

Worship Service “Seeking”

Pentecost 7, Year C, 24th July, 2022

Colossians 2:6-15 NRSV / Luke 11:1-13 NRSV

Prelude

Opening Music (Video) [He's An On Time God](#)

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Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Hymn *Sweet Hour of Prayer* **11**

Call to Worship

Come and worship, all you who love and serve our God — who surrounds us with unfailing love, and answers us when we call; who cares for the humble and lowly, and never abandons those in need. This is our God, worthy of our worship and praise!

Invocation (responsive)

One: Our Father

All: Our Mother

One: Who art in heaven

All: Who are in all the earth

One: Hallowed be thy name

All: Holy is your truth

One: Thy kingdom come

All: May your wisdom come

One: Thy will be done, on earth

All: Your circle be one uniting

One: as it is in heaven

All: heaven and earth

One: Give us this day our daily bread

All: Give us today a nurturing spirit

One: And forgive us our trespasses

All: Heal through us as we

One: as we forgive those who trespass against us

All: ourselves are healed

One: Lead us not into temptation

All: Lead us into Fullness of life

One: But deliver us from evil

All: And liberate all that is good

One: For thine is the Kingdom,

All: For the Wisdom,

One: the power and the glory

All: Presence and the Goodness are Yours Now and Forever Amen.

Epistle Reading – Colossians 2:6-15 NRSV

As you therefore 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.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

People of God, as we come to prayer let us remember that we do not have to twist the arm of a reluctant God to seek good things for this world, nor find ways to persuade a distant God to come near and listen to us.

Let us remember that as we pray we kneel alongside Jesus Christ, in the presence of God, with the help of the Spirit.

So let us bring to mind now those people who are in need of our prayers: those who are ill, or anxious; those who are lonely or sad; those who are despairing or defeated; those who are hungry or homeless; those whose relationships are breaking apart; those who are bullied or abused; those who cannot find work; and those who are over-worked. In silence now, let us make our own specific prayers for those on our hearts and minds today.

(silence)

In the presence of God, alongside Jesus Christ, with help from the Spirit may we go into this week to live out our prayers through our lives.

Amen.

Hymn “*In The Garden*” *(see insert)*

Gospel Reading

Luke 11:1-13 NRSV

He 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 to 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!

Message – Seeking

When you are seeking the answer to something, or find yourself perplexed, where do you look to for answers? For many of us in many situations, I would guess we would respond with the ever familiar, "Google." The internet certainly contains a lot of valuable links to resources to get information on a seemingly infinite number of topics. YouTube now guides us through many home and auto repairs that used to require thick specialized manuals and books to walk us through a lot of these tasks. I'm old enough to remember the days when one could do virtually any repair on one's car, looking at diagrams in a Chilton manual for things like the firing order of spark plugs on a distributor cap. Sometimes though the answer we seek may not be as clear online, and we turn to trusted family and friends for guidance. Other times, we may just rely on our "common sense," those cultural and societal norms for the solution. But even with all those resources at our disposal, do we always find the answer we are looking for, or the explanation that makes the circumstances in question make sense? I would venture to guess that all of us have found ourselves lost for answers at different times in our lives, or wanting guidance or assistance when none can be found. Where can we turn in those difficult times?

Well, I wouldn't be much of a minister if I didn't suggest that maybe God might be a good choice, and specifically God through prayer. Prayer itself can be intimidating for many. Are we praying right, am I asking too much? For many of us, prayer has different faces. When we pray in public, we think it should be organized and lyric, fancy praying. But often in private, we often find ourselves being more conversational. Many feel they are inadequate to pray with others, that they lack the skills or training to pray "right." Likewise, those like myself who are trained to include all the elements for a "proper" prayer, can be intimidated that we are forgetting pieces, or not organizing it well. Yet there is no doubt from the scriptures that prayer was vital in the faith life of Jesus.

Throughout the gospel stories we are told that he walked away from the crowds to pray, or he spent the night praying up on the mountain, or in a boat. Prayer seemed to be an almost continuous process for him. The disciples witnessing this, wish to find that same prayer life for themselves and ask him how they should pray. They, who suffered from the same insecurities as we, the same lack of confidence in how and what they should include in prayer.

