

And *that* is to illustrate and describe our prayers to God? Not very flattering to us, is it? And yet, it is true. True, first of all, because Jesus said it. But also true because He is demonstrating God’s grace and mercy in hearing (and answering) our prayers. God does not owe us anything, including granting our prayers. But because He is good, He invites us to be “impudent” (to use St. Luke’s word). A *godly* impudence, though, which knows and trusts God’s infinite goodness.

Our Old Testament lesson serves to illustrate this “godly impudence”. It is the familiar story of Abraham dickering and bargaining with God over the fate of Sodom. Abraham knew the wickedness of its inhabitants. He knew that they certainly merited and deserved God’s wrath and judgment. But Abraham also knew God’s goodness and grace and mercy. He knew that God did not *want* to punish and destroy Sodom; that, even though they were sinners, the Lord loved them and wanted to save them. And so Abraham intercedes for the city and its citizens. The boldness and brashness of Abraham in this is quite revealing. And instructive.

Starting off with asking God if He would destroy the whole city if 50 righteous people could be found there, Abraham goes back and forth with God until he gets all the way down to ten. Ten righteous people and the city will be saved. Now, Abraham must have had some hope for that number since his nephew Lot (and Lot’s family and household) lived there. Surely there were ten believers amongst all of *them!* But, sadly, there were not. And we all know what happened to Sodom.

But that is not the point here. No, what matters for us here is how Abraham’s attitude and actions demonstrate what Jesus was talking about regarding prayer. Abraham was bold to come to God. He was brazen enough to argue and bargain with God. He was brash enough to continue on, even in the face of God’s apparent judgment. He was impudent enough to keep at it until God’s mercy was revealed. So, with that idea of “godly impudence” in mind, let us look at the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples (including us) – the Lord’s Prayer. (pause)

The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our Father” (or simply “Father” in St. Luke’s version). Father. That is infinitely important for all that follows. Jesus is teaching us to see, to call, and to trust in God as our Father. That relationship is what enables us to come to Him. It is what makes it possible for us to bring Him our prayers and petitions and requests. It is what allows us to ask of Him, and to believe that He will listen and give us what is best.

But it is important to remember that we do not have that right to call God “Father” **apart** from Christ. Sure, God made us to be His children. But Adam and Eve (and we) have thrown that birthright away by our sin. We have run away from home. We have rejected our heritage,

our inheritance, our Father. We no longer deserve to be called His sons and daughters (much as the Prodigal Son said to his father in the parable). And yet, Jesus still instructs us to call God our Father!

And that is so because Jesus has done everything to reconcile God and man -- God and YOU. Jesus has lived the perfect life of obedience to the Father's will, keeping the commandments and giving us the credit. He has paid the full price for all sin at the cross, when He suffered the hell we merit. He has proven that reconciliation by rising on Easter, showing the Father's forgiveness of all sin. And He sends the Holy Spirit to us, to give us faith in that saving work – and to keep us in that faith, despite the weakness of our flesh and all the attacks of the devil.

Because of Jesus, YOU can rightly and truly call God “Father” once again. And because of that restored relationship as His children, you can ask God *anything*. For what Father does not want to hear from His children? What Father would refuse to give His children what they need? What Father denies and rejects His children's pleas for help? As Jesus said, what Father would give His son a snake instead of a fish? Or a scorpion instead of an egg?

And so we rejoice to come to Him with our prayers – knowing that to do so is to truly hallow and honor His name. That is, it shows Him to be the holy and gracious God. The One who gives only good. The One who loves with an infinite love. The One who delights in His children. Nothing makes Him happier than when we acknowledge Him to be our Father in Christ, the Source of our being and life, the Giver of all good gifts.

And that especially includes eternal life. We are God's children and members of His Kingdom. But we also rule with Him in that Kingdom! As His children, all things are given to us. Just like in Eden, when God placed all things under Adam and Eve. What a joy it is for us to know this! And how we long for others to know it too. For them to become part of that Kingdom too – children of God, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Do any of us deserve that? Of course not. But we have that godly impudence to ask for it. And so we fervently pray: “Thy Kingdom come”!

