

Pentecost 7c (07.24.2022)

Luke 11.1-13

Virginia Synod / Region 9 ELCA sermon

The Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick; Assistant to the Bishop, VA Synod

Ask. Search. Knock.

I have three kids - three sons. There has been LOTS of asking, seeking, and knocking as they have been growing up!

Asking for snacks. Asking to go somewhere, play something, get something, do something.

Asking for our presence - at bedtime, at special events, at every day moments.

Searching - for toys, for clothes, for ALL the lost things.

Searching for car keys, for the phone, for answers to life's questions.

Lots of knocking. When visiting friends and family. When needing to use the bathroom. When locked out of the house.

Ask. Search. Knock.

*For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Luke 11.10)*

This is the promise of God, the generosity of God, the assurance of God, the compassion of God.

That God does provide, that God does answer, that God is present. Always.

Just think: If a child asks for food, their parents don't give them a snake or scorpion instead of food. In some ways, this is just common human decency. You don't respond to someone's

request for food or for assistance with something that is going to harm them instead. Parents do not answer their child's request with malice.

And guess what - God's generosity is superior to any earthly parent!!

As Jesus says: here's the thing - *if we, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, then how much more will God - our heavenly parent - gift us with the Holy Spirit! (Luke 11.13)*

If we humans know how to treat a child with kindness and compassion, how much more does our heavenly parent care for us!

God's generosity far exceeds ours!

The entire gospel reading from Luke for today emphasizes God's generosity. And our confidence in God's love, compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, peace, hope, and love.

The foundation of the relationship between God and humanity is God's love for us. God loves us so much that Jesus was born for us, lived for us, died for us, and has been raised for us. God loves the world so much that God sent God's only son to the world in order that the world might be saved through Jesus Christ. God loves us so much that sin and death cannot stop God's love. God loves us literally more than life itself, because Jesus died on the cross for you, for me, for all humanity, and for all creation. As Paul notes in Romans 8, there is nothing - nothing! - that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus!

God's love for you, for me, for us, for y'all, for all y'all is the foundation of our relationship with God. A relationship in which we can trust. A relationship in which we have confidence and surety.

God IS generous, gracious, kind, loving, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. God will never answer our requests with malice, with hatred, with hostility. God will always respond to us with love and compassion.

Want to know how I can be so confident? Because of Jesus! Because Jesus is the embodiment of the love of God for all humanity.

Jesus is the embodiment of God's love and compassion which have been shown in countless ways, throughout time. God is boundless compassion, mercy, justice, and love - serving humanity and all of creation.

- God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46.1)
- God is a nursing mother who cannot forgets her child, who shows compassion to the child of her womb. (Isaiah 49.15)
- God is our shepherd; they lead us beside still waters and prepare a table before us. (Psalm 23)
- Because of God's holy, steadfast presence with us, we have nothing to fear. God is with us. God will strengthen us, help us, and uphold us. (Isaiah 41.10)
- Our help and our hope rest in God who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger; who sets the captive free; who opens the eyes of the blind; who lifts

up those who are bowed down; who loves the righteous; and who cares for the stranger.  
(Psalm 146.7-9a)

We have nothing to fear from God - who is, who has been, and who will always be love, grace, mercy, and compassion.

Because of God's love for us, we can and should be bold to pray:

Our Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done.

In the tradition of Jewish prayers prayed by Jesus and the disciples and countless Jewish siblings, our prayers reflect the pattern of praise, petition, and thanksgiving.

We praise God for God's boundless love, God's holy name. We give thanks for God's eternal presence with us - as God continues to establish God's dominion, God's lovingkindness and tender mercy, God's judgment and righteousness. We give thanks to God for always, always being present with us in love. We give thanks to God for the confidence we have in trusting God's promises.

We also trust God enough to boldly ask God for assistance. We petition God for our daily bread. God knows that humanity's needs are many. In giving us each day our daily bread, we trust that God does indeed provide for our urgent needs. That God hears our cries for healthy food, clean water, clean air. That God hears our cries for justice and for an end to violence. That God hears our cries for the wellbeing of creation, for an end to climate injustice. That God hears our cries

for wholeness and abundant life - for an end to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ageism, ableism, and all the countless ways that *we* seek to divide and diminish one another. We have confidence that God hears our cries, that God is engaged in our world in ways of justice and peace, righteousness and hope.

Again, God's love for us is SO great. God is in an intimate, personal relationship with us. As a generous, loving, attentive parent, God provides for our needs - today, tomorrow, and always.

God not only loves us so much that God attends to our daily welfare, but God also tends to our spiritual welfare as well.

God forgives us our sins. And strengthens us to forgive others.

When we pray: *Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us, (Luke 11.4)* we acknowledge that our spiritual wellbeing includes our relationship not only with God but also our relationships with others. Making amends with those whom we have wronged is central to forgiveness. When we ask God to forgive us, we also must recognize that we are called to forgive others as well. And God's holy presence with us empowers us and strengthens us in relationships with each other, so that we can forgive and can ask for forgiveness as well.

Relationship is at the heart of God. A relationship of love and compassion; of grace and mercy; of forgiveness and peace; of justice, righteousness, and hope. A relationship of a loving parent who loves humanity - the children of God.

God's generosity far exceeds our own. God's love abounds. God responds to our asking, our searching, our knocking with love, grace, and mercy.

So, be persistent in asking, searching, and knocking. Be brave in approaching God! Come before God with shouts of joy and cries of anguish, with mournful lament and courageous conversations. In challenging times – disciples need to initiate, ask, search, knock, ask. Lift up your eyes to the hills, confident that God - who is already close to us! - is our refuge and strength.

God is love. God is life. Ask, Search, Knock.

God IS present; God responds!

Thanks be to God!

Amen.