

*Freshening Up***Luke 11:1-13**

August 3, 4, 2019

Beargrass Christian Church**I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. Last week we wrapped up the “New Spirit” sermon series.
 - 1. We thought about God’s spiritual gifts of gratitude, peace, hope, freedom, compassion, growth, faith, restraint, courage and glory.
 - 2. As we continue to worship during the season of Pentecost, we will begin a new, but similar series, called “Living It Up.”
 - 3. We will focus on several passages from the Gospel of Luke.
- B. Today we will think about “Freshening Up.”
 - 1. And I’m not talking about taking a vacation, checking our make-up, grabbing a quick shower or changing into clean clothes.
 - 2. I hope we will find ways that we can freshen up our spiritual vitality and relationship with God and each other.
- C. I also hope you are trying some of the “Summer Stretch” exercises.
 - 1. We are practicing simplicity, morning intention, beauty, centering prayer, play, kindness, praying for others, celebration.
 - 2. I shared some thoughts about the practice of Centering Prayer.
 - 3. And I confessed that I am not very good at it—when given the option of being busy or being still, I usually opt for some action.
- D. I am reminded of a cartoon that shows someone entering a pastor’s office unannounced.
 - 1. The pastor is on her knees, eyes closed, praying fervently.
 - 2. He says: “Good. I’m glad to see that you’re not doing anything.”
- E. But I also know all too well that busy-ness leads to burn-out and so there must be a balance between action and quiet contemplation.
 - 1. Centering Prayer lets us bask in the peace and presence of God.
 - 2. God speaks words of affirmation and assurance.
 - 3. “I am with you.” “I am within you.” “I will never leave you.”
 - 4. My prayer for all of us is that we will take time to listen for God’s still, small voice...and know that we are loved.
- F. Today’s text includes another kind of prayer.
 - 1. And the words we heard sounded familiar—almost.
 - 2. This is Luke’s version of what we call “The Lord’s Prayer.”
 - 3. The other version is in Matthew 6:9-13—it is more familiar.
 - 4. So is it possible to try to hear these words again as if it is the first time—with new eyes and alert minds and open hearts?
- G. That is actually happening for a whole lot of folks right now—millions of people on the planet.
 - 1. You probably know that the prayer has been in the news lately.
 - 2. The phrase, “lead us not into temptation,” has been theologically troublesome for centuries—it is as if God might do this to us on purpose!
 - 3. The Pope had the courage to change it to “do not let us fall into temptation.”
 - 4. What do you think about the new translation?
 - 5. Does it make sense—or does it just complicate matters because “we’ve always prayed it the other way?”

II. THE LORD’S PRAYER IS NOT A CENTERING PRAYER.

- A. It is not just personal or passive—and it is for the faith community—it begins with “Our.”
 - 1. Think about the imperative “tone” of the prayer.

2. Someone described it with the phrase “faithful assertiveness.”
 3. “Teach us to pray,” “When you pray, say,” “hallowed be your name,” “Your kingdom come,” “Give us” and “forgive us.”
 4. This sounds like a series of insistent instructions.
 5. Then Jesus uses a couple of illustrations about friends and parents that reinforce the “ask” imperatives in the prayer.
- B. The context for the gift of this prayer is also important.
1. Notice that the disciples ask Jesus for a prayer—I guess you could say that they didn’t have a prayer without Jesus!
 2. Anyway, they come to him and say: “Lord, teach us to pray!”
 3. He doesn’t impose the prayer or make it a commandment.
- C. And let’s pay attention to the timing for this request.
1. When do the disciples ask for this?
 2. Is it after Jesus gave a lecture or lesson on prayer?
 3. Is it after he led a seminar or preached a sermon on prayer?
 4. Luke tells us that: “Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he finished, they said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’”
 5. They saw the power, importance and priority of prayer for Jesus.
- D. Fosdick talked about this in his book “The Secret of Victorious Living.”
1. “Note that their awakened interest in prayer came not at all from new arguments about it, but from a new exhibition of its power.
 2. “The more they lived with him, the more they saw that they could never understand him unless they understood his praying.
 3. “They saw amazing spiritual power released in him by prayer.
 4. “They wanted Jesus to tell them how to pray.”
- E. In my own life, I cherish the memories of mentors and friends who, by their example, exhibited the importance of prayer.
1. I am a PK—a preacher’s kid—and when I was a child, I recall vivid images of my father praying during communion.
 2. It may surprise you, but as a preacher or worship leader or music leader—one of the most difficult things to do during worship is worship.
 3. We’re thinking about how things are going and what to do next.
 4. But for my Dad, communion was a time when he would humbly bow, fold his hands, close his eyes, and commune with God.
 5. The intensity of the expressions on his face left its mark on me.
- F. “Lord, teach us to pray!”
1. Some say that it would be more appropriate to call this prayer the “Disciples’ Prayer” rather than the “Lord’s Prayer.”
 2. Some say that Jesus’ real “Lord’s Prayer” was in the garden right before his death.
- G. Either way, Jesus urges us to go to God in prayer.
1. We are assured that we can confidently pray for the reign of God to come—which has an “almost but not yet” feel to it.
 2. We can pray about daily needs and trials, tests, and temptations.
- H. Then, to confirm that to the disciples (and us)—he offers almost comical, exaggerated examples of God’s great love for us.
1. Go ahead—pound on God’s door in the middle of the night!
 2. Go ahead—and wake God up—ask, knock, search, seek!
 3. When a child cries out, a loving parent is not going to hand them a snake or a scorpion or do anything to hurt that child!
 4. So how much more—how much more does God love you all?