After confessing God to be our Father and the One who gives US the Kingdom, we pray three petitions that really follow the three articles of the Creed. That is, we pray: “Give us this day our daily bread” (which brings to mind the First Article: God as the Maker of heaven and earth). When we pray for forgiveness, we remember that such forgiveness is only through the Person and work of Christ – as we confess in the Second Article. And then finally we pray “lead us not into temptation” which is nothing more than the Third Article and the Spirit's keeping us in the saving faith.

But, again, we pray for these things with godly impudence. That is, we do not deserve any of them. But we are bold to ask because we know God is our Father and so He will give us what we need.

And we NEED daily bread, don't we? Without it we would perish. But we also confess that it all comes from God, as a gift. Every mouthful of food, every swallow of water, every breath of air, every stitch of clothing, every last little thing that makes life here possible (and enjoyable!) comes from Him. If He did not give it, we would die. No matter how hard we worked.

So it is that we pray to our Father in heaven. And, at the same time, we KNOW He will hear and answer us. He will give us what we need. What is best. Not that we always get just we seek and want – for sometimes our Father must tell us “no”. Sometimes we ask for the wrong thing, at the wrong time, for the wrong reason. But even when He tells us “no” that changes nothing – He is still our Father and we will still continue to come to Him, asking. Trusting. Boldly and with confidence, as dear children come to their dear Father. Praying for our physical and earthly needs. And those of others -- like Abraham with those lost souls of Sodom. We come and we

come and we come. We pray and we pray and we pray. We trust and we trust and we trust. For He IS our Father.

But if we pray for our physical, bodily needs (and we do!), we also pray for our spiritual needs. For forgiveness and salvation. For peace and reconciliation. For release of our burdens and sins. And we have it in Christ. But only in Him. God forgives – not because of anything in us or what we do, but only because of Christ. His blood covers every spot and stain, every sin and blemish. So when we come to our Father seeking forgiveness, we do so only pleading Christ crucified. For us. There is our Hope – the One whose hands and feet were pierced for us, the One who carried all sin on His scourged and torn back, the One whose head was crowned with thorns to give us the crown of life.

And because we are forgiven ALL in Him, we forgive others when they sin against us. We have to, for their sins were also on that same Lord Christ, at the same cross, as He suffered the same hell for them as for us. If they are not forgiven, then neither are we. It is one or the other: all sins are covered, or none. And so we WILL forgive. Because Christ has forgiven them too. And just as we delight in hearing of our forgiveness, so we will delight in announcing that same forgiveness to others – even when they sin against us.

St. Luke concludes his version of the Lord's Prayer with the petition: "lead us not into temptation". As I said, what is this but a re-statement of the Third Article of the Creed? If God does not lead us, we go astray. We follow the devil. We follow the world's satanic bait. We follow the desires of our sinful flesh. If God does not lead us, then all is lost. But when He *does* lead us, then our way is straight and true. Then He leads us to the green pastures and quiet waters of which we hear in Psalm 23.

Lead us not into temptation – not that God ever leads anyone into sin. He does not. He CANNOT. But rather that He would lead us AWAY from temptation, from sin, from the devil. That He would lead us to our Savior. To forgiveness and life. To peace and reconciliation with God, our Father. And the Holy Spirit does all that through the Gospel. As we hear the Good News preached and taught. As we read it in our devotions. As we are washed clean in baptism. As we hear Christ speak His word of absolution and peace. As we feed upon His Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. In the Gospel we are led in the way that is pleasing to God. And because it is pleasing to Him, it is pleasing to us.

Again, though, we remember that all this is but a gift from God. Without any merit or worthiness in us, as we confess. Only because He is so good and gracious. Even to poor miserable sinners, like you and me. How wonderful is our Lord, our Father! And so we come to Him, boldly and with confidence, full of godly impudence, asking for this blessing too. Knowing that He will give it to us, to keep us from falling into sin and unbelief. Because that is what our Father does.

What father among you, Jesus asks, would NOT give his children what they need and is good for them? And if we – who are sinners – know and do this, how much more will our heavenly Father do so? That is why we are impudent and bold to come before Him always, with all our needs in prayer. So, pray. Boldly and brazenly. Your Father is waiting to hear from you. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.