

7th Sunday after Pentecost 2022
July 24, 2022

This is not quite what I had planned for this morning, but a combination of the rather toasty weather, which will cut down on the number of people that want to venture out, and a health issue with a member of the Altar party has led me to pull the plug on services for today. As always, I hold all of you in my prayers and ask that we pray for each other and the body of the Church.

Blessed be God: Father, Son and holy Spirit.
And blessed be Gods kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us now pray together the collect of the day.

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

First Lesson
Hosea 1:2-10

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord." So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

And the Lord said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the Lord said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the Lord their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen."

When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God."

Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

The Psalm
Psalm 85
Benedixisti, Domine

1 You have been gracious to your land, O Lord,
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

2 You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.

3 You have withdrawn all your fury
and turned yourself from your wrathful indignation.

4 Restore us then, O God our Savior;
let your anger depart from us.

5 Will you be displeased with us for ever?
will you prolong your anger from age to age?

6 Will you not give us life again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

7 Show us your mercy, O Lord,
and grant us your salvation.

8 I will listen to what the Lord God is saying,
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to him.

9 Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 The Lord will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him,
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

The Epistle
Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19)

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

[Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.]

The Gospel **Luke 11:1-13**

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

A Reflection

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

This Gospel offers quite a bit for contemplation. Besides the gift given here of what we consider the Lord's Prayer, which we will as always recite as part of Communion today – It also offers a

series of promises that are both parts of the foundation of who we are as Christians. And equally, offers something that is possibly part of the downfall of Christianity in modern culture today. I'll try to explain.

Jesus tells the disciples while instructing them, "I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." Wonderful words of promise and words that provide great hope.

As examples of this promise, Jesus goes on to offer, "if your child asks for a fish, will you give a snake instead of a fish? Or, if the child asks for an egg, will you give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The message is clear, you know how to give good gifts to your children. They ask for a fish, you don't give a snake. If they ask for an egg, you will not give a scorpion. Jesus seems to be suggesting that even those who we may see as evil know this, but goes on to point out how much more the heavenly father will give, by way of the holy spirit, to those who ask.

Consider the story of the friend you go to when needing bread. I'm still wondering why this whole story takes place at midnight, to be honest. I might be annoyed by someone calling on me like that looking for bread for a guest! Jesus says the friend responds saying, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything", which is perhaps a more polite response than being disturbed at midnight calls for!

He then elaborates on what I found to be key in this scenario. "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence, he will get up and give him whatever he needs." I'll say those last words again – whatever he *needs*.

This is the part where I think modern culture has gone in a direction that makes this all hard to see. Consider the phrase again, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" Now back that up with the specific words of the bread story, "give him whatever he needs."

Some Christians might be disturbed by this notion, but nowhere in the Gospel does it say that Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit are the same things as Santa Claus, automatically giving you whatever you ask for.

I want to offer the phrase again, but keep the word "need" in mind as you listen. "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." There is really a big difference between need and want.

To put this in a bit of context, when Jesus offered these words to the disciples, the world was largely a somewhat less material-oriented place. Yes, there were exceptions to this in the time – we see many examples of a new focus on wealth and elaborate things when the Romans arrive in the story – the royalty of the day also took exception to this. But the prayer Jesus teaches here brings us back to the basic needs – Lord, please give us our daily bread.

But in a broad sense, what people needed was the basics. Bread, family, God, love. Not many prayers for a new car or a new iPhone or any of the material goods that may occupy many of our prayers today.

In our material-based culture, the “prosperity Gospel” has existed for a while. A quick web search shows what it teaches “In the forefront is the doctrine of the assurance of divine physical health and prosperity through faith.” In short, this means that “health and wealth” are the automatic divine right of all Bible-believing Christians and may be procreated by faith as part of the package of salvation since the Atonement of Christ includes not just the removal of sin but also the removal of sickness and poverty.

I have several problems with this. In Matthew, we hear, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” To be honest, I also have trouble believing in “automatic divine rights,” which seems to cry out something we are entitled to and perhaps not celebrate as a gift. I often feel that as soon as the word “entitled” comes up, we lose sight of what it is to be a Christian.

I suggest we all work to pray for that which we need as opposed to that which we want. Pray for health. Sure – but pray and then act. Pray for prosperity and wealth, sure, but pray and then act. Don’t wait for it to arrive like a gift from Santa. Our gift of free will does not supersede the need for prayer, but it does perhaps, provide focus for that free will.

I also believe a lot in the power of prayer for each other. Prayers for health and well being surround much of what I do at the shelter.

I had a long talk this past week with a gentleman who felt he had exhausted all of his options and wasn’t sure what he could do next to benefit his wife and their current situation. You see, they are currently living in a tent in the woods and working to improve their situation. Not for the first time, I found myself wishing for a magic wand to help situations like this, but I don’t, and I told him this. I did say a quiet prayer that he would see his available options and find the strength to act on them.

A bit later that afternoon, I heard him on the phone pursuing another option.

I pray for him just as I pray for you. Perhaps not that you get what you want, but that you get what you need, and sometimes, you may not recognize what you need when it arrives.

Amen.

Let us end by praying as our Lord Jesus Christ taught us. Pray this as you will – just know that God hears you.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those*

*who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

We will continue with the prayer of Spiritual Communion. Again, this prayer was written by St. Alphonsus de Liguori, who lived from 1696-1787. This prayer is now often used when the church is in a place of fasting from Communion, and I have heard this used in many of the online services being offered. I suggest you get familiar with this prayer and get used to it – we will need to use it for a while when we can re-gather.

Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. I love you above all things, and long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

I ask that you pray for those affected by this heat. Many are required to work in this sort of condition for the common good, and many are limited in the means to escape the heat. Stay in the shade, keep cool, and drink lots of water!

See you next Sunday. Be well until we can meet again,

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