So Jesus breaks it down into the basic elements. He starts by glorifying God. "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kin-dom come..." It acknowledges straightaway the transcendence of God, the otherness of God, the sovereignty of God. Yet it assumes an unmistakably human orientation: the transcendent One is "father;" God's holiness is God's presence to us as One whom we name. God's kin-dom, however it may extend beyond us, is intended also to this planet, to our here and now. There is no indication of God up and out there but rather God in relationship with us. The prayer moves directly to our human condition with a number of imperatives: "Give us...Forgive us..." and in Matthew's version, "Lead us...Deliver us." It cuts right to the chase in a way that forgoes the norms of polite favor seeking. There is no "Please," none of the softening interjections that often mark what is called "spontaneous" prayer, things such as: "Oh dear Father," "blessed Lord," "sweet Jesus," and so on – Just "Give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us." It may seem rather brazen or forward, but it reinforces Jesus' warning in Matthew 6 to avoid unnecessary wordiness practiced by the "hypocrites" and "heathens" who "think they will be heard because of their many words." The whole assumption of this prayer is that it is uttered out of a condition of real necessity.

The one who prays is driven by great need – there is neither the inclination nor the time for pretense. Because the One to whom we pray is not ordinarily "glorious" like the gods we create in our own image, but glorious in loving, we are able sometimes through our most honest acts of prayer to find that our very weakness is the occasion for encounter with the Source of new strength.

The verses that follow serve only to reinforce the point the prayer itself has made: prayer is not a meek, contrived, and merely "religious" act; it is the act of human beings who know how hard it can be to be human. Real prayer cannot be faked. Its only prerequisites are sufficient self-knowledge to recognize the depths of our need, and enough humility to ask

for help. Yet how often do we forsake that opportunity to reach out for help?

We all like to live in the delusion of the self-made person. Particularly in our American culture rife with the image of rugged individualism, overflowing with that pioneering spirit. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, no one makes it entirely on their own. It really does take a village, in whatever form that takes in one's unique environment. From a worldly perspective, the help of families, friends, teachers, coworkers, neighbors, church, etc. help make us who we are. And over all of that, is our creator, our Divine parent. If we're honest though, I think we could all admit that sometimes it seems like we're praying to the void; that our prayers are not heard, because they don't show the results we expect. But Jesus stresses in the verses following the prayer the importance of persistence. We combat our doubt by our commitment to frequent prayer. As the friend was rewarded by their persistence, so are we.

Colossians reminds us that Jesus is the foundation of our support. We share in the experience of death and resurrection in our conversion experience and become part of the holy family. We can count on that support and actively seek it through prayer. The question is, will we? How often do we try to find our own ways out, when we can seek what we need through reaching out to our Divine parent, the one who's very definition is love. And do we have the faith that our prayers and petitions are heard, are we persistent in our efforts?

I'd like to close today with a story told by Television interviewer and journalist Larry King about three farmers who gather daily in a field during a horrible drought. The men are down on their knees, looking upward, and praying the skies will open and pour forth a much-needed rain. Unfortunately, the heavens are silent, and the petitioners become discouraged, but they continue to meet every morning to lift up their request to God.

One morning an uninvited stranger approaches and asks the men what they are doing. They respond, "We're praying for rain." The newcomer looks at each of them and shakes his head, "No, I don't think so." The first farmer says, "Of course we're praying. We are down on our knees pleading for rain. Look around; see the drought. We haven't had rain in more than a year!" The outsider continues to nod his head and advises them their efforts will never work. The second farmer jumps in and says, "We need the rain; we aren't asking only for ourselves, but for our families and livestock." The man listens, nods, and says he still isn't impressed. "You're wasting your time," he says. The third farmer can't take any more, and in anger he says, "Okay, what would you do if you were in our shoes?" The visitor asks, "You really want to know?" The three landowners answer, "We really want to know! The future of our farmlands is at stake." The guest announces, "I would have brought an umbrella!" May we have the persistent hope and faith in our own faith lives to bring our own umbrellas, confident that God hears and responds to our that which we seek. May it be so. Amen.

A Call to Serve

Compassion stirs us to generous action and hopeful giving. We share the abundance of our resources and spread the gifts we have received for the good of the world and the work of the kingdom.

A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God, We have known Your unfailing love and faithfulness, Your care and provision, Your protection and salvation. And so we respond with deep gratitude, offering back to You a portion of what You have given to us.

Accept the gifts we bring—tangible expressions of our love and gratitude for what You have so generously given to us. Amen.

Hymn

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

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BENEDICTION (resources)

As you go from here, remember this:

The same Spirit of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead,
also lives in you,

breathing new life and freedom into your hearts and minds.

So go from here with joy and confidence,
knowing that God is at work within you.

Postlude