

Sermon Text: Luke 11:1-13

Today's Gospel reading has some familiarity to it. Luke is one of two places that has the Lord's Prayer. As a church, we are more familiar with Matthew's version because it is longer and is much closer to what we pray each Sunday here at Bay View.

In the first verse, Jesus is praying.

This story comes right after their house visit to Martha and Mary. Maybe the visit was just a little too much and he needed time away to regroup.

Following the prayer, one of the disciples comes up and asks him if he will teach them to pray, just like John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. Jesus obliges. The prayer that he teaches them is a Jewish prayer in its structure and content. He gives them a pattern to follow and, in his pattern, there are five petitions.

Most scholars believe that even though the pattern and the petition can be very powerful for us; the real purpose of Jesus teaching on the prayer is the fatherhood of God. Before I get into the Fatherhood, I want to spend a brief moment of pattern and petition. The reason is that I hear many individuals who still seek guidance on how to pray. Maybe this simple acronym can guide you if you get in a rut or are looking for a new pattern or method.

The acronym is **A.C.T.S.**

Adoration - Confession – Thanksgiving – Supplication

Now, back to the fatherhood that seemed to be Luke's main focus.

Luke decided that he would concentrate on a father-child relationship. God is rarely addressed as father in Jewish prayers; so, this would have piqued the ears of the listeners. So, why did Jesus take this approach? Jesus was wanting to teach his disciples that they could approach God as they approach their own fathers. When we call the God of the Universe, Father; it signifies a personal relationship.

Now, here is where I will be honest with you and tell you that I have always struggled with this concept. I had a great relationship with my father. But, I know some individuals who had terrible relationships with their dads and thinking of God as a Father is the last thing that they wanted. Some even saw the father-child language as a barrier.

Then, as I began to study this personal relationship idea a little deeper, I, once again, realized the importance of understanding the culture and the time of the writing. This is something that I don't think many of us participate in. Luke was writing to a Gentile Christian audience and their experiences with their Fathers would be vastly different than their Jewish counterparts. For example, in the Greco-Roman culture, fathers had complete control over their children and their grandchildren. The father could decide whether the newborn child will be raised in the family, sold, or even killed. So, many individuals of that time did not have a high view of fathers.

Yet, Luke uses that language. Luke wanted to introduce the Gentiles to a God who is generous, loving and attentive to all of God's children's needs. That is quite a shift in the narrative. Don't you think?

Luke completely changes the audience perspective on fatherhood by presenting God as a father who cares completely for their children and more importantly acts in a redemptive manner on their behalf. Now, that was quite a story for them to hear. They no longer had to view the father-child relationship out of fear; which many did. Instead, they could view the relationship out of love. They could now hold onto a dear new view. That view included the fact that the God of the universe is a personal, intimate, sacred and a trusted authority.

This is the reason that the language "Our Father" is so vital. Luke not only wanted to encourage his Gentile audience to be persistent in their prayer, which we will get to later, but he wanted to encourage them that they could have a Father-Child relationship with God. In this new understanding, they were able to shift their thoughts on their relationship with God. The foundation of their relationship could now be based out of generosity and confidence.

Following the prayer, Jesus transitions into an illustration of an individual who goes to his neighbor because he is in need. However, it is midnight. We had a pretty in-depth conversation on persistence at our Tuesday morning bible study. We shifted the word away from persistence to shamelessness and then talked about how the story can change our thoughts if the neighbor came to us shamelessly instead of a continuous persistence. Now, don't think that I am changing the biblical narrative or the word, it is instead how the Greek word has been translated in this

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instance. The word is *anadea*. This word implies a boldness that comes from familiarity. The ask is only once and not continuously.

The illustration is to help us understand that God can be trusted to respond to our prayers. Going back to the illustration, hospitality was of paramount importance in the first century. We saw that last week in Martha and Mary welcoming Jesus and the disciples into their home. It did not matter if the guest was unexpected or if the guest showed up at midnight, hospitality was to be offered. The man who is about to offer the hospitality realizes that he does not have enough bread for his guest. Thus, he goes and asks his friend for bread even though he had to wake up his friend and his entire household. The friend was shameless in the ask. Another way to think of this is that he is shamelessly counting on his friend's desire not to fail the communal expectation that is at hand.

Now, here we go again. We are in the 21st century; so we are hearing this story through our lens and not the lens of the original reader. If I would ask you the following question:

Which neighbor in this story is behaving badly?

My hunch would be that the majority of you would lean towards the neighbor who woke up his neighbor at midnight.

But, in the culture of the biblical world, it is the woken-up friend who is behaving badly. The ability of his friend to provide hospitality, and thus is honor, is at stake. He must help and give assistance.

We close out this passage and the sermon on the sayings about the prayer. We have looked at the Lord's Prayer or the Disciples Prayer because of the disciples ask. We then looked at the parable or the illustration. I would say that the sayings about prayer may be the most popular. We see it quoted often because it can be done in three words:

Ask – Search – Knock

Once again, I want to challenge you to step back from thinking this is a call to be persistent. It could be more helpful to read the instructions of Jesus through the lens of trust. Jesus is asking us to trust that the divine parent will give us all that we need. For us, part of that need is the Holy Spirit.

As I was thinking about how this text could be connected to our baptismal promises, I kept coming back to living among God's faithful people. Are we able to go to them in our time of need if we are living in relationship with one another? If we live among God's faith people, are we praying for one another and are we setting up a system at Bay View where we can come to God and cover one another with prayer? Right now, maybe not, but I think that I see movements going in that direction and I cannot wait to see them happen.

As I close, I want to share with you two prayers. I shared the prayers with the bible study group. I think that you can easily remember them and put them in your memory bank when you need to call out to God.

The prayers come from Anne Lamont and she shares them in her book "Traveling Mercies". Here is the first prayer: "help me, help me, help me" and the second prayer is the following: "thank-you, thank-you, thank-you".

However you pray and what ever pattern you choose, allow me, as your pastor simply invite you into a deeper, more honest, and a more trustworthy relationship with God whose truest desire is to be known as a loving parent.

AMEN