



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON
7-24-16

“It’s me, it’s me, O lord, standing in the need of prayer.....”

This is about prayer all the way through. Starting with Jesus praying, JESUS praying in a certain place – significant?

And his disciples want to pray – how do we do it?

We are given the Lord’s Prayer – with different words that we are used to?!! And some people think that’s it for prayer --- say these words, Done. Or a variation that this prayer is complete prayer.

It’s not a bad prayer – follows the ACTS acronym for praying – Adoration, Confession, light maybe on Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Your name is holy and adored – adoration and your Kingdom come- you are the ultimate. Forgive my sins – confession, and give us bread and not the time of trial – supplication. There – we now know how to pray –

Then what about the rest of this reading? It too is about prayer – there can be more to prayer than just saying the Lord’s prayer – duh.

There’s persistence – however that looks – probably looks like not giving up easily or continuing to pay attention and not drift away.

Then there’s asking and searching and knocking. All of those actions are assured of good results. So Jesus talks about receiving a fish or an egg. I know of people who pray for parking spaces, or to not receive a speeding ticket, or for their team to win, and so on. I suppose from the examples of prayer given – like asking for our daily bread it is not WRONG of us to pray for those sorts of things – and we are told that God wishes to give Good Gifts to God’s children – you and I – so we make our requests and we knock and ask and search.

But to me – here’s the whole amazing end-all to praying ---God will give the HOLY SPIRIT to those who ask.

The HOLY SPIRIT – I love the Holy Spirit – the Holy Spirit is the ultimate gift. It is the ultimate answer to our prayers. The Holy Spirit.

And how, you ask, how does the Holy Spirit serve as an answer to prayer??? For one thing – I don't even really understand what the Holy Spirit is or what the Holy Spirit does or how the Holy Spirit works.

Let me share some stories. You've probably heard that the Holy Spirit is the gift promised to us upon the ascension of Jesus back to heaven/God. We celebrate that gift on Pentecost Sunday remembering the disciples who all spoke in different languages praising God when the Spirit came upon them like a fire or like a dove or like a wind. Those words are all used to describe the presence of the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit dwells with us and Jesus told us the Holy Spirit speaks to us and to God, intercedes for us. And works as our guide and counselor. I often imagine Jimminy Cricket for Walt Disney's Pinocchio. The Holy Spirit is always whispering in my ear if I will listen and pay attention and heed what I hear.

So, we knock on the door and there's the Holy Spirit, we ask – and there's the Holy Spirit. We search – and there's the Holy Spirit!

I remember back in the days of the Cursillo movement in Wyoming – the evening dedicated to inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives. WHOOWEE! Scary.Powerful.Amazing.Inspiring.

When I first arrived here – a parishioner was preparing for surgery and I called and prayed with her in her hospital room. Afterwards – surrounded by calm and peace and assurance.

At the jail visit this week – young woman feeling nudged to reach out to – write to someone she had ended relationship with. Was that the Holy Spirit?

In all instances it is God's Spirit, and Jesus' presence, and the holy and sacred that you engage with in your prayer and it is that same spirit that directs you and nudges you and calms you and holds you close and loves you and assures you and inspires you and answers you ---

The Holy Spirit is the answer to everything – and prayer is taking time to notice and listen to that Spirit.

Thanks be to God.