

## **“Ask, Seek and Knock”**

### **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 God!”

## **Ask, Seek And Knock**

Luke 11:1-13

July 24, 2022

Rev. Michael P. Catanzaro

### **I.**

Now, I know Fire Prevention week isn't until October, but it never hurts to review. So, I'd like to take a minute here this morning to go over the fire safety technique which we teach to children, emergency service personnel and industrial workers as a component of health and safety training; namely, Stop, Drop and Roll. It involves the three steps a fire victim should follow to minimize injury in the event their clothing catches on fire.

First, **Stop** – The fire victim must *stop*; ceasing any movement which may fan the flames or hamper those attempting to put out the fire.

Second, **Drop** – The fire victim must *drop* to the ground, lying down if possible, covering their face with their hands to avoid facial injury.

Third, **Roll** – The fire victim must *roll* on the ground in an effort to extinguish the fire by depriving it of oxygen (if the victim is on a rug or one is nearby, they can roll the rug around themselves to further extinguish the flame).

Now, along with School House Rock, the paper clip and the alphabet, Stop, Drop and Roll is a simple but brilliant invention. Not all of you here today may know the Conjunction Junction song, but I'll bet just about everyone knows Stop, Drop and Roll. Yes? (So let all stand up and practice, shall we?)

### **II.**

Now, the only problem with Stop, Drop and Roll, as useful as it may be, is we really don't get a whole lot of practice using it; and, truth be told, we really never *want* to have to use it at all. Do we? Down through history, there have been any number of fabulous inventions, like Stop, Drop and Roll, which are brilliant in their simplicity, but are much more frequent in their application. Things like fire, language, the pencil, the cup, the staircase, the plow, soap, matches, the compass, eye glasses, the zero, and the biggie, toilet paper. These are things we use every day and, frankly, we couldn't imagine living without. Simple, elegant solutions to very difficult challenges.

### III.

I was up in my shop this past week building things and doing projects: a small, wooden rack for the TV, Stereo and Apple TV remote controls, finishing up the sunfish sailboat sled I built for my neighbors, cutting replacement boards for the picnic table, and I got to thinking. I got to thinking about all the very difficult challenges we face in our church. I got to thinking about all the difficult challenges we face in our schools, and in our lives, across our nation, and throughout the world. I tell you, though I look over the various local and national news websites each day, and subscribe to the Plaindealer North Country This Week papers, some days I can hardly stand to read very much of it. It isn't just one or another particularly difficult story, it is the critical mass of bad news that seems to wash over us day after day.

### IV.

Maybe it is an age thing. When we are young, we believe and operate on the assumption that we *can* change the world. As we mature, we accept the limits of what cannot be changed, and focus our efforts on whatever small areas of endeavor we deem to be changeable. When we get older, and I think I must be on the cusp of this, we simply hope all this stuff that is seemingly impossible to change doesn't catch up with us. So, like I said, I got to thinking about some kind of simple and elegant solution to the very difficult challenges which face us all. And, while I was thinking all of this, I happened to sit down to consider today's scripture reading from Luke 11, and what the Spirit might have in mind for me to say to you all today.

### V.

Here in today's text we find Jesus teaching the Disciples, what has come to be called the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father Prayer; and, then, telling them the parable of the persistent friend. Now, the Lord's Prayer as it is recorded in Luke, sounds a little different to our ears than what we are used to.

It begins, rather surprisingly, with the words, **Our Father**. Not the "Lord God of Abraham, God of Issac, God of Jacob! Not, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth! Not, Our Shield and the Shield of our fathers! Not the transcendent Lord of the heavens, but rather, the father who is close to us, like a father to his children. And this isn't just *Jesus'* father, this is *our* father; parent to all God's children.

## VI.

Then, the prayer continues with two petitions which express a form of praise to God which the Christian community utters in our *capacity* as children of this Father. Neither of them expresses something that we can or are expected to bring about. Rather, they are an assertion of an eschatological, or *future* vision and hope, that someday this will be so. First, **May Your Name Be Sanctified!** May the name of God be recognized as holy, and so celebrated. Second, **May Your Kingdom Come!** The faith community, the church, prays that God's reign over human life and existence will one day be achieved and established, and brought to full realization. Next, Jesus teaches a triple petition (an asking) for the things we most desire. Note, though, rather than "me" Jesus uses the 1st person plural "us." We aren't asking as individuals, we are asking as a *community*.

## VII.

**Give Us Each Day, Our Daily Bread.** Each day that we pray, we ask only for *that's* day's subsistence; what is necessary for existence, for survival. We are not praying to win the lottery, we are simply asking God to provide for this *one* day, with no need for anything left over. Because tomorrow we will get up and pray this prayer all over again. Each day we pray for that day's portion. **Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors.** We state our attitude toward forgiveness: God's forgiveness cannot be expected if human forgiveness is withheld. **And Bring Us Not Into The Time Of Trial.** Take it *easy* on us. May our lessons be only as hard as they must be in order for us to learn them. All three of these petitions express not only a humble confidence and reliance, but also a conviction that by praying this together *as* God's children we will be heard the God who is also *our* Father.

## VIII.

And, that's it. That's the whole prayer. None of that other stuff about delivering us from evil, the Kingdom, the glory or the honor forever and ever. This is the original version; just the basics. Though those later additions certainly give a admitted flow and zing to the prayer, we really miss something when we forget (as we often do) the parable which follows which places an emphasis on the need for *persistence* in offering tireless prayer.

Now, the Greek word Luke uses is commonly translated as “persistent”; a better translation, however, would be “shameless.” The persistent, or shameless, neighbor is asking for help to feed an unexpected visitor. He has searched and has nothing to set before him. So now he starts knocking on the door; and, this neighbor *keeps* on knocking until he receives what is needed and requested.

## **IX.**

Unfortunately, for such a humble prayer, I’ve given you all a rather convoluted explanation of that prayer; one that is neither simple, or elegant. So, what I’d like to leave you with is the Stop, Drop and Roll of the spiritual life: Ask, Seek and Knock.

As we look out on this world, and our lives, we see many people devoting time and energy to technological advancements, political solutions, diplomacy and social engineering in order meet the challenges which confront us as a planet. However, let us remember that we, as individuals and as a faith community, have a very unique, and equally important responsibility (more so, I would argue) in meeting these same challenges: Ask, Seek and Knock.

## **X.**

**Ask** that it may be *given* to us, or, and keep this in mind, that we may *stumble* upon it. **Seek**, look around, hunt for it, make the effort to find it. and **Knock**, being *shamelessly* direct in our asking. Unlike the Stop, Drop and Roll of Fire Safety, Ask, Seek and Knock is something we have cause to use *all* the time; it is the daily bread of our spiritual lives. It is something we need to practice, play with, get good at and rely upon. Because, my friends, my sisters and brothers on the journey of faith, my fellow children of God, Ask, Seek and Knock is the simplest and most elegantly brilliant solution to a world which seems to have caught on fire. It is something we need to use each day because, frankly, it is hard to imagine our world living much longer without it.

As you go from here today, remember to Ask, Seek and Knock; and, remember the words of Christ: *Ask and It Shall Be Given, Search, and you shall find; Knock & the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks received, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.* Amen.