

Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House  
New York City  
July 25, 2010

### Sermon Notes

out of bed...  
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Part of my time living with my family was spent in E. Northport, Long Island. We moved there from the Bronx when I was 18 or 19. It was one of the favorite houses my family lived in over the years; however there was one part of it I would have been happy to change. The previous owners had installed an intercom system in all the rooms. My mom quickly put it to good use for her and annoying use for me.

My dad has always had enormous energy, and on Saturday mornings after a long week of working, you would think he would like to sleep in a bit. Nope. He'd be out in the yard or the garage or somewhere around the house doing one of his "projects." Me, I'd be sleeping, often after getting in only a few hours before.

My mom hated to see my dad working alone - so she would call *me*! You guessed it using the intercom. But not just calling me and saying, "Come help your father." No. She would sit down at the kitchen table, coffee in front of her, reading the paper, with one hand on the intercom - saying over and over..."Raymond, get up Raymond" in the sweetest, sing-songy, most annoying voice you could image.

It was like fingernails on the chalkboard.

Like the neighbor in this morning's reading who finally gave in to the person knocking at his door for bread, it worked and I would sooner than later get up out of bed, grumbling and mumbling, as I went.

It can still take encouragement now and then to get things done. It can take encouragement to pray, now and then, as well.

Jesus was certainly someone who encouraged others to pray. To follow him as one of the early disciples must have been an experience that included sheer wonder at what he was able to do and an ongoing effort to understand how he did it.

Luke pays close attention to Jesus and prayer, as did the disciples. He reports several instances of times when Jesus prayed: before calling the disciples, Peter's confession, at the transfiguration, Gethsemane, on the cross, and at the table with the disciples.

Often Jesus "would go off" to pray in places away from distractions. The earliest of sanctuaries, perhaps.

So, it would be natural for the disciples to see the connection between Jesus in prayer and how he performed some of the signs or withstood some of the things he did. And, Luke tells us that on this one particular day, following Jesus' prayers, the disciples asked Jesus to teach **them** how to pray.

I have to believe that the disciples had already prayed in some way or another before this request they made of Jesus. It then seems to me that they were asking Jesus how to pray **as he did**. It wouldn't surprise me if they were looking for something like "magic words" that would make it possible for them to do the things that Jesus did. They had yet to learn they already had what was needed.

There seems to be no hesitation in Jesus' reply:

"When you pray, say:

Father (Mother), hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.

The prayer is an awakening; getting out of bed; opening the door - stepping into the Spirit in the full cosmology of the coming kingdom of God. It is a prayer that bridged the difference then and now between this world and the next; a prayer that discarded time, with the wave of a hand. It is a prayer of faith, vision, and action.

You likely have discovered much of this on your own, through your own prayer life.

- The reference to God as a loving parent...a loving parent
- The wish that God's name would be hallowed, made holy - not by just us but the whole world: "hallowed be your name."
- The request for bread on a daily basis, to carry us through on this journey
- To clean the slate of resentment, jealousy, anger, fear with forgiveness of others and of ourselves
- And to protect and watch over us with your Spirit as we come to you.

To me, it sounds just like the journey we are on. The same ones the disciples were on. Here, in this world, surrounded by much beauty and hope, but also surrounded by totally incomprehensible events of oppression, war, discrimination, illness, and a more.

When the disciples were around Jesus, he brought the promise to them in his presence, his "Way." Today, the promise is still with us - and so is the prayer.

And, so is Jesus with us.

And, that surprising as it may sound to some is fundamental to Christianity. We are a community that spans time and space, actually - compresses it into the "now" with just a

small change in our thinking or perceptions. And, this is what prayer does, along with drawing us into community.

**Our** Father/Mother...  
Grant **us** the serenity...  
God, have mercy on **us**...

Our opening hymn...Gather **us** in...

And, as only Jesus can do, he takes prayer, the cosmic connection, and community and brings it to life...

In the second portion of the reading from Luke, we have the section known as *The Shameless Neighbor*. Some refer to it as *The Persistent Neighbor*. It all depends on your point of view.

Set in the community of 1st Century Palestine, the tradition among the Hebrews of hospitality and generosity would be strong and life-giving. To break the tradition would be a shameful thing to do.

In teaching his disciples further about prayer, Jesus talks about the neighbor who is dealing with unexpected guests. He or she is scrambling to get some bread to complete the meal and be able to serve the guest, following the tradition of hospitality.

The one that is petitioned for the bread is in bed. The most likely typical Palestinian home would have been a house of two rooms. The door would have been bolted and to get up out of bed and open the door would have awoken the entire family.

Still to not be persistent in seeking what was needed - or to be shamed the next day by neighbors for refusing to help the neighbor...

Both center on the promises of the tradition. Promises that do not change, even when it takes a little more effort in seeking the promise or in living it out for others.

Such seeking and such effort, says Jesus, we will get "whatever we need."

That's the "ouch of faith," so to speak. There is no quid pro quo, here. There is no instant prayer lottery. There is prayer and there is...

Our Mother/Father...

And there is the belief in the promise that we will be given what we need...

And, almost in anticipation of the disciples saying what we might, something like, "Yeah, but Jesus, how will we know...really...that our prayers are being answered, that we are getting whatever we need..."

Jesus assures the disciples that it is so. That God hears our prayers.

"So, I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you for you."

Ask, search, knock and enter...

Don't get discouraged. Trust in God. Pray. Pray together. Know that when you do - you enter a different place, you move closer to God, however you know God, and you and your prayers are heard. You will get whatever you need. You can rely on that.

Ask, search, knock...and enter.

But first, you need to get out of bed.