**Luke 11:1-13 July 24, 2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 11 here re-reading these words. “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 him!” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We all have that one friend. The one who always seems to need something. You hear from them and the conversation begins the same way, “Hello, how are you doing? How are the kids? How is work? Etc. etc.” Small talk, typical stuff, talking about the weather, about current events, the same stuff you always seem to gab about and if it was anyone else that would be fine. But you’re waiting for it. And you know it’s coming. That one friend that just always seems to need something. No matter how outlandish the request. They need help with something, or they need money, or they need to borrow your stuff. How do you respond to this type of person? Initial emotional response is probably, frustration. Their request is too great, this time is the last time, as a matter of fact I told them last time was the last time and so this time is a definite no! But you hear them out, you think about it, you have the money….you have the time….you aren’t using the item. And you know they are in a bind, you know they need it, you certainly know their situation and what they are going through and they should know better, but….well…..okay. And you relent. And you help and show mercy and compassion and care for this friend despite their brashness and shamelessness to ask again and again and again.

This situation, leads to questions that can only be answered from the wisdom of Jesus Christ. And we find those answers in Luke chapter 11. The first question: “Why does this person always seem to be in need?” The answer is the evidence of sin. Laziness, slothfulness, lack of basic necessities, on account of greed both from the person and the society in which they live are all a result of the fall into sin and are the norm in our world of sin. Jesus himself says, in Matthew chapter 26:11, “For you always have the poor with you.” There will always be those in need and we are called to help them as children of God, as imitators of Jesus Christ who multiplied bread and fish for the hungry 5000. Who gave of himself for others when they cried out to him for healing and for help. Paul writes to encourage us in this endeavor to not give in to the temptation of turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to those who are struggling in Galatians chapter 6:9, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” So the answer to the cause of the need is simple. Sin.

But where does this ability to help others come from? Or a better yet think of it this way, Why did you help them? They came to you asking for help and you did, you gave, they made their request to you and there was initial hesitation, but ultimately you helped them. Why? Where did that come from? And the answer to the question of the origination of goodness, of mercy, of compassion is answered by Jesus, which speaks to the nature of God and the purpose of prayer. Jesus says, “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 him!” Which means very simply that it is God who spurs forth the good that we do because he is the source of the goodness. His holiness, His all goodness, is what brings about any good in our world and in us. And it is the nature of God to give good things, and to show mercy, and to preserve and care for his sinful and fallen creation. So when we do good, when we show mercy, when we give, we are doing so only through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that shows us what is pleasing to God and we are imitating what God has already done for us. Because our relationship with God through prayer is exactly what we are talking about in this example of one always needing and the other always giving.

Because what could God possibly need from us? When does God come to us in a bind, as we hear about in our Gospel lesson with the man who needs 3 loaves of bread at midnight for a friend who has come to his house, and bothers the other man who is asleep? When is God in that position of need? Never, it’s silly to even think of it that way. God never comes to you needing anything, which means that in your relationship to God, you are the one who is always in a bind. Think about your own prayers to God. What are you saying? What are you asking? What do you need? To put it into context this person who comes to this man at night, is either brave, or incredibly foolish. You can imagine how frustrated you’d be if someone calls you on the phone at midnight asking for food, but now imagine they show up at your house, expecting you to just give them the food. After waking you up! And as someone who has younger children, once you get those children to bed you don’t want them to be woken up or disturbed, which means that for this man in this small house to get up would mean to disturb and wake up his whole household, just to give this guy some bread for his other friends, something he should have been prepared to do, and he isn’t! This is ridiculous! And this is the key to the whole situation, what Jesus says in verse 8, “I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.” Meaning that friendship lines only go so far, and a true friend wouldn’t even be making this request if you think about it, but because of his need, impudence here being understood as “shamelessness.” Meaning that the man in the house who has the means to help him would be shamed if he doesn’t help him, and so he will give him what he needs. Because he is at his house, and he has the bread, and he’s already awake, and he now knows of the need, and it would be shameful not to help, which again, reflects our relationship to God our heavenly Father.

Our relationship to God is not one of two friends or neighbors who help each other out from time to time. No, our relationship is that of the friend who constantly needs, and the other friend who constantly gives, expecting nothing in return. Yet we think that God needs from us, in our wisdom, in our stuff, in what we have accomplished and accumulated for ourselves here on Earth. And so we will graciously give of our treasures to the church, if we deem it necessary for God to have some of what He has already blessed us with. We will give of our time, if we feel like it, oh and of course if God doesn’t waste it asking us to do things we don’t feel need to be done. We will see ourselves as the giving ones to God, when in reality we have been showered with his mercy and everything we have comes from him. We also will sadly in our sin neglect to ask and we go without. Like a starving friend who truly needs help, but is too ashamed to seek it from those who have an abundance and would love to give. We have too much pride. We neglect to pray. We don’t take our needs to God in prayer and we don’t seek the comforting mercy of Jesus, our greatest friend. It’s as we sing in “What a Friend we have in Jesus”. “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.” We suffer needlessly, we forfeit the peace that comes only from God, and we think there is help in some other place for what plagues our soul. And yet there is Christ, telling us plainly, “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

God gives peace and all we have to do is ask. Not demand. Not exchange, this isn’t a back-and-forth sort of relationship where you are receiving favors from each other. Again, we are beggars, and we need mercy because we can’t save ourselves. There is a beautiful back and forth going on in our Old Testament lesson from Genesis 18, between Abraham and God about the fate of Sodom and Gommorah. Abraham makes his request to God to spare the city on account of the faithful remnant found there. 50 men to 45 to 40 to 30 to 20 to 10. And God goes along with it, and Abraham is able to make his requests known. And are 10 found there? No. The city is destroyed with fire from heaven. Abraham was able to make his request known, and yet what Abraham wanted didn’t happen on account of sin and the corruption of that city. Yet God heard his prayer and answered it. God did spare a greater city, as a matter of fact, he spared the entire world. Not on account of 10 righteous men, because there weren’t that many across the entire world in all the cities, who were righteous based upon their own actions or works. No, God didn’t spare the world on account of the righteousness of Men, he spared the world on account of the righteousness of one Man, Jesus Christ. He took all the wrath and punishment of sin, and put it upon one Man, his very own Son, Jesus Christ, who died in the place of all, and gave them eternal life. And it is Christ who restores this relationship between God and man, as we see it here between God and Abraham, which means that with Christ as the mediator, the go-between, you, a beggar, who has no right to ask, you, the friend who constantly takes and never gives and always seems to be in a jam, can make your requests known to God. And God hears you, the same way he did Abraham, and shows a greater love and mercy than we could ever receive from anyone here on Earth because the only way we know how to love is through Him. He gives and gives and gives. And you receive. That’s your relationship, and that’s why you pray, to be reminded of all that he gives and to give you peace and comfort, knowing that you serve a God who loves you and provides for you. So pray often, frequently, continuously even, and don’t forfeit the peace that comes from God hearing you and answering your prayers.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.