

Reflections on Prayer: Luke 11

We have three pots of inpatients at the front door, one large and two small, that are third year cuttings off the original. I know from previous years each cutting seems to increase the blooms. I liken this to the way I study the Scripture from the daily office. The last five years I have been reflecting on verb forms and adjectives in the daily Gospel cuttings. Especially after the crossing over/other side, translation of the word peran, where Jesus and the disciples encounter the storm on Lake Galilee. This account, told differently sometimes, is in all four Gospels. All of us encounter various storms in life. Some bigger than others. They are part of our growing up, our maturation, our transformation, just as the crossing over/other side became part of the disciples transformation. They actually write from the other side, retelling the story before the Resurrection cross over. We too are never the same after a significant crossing over. The afterwards may even change what we remember and resurrect stories long forgotten.

The Collect for today (Pentecost VII) connects with these transition experiences, that “we may pass through things temperate that we lose not the things eternal.”

After beginning a grief recovery group where listening to the story was an important part of the healing, I remembered my first grade teacher who listened to my story after I was told my dog Topsy had been run over. I ran back to the country school to tell Miss Spencer. She is the only grade school teacher whose name I remember, she made a significant difference. She continues to be my earliest source of who makes a difference in a loss.

This is how all of us add to the Christian story in our own time. I recently read the Alexandrian mystics in the 4th century were very much aware of updating the Christian experience in their own time. We do the same today in the telling of our Faith stories. We update the Christian story.

Turning to the cutting from Chapter 11 in Luke's Gospel we have an opportunity to update our experiences with Prayer. Prayer life includes our pre existing conditions and a pre existing environment already in process. Luke's account starts when Jesus receives a request. “Teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.” Quest is part of request. Literally quest again and again. A great title for this Gospel reading. Journey again and again in prayer continuously. I want to amplify and explain and then you can come to your own conclusions. Hopefully, you already Quest again and again in prayer continuously. As each cutting in our Scripture experience blooms we add understanding and insight again and again..

Jesus begins teaching with the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer we have several revealing Greek verb forms. English verb forms are more time oriented. Greek are more action oriented. The Greek present imperative involves continuous action. Give us this day, Give is in the continuous action. Hallowed, forgive, deliver are in the aorist imperative form with a focus on the now.

After the prayer we have a parable. My guess is the story brought a smile to those who first heard it. Jesus reveals himself as a serious clown in the way he tells the story. What is this? Going at midnight. That gets your attention. And the request for three leaves of bread for a guest. Someone is a big eater. And someone was completely unprepared. We usually pray when we are in a situation where we are unprepared. Vulnerable. The intruding doesn't get a response from friendship. Rather the The point of the story, Persistence wins out. Aorist imperative, persist in the now.

This is the first lesson.

Now for the how, ask, seek (search), and knock. All these verbs are present imperatives meaning continuously. The More conscious I become of this language I visualize my prayers continuing after I say the words. Prayer is a flowing stream that we enter by asking, seeking, knocking, persisting. Like the air we breathe, prayer is a continuous environment. Most of the time we are not conscious of our breathing until we take a deep breath or have shortness of breath. Prayer is a deep breath of consciousness and our awareness of need.

Ask, seek, knock, are orientation metaphors. And add persist for your orientation in the now. This isn't a smart phone selfie approach to prayer. This is an orientation for continuous questing and reaching out. Our picture is one of the Other with a capital O. This is an orientation for continuous questing and reach out out. The action orientation of the Greek verbs are very clear about how we orient ourselves for expected outcomes in receive, find, and open. Notice the outcomes are very general. They lack specifics.

This is the second lesson.

Now Prayer becomes a unitive, at one with the one Being addressed. Initiating and outcomes go together, a both/and, A being and becoming experience. We exercise our being as we ask, seek, knock, and persist for the outcomes are part of our becoming, always coming into being continuously.

Luke continues and closes with an essential story amplifying becoming and the unitive. His conclusion is not found in the other Gospels, Prayer is in the context of love. For asking we are not given a serpent or a scorpion rather the Father will give much more for our asking, The Holy Spirit, our advocate, the one alongside who leads us into truth. Prayer is now a radical relationship between ourselves and the Other, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is the third lesson.

On a practical level, Our Book of Common Prayer provides a continuous outcome as a place to ask, seek, knock and persist in the present. The dynamic of the Holy Spirit is present in the daily office along with a host of liturgical and sacramental resources, liturgies for the significant times in our life Then we have the Christian Year,, the Book of Psalms, special prayers. They all help us connect the dots in our stories continuously, connecting by looking back and adding meaning. Forward is where we ask, seek, knock and as the dots connect we receive, find, and live in an open way. Such is the dynamic of a loving father through the Holy Spirit. Amen