5. How much more will God take care of you all?
6. So, pray like this—and continue to pray—and don't give up!
7. God, unlike most human parents, delights in our clamorings in prayer all hours of the day and night—God wants to talk!

III. CAN THE PRAYER REGAIN SOME POWER FOR US?

- A. Some things we do automatically—without thinking about them.
 1. We learn good habits so that they become natural—we brush our teeth, buckle our seat belts, look both ways, and on and on.
 - a. But at times we don't want to be on cruise control.
 - b. In some situations, we need to give our full attention and demand that same degree of attention from others.
 2. Family members can tell the difference between an automatic, “I love you,” and a heartfelt expression of genuine love.
 3. Our children can tell the difference between an automatic, “How was school today?” and authentic interest in their lives.
 4. Friends can tell the difference between an automatic, “How are you?” and the compassionate care of one soul for another.
- B. Isn't it odd how we sometimes convince ourselves that God doesn't notice our automatic recitations of the “Lord's Prayer?”
 1. I've done it—just kind of mumbled through it—have you?
 2. I've even lost my place when I was leading a wedding or funeral because my mind wandered away—that's really embarrassing!
 3. Or I worry more about the “debts, trespasses or sins” options.
- C. And sometimes we even poison the prayer and make it some kind of “good luck” saying, meaningless mantra, or partisan appeal.
 1. Some of you are athletes—or at least you used to be.
 2. Have you ever used this as a pre-game, locker room prayer?
 3. “Our Father...Amen! Now let's go out there and kill them!”
 4. The very prayer that Jesus gave us to keep us spiritually alive and alert and fresh—becomes a selfish, vain repetition—a battle cry!
- D. Prayer is not some kind of magical lamp to be rubbed in a crisis.
 1. It doesn't become more effective because of the way we hold our hands or the way we select our words or sit or stand or kneel.
 2. Unfortunately, much that passes for prayer is irrational, superstitious, and self-centered...but not this prayer....
- E. St. Thomas Aquinas described it as the most perfect of prayers.
 1. “In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired.”
 2. “This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in the order in which we should desire them...God is always first.”
- F. Prayer is not a note jammed into a bottle and tossed in the sea in the hopes that it will wash up someday on God's shoreline.
 1. Prayer is communion—conversation—with God.
 2. We speak, but God touches, embraces, shapes, and changes us.
 3. And we pray the Lord's Prayer over and over again and again...
 4. Not out of habit—but because we want to participate in the lifelong act of bending our lives toward God.
 3. “O God, THY will be done...not mine...not ours...yours.”
- G. Some of you may remember the powerful scene from “Shadowlands,” a movie based on the life of C. S. Lewis.

1. Dr. Lowe mentions it on her podcast about lament—I invite you to listen to it.
2. Anyway, Lewis has returned to Oxford from London, where he just married Joy Gresham, who is dying from cancer.
 - a. The ceremony was private, performed at her hospital bedside.
 - b. But through the difficult struggle with her illness, they discovered the depth of their love for each other and God.
3. As Lewis arrives at the college where he teaches, he is met by Harry Harrington, an Episcopal priest, who asks about Joy.
4. Lewis hesitates...but decides to speak of the marriage and not the cancer: “Ah, good news, I think, Harry. Yes, good news.”
 - a. Harrington is not aware of the marriage and thinks Lewis is referring to Joy’s medical condition.
 - b. Harry says: “I know how hard you have been praying.”
 - c. “Now God is answering your prayer.”
5. Lewis says, “That’s not why we pray, Harry.”
 - a. “We pray because we can’t help ourselves...we pray because we’re helpless.”
 - b. “We pray because the need flows out of us all the time, waking and sleeping, we long for the love of God.”
6. “Prayer doesn’t change God...”
7. “Prayer changes me...prayer changes us.”