

Sermon for July 28, 2013

Tenth Sunday of Pentecost, Luke 11:1-13

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

This morning's sermon is going to be **all** about prayer and about how the **power** of prayer is present in our lives. How many of you saw this article in Thursday's Press Enterprise? It was a story about how the police and clergy in Moreno Valley are joining together to improve their community relationship. The members of the *Inland Empire Cops and Clergy Network* were out walking the streets of the community **praying** for the people who live there. The group's vice president said, (quote) "Prayer is **essential** for the well-being of the city and its residents. We pray for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding for our city officials. We pray that our city will grow, blossom, and prosper." (end quote)

Here in Riverside something similar regarding the subject of **relationship** building is done with the monthly *Cops and Clergy* meeting at the Riverside Police Department which clergy from the community are invited to attend. This month's topic was the **resources** which are available to help victims of crimes. It was **sponsored** by the district attorney's office. Each meeting begins and ends with prayer.

On September 21st there is going to be the 7th annual **Bless Riverside** prayer service at 7:30 a.m. on top of Mt. Rubidoux. It is a time for the 225 churches of our city to come together to pray for Riverside and the officials who govern it. Last year more than **40** churches were represented and it was attended by nearly **100** people. This year the plan is to invite Mayor **Rusty** Bailey and police Chief **Sergio** Diaz to the event and for **one** of them to read the **proclamation of faith** to the city which includes scripture passages.

Also, you may remember the **baby** prayer quilt for baby Joshua we **lovingly** tied knots in and **prayed** over a couple of weeks ago. I got a call from Joshua's mom this week asking me if I could come and baptize him in Kaiser Hospital in Orange County or did I know of **anyone** that would be willing to go there to do the baptism as she was not sure when she would be able to bring Joshua to church to be baptized in the worship setting. As **God** would have it I had plans to be in Orange County on Friday. So we **set** a time, I was **at** the hospital. There-
surrounded by Joshua's **mother**, his **grandparents**, his **great-grandmother**, his **great uncle**, and his **aunt** we prayed in the name of **God and Jesus Christ** as this **10** pound, **6** month old baby boy who is waiting for a **liver** transplant became the **newest** member in God's holy kingdom. What joy was in that room as we prayed the **Lord's Prayer**—our **Father** who art in heaven. What blessed words. The **power** of prayer is present in our lives.

Focusing on the first **4 verses** in our gospel reading for today Jesus' disciples wanted to **learn** how to pray. They wanted to learn how to pray like John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. Jesus' disciples wanted a prayer that would form the foundation of their identity as followers of Jesus.

In Luke's gospel the **act of prayer**— especially Jesus' praying—is of particular importance. There are **7** times during the course of Luke's gospel where Jesus is said to have been **in** prayer. From the time he was baptized until the time when he was on the Mt. of Olives before he was arrested Jesus said to be praying to God. Prayer was a part of Jesus' life, **even** unto death. Then in Luke's book of Acts there are at least **5 references** for the community of faith to be in prayer to God so the **faithful** could participate in God's **commitment** to bring forth God's **reign** into the world once Jesus was no longer with them.

Here are a few questions: Why do we pray? I believe generally there are **5** reasons that most people pray. They are: to **praise** God, to **thank** God for something, to **ask** God's forgiveness, to ask God for **what we believe** we need, and to feel a **closer** relationship with God.

Who taught you how to pray? In my family it was my **mom** who taught my sister and I **who** Jesus is and **how** to pray to him. They were simple prayers but

prayers none the less. Prayers do **not need** to be elaborate to be heard—just **talk** to God. It is the **relationship** with our Heavenly Father which is important not the flowery words. It is about **how** the power of prayer present in our lives.

On a more personal level—what is **your** prayer life like? Occasional and spotty—on an **as needed** basis, how about **daily devotions** are they a part of your relationship with God, or do you **thank God** when wake up and go to sleep at night?

Many of us view prayer as a **private** matter—an **inner** conversation between God and ourselves alone but that is **not** what the prayer Jesus taught his disciples is about. Jesus' model prayer reveals a much **broader** corporate or collective prayer—a prayer that is for **all** to pray and for **all** to hear. What he taught them has remained the perfect prayer for the life of the church as it has been prayed for **more** than 2,000 years.

Listen to the plural **relational** words within this prayer: *us, our, ourselves, we, and everyone*. In this '**all about me**' society in which we live, hear that this prayer is **not** about: '**I**' want, '**me**' and what is important to me, or '**my**' will be done or '**my**' needs need to be met. It is about **our** intimate relationship with God. This prayer invites **us** to think of God as one who looks upon **us** as family, as if each

and every one of **us** were God's very own children (which we are). In a world where our existence is so fragile Jesus reminds **us** that there is only **one** who has **power** over all and there is only **one** who is near to **us** at *all* times.

We are to approach God as "**Father**" which to the hearers of these words at Jesus' time would have represented the head of the extended family household, the head of the basic unit of all economic and social life in their culture. The '**father**' was the one who would have had the responsibility of **providing all the 'children'** of the household with the necessities of life.

The next 2 phrases call on God to be God: "Hallowed (or holy) be **your** name" and "**your** kingdom come". These are requests for God to truly take charge of **our** lives, to bring peace and mercy to **our** world which is something only **God** can bring about.

Finally, the remaining petitions concern 3 basic needs: *food, forgiveness, and faithfulness* in the relationship. These 3 petitions name what is necessary for the life of our **individual** bodies as well as the whole of society, the church, the world, AND the life of our ongoing relationship with God. These are the gifts of the kingdom of God which will **not** be refused because they flow from our being **united** with the *very being* of God who sustains us, forgives us, and is faithful to us to the end of time.

Today's gospel invites us all to **reflect** on the story, to **take a look** at our prayer life, to **think about** where it has taken us, and **where** it is taking us in our lives.

We owe a **deep debt** of gratitude to those people in our lives that have **put us** on the path to having prayer being an **essential part** of who we are as Christians.

So may we **continue** to ask, “Lord, teach us to pray. Truly **teach** us to pray the words given to us by Jesus Christ, calling on **God** as our parent and protector.”

May we take **comfort** from the fact that, even when we **do not know** how or what to pray, the **Holy Spirit** helps us in our weakness. May we **continue** to teach our children- those to whom **God** has entrusted to us- to **pray** as Jesus taught us, **confident** that our relationship with God will become **ever** stronger. It is about how the power of **prayer** is present in our lives.

So—my prayer for **us** here today and from this day forward—is that **whenever** it comes time to say the Lord's Prayer we **hear it** with new ears, see it **written** with new eyes, and **realize** the power that *God, the Father,* has in **our** lives.

Amen.