

February 24, 2019 Ask, Seek, Knock Matthew 7:7-13

The two pilgrimages that Barbara and I made to Israel, reminded me in a profound fashion, that at the age of 70, with three degrees, and 45 years of ministry behind me and all those years of reading and studying the Scriptures....I had a lot to learn. I had and have a lot to learn about the Lord our God, revealed so marvelously in Jesus, HIS only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit who continually casts light into any given day, provided we are prepared to have our eyes opened, that we might see.

That very famous philosopher and theologian, (don't laugh) Clint Eastwood, said it very well, when as a young man he played the pragmatic, hardened homicide detective, Harry Calaghan, "A man has to know his limitations." And there is a corollary to that wise saying, which is, "God is real, and HE is present, and HE loves us to degree we have only begun to sound, when we say with real commitment, (as I do), I believe.

In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7 beginning at verse 7, Matthew tells us what Jesus taught about prayer. It is something we have to take a moment to notice, that Jesus teaching on prayer follows immediately upon his saying, "Don't be judgmental of others. Why do you focus on the speck of dust in your brother's eye, when you fail to see the barn beam that is in your own?" In other words, Jesus teaching on prayer follows hard upon HIS urging us to handle our relationships with other...all of our relationships with other people...very

gently, kindly, lovingly. Why? Because HE above all else wants us to realize that we are being handled, gently, kindly, and lovingly by our Heavenly Father, at all times.

And here is what Jesus taught the crowds that came to HIM, and HIS disciples who were continually with HIM: If you want to be faithful at prayer, ask! If you want it to be a precious experience seek. If you want to experience the love in which God holds you, knock.” People had not heard that kind of thing before. And the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Teachers of the Law in the crowd did not teach that. They taught, “Get yourself straight. Fly right. When you are holy enough, you might consider trying to talk to the Lord God Almighty in prayer.” Jesus said, somewhat like the Nike shoe company, “Just do it!”

“Ask and it will be given unto you, period.” In fact Jesus went on to say, “Everyone who asks, receives.” God loves you. God made you and gave you life. He literally breathed the breath of life into your lungs. That is why you are here. That is why you are alive. Ask! God, your Heavenly Father, wants nothing as much as HE wants you to turn to HIM with the needs of your life, heart, soul, mind, body asking HIM to meet your very real needs. In fact Jesus believed that so profoundly and deeply, HE made this comparison, in the form of a question. “If your child asked you for bread would you offer him or her a stone? Of course not. You know how to care for the needs of your beloved family. Well, said Jesus, God is a more generous

father, mother, sister, brother than you will ever be. HE knows what a good gift is. HE knows what you and I really need. Ask HIM! No one...no one loves you more than HE does. Your Heavenly Father is approachable. You do not need to wait until you get holy enough to be in HIS presence. HE wants you to ask.

And yes we do need to remember, that does not mean we are going to live forever. As the wisdom of Solomon, blessed by the Holy Spirit reveal in Ecclesiastes 3. "There is a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die." But we have been invited and called to ask for life.

In this matter of prayer, Jesus said, to folks not all that different from us, in spite of the era in which they were living, "Seek and you will find." Seeking or Searching is a very active verb. I remember the Christmas in Thunder Bay when my mother-in-law lost her wedding ring. We were all enlisted to search the living room. We had to move the sofa, her favourite reclining chair. We had to comb the living room rug. We had to lift the cushions and search the seams of the upholstery. We had to sweep up the dust bunnies and search among the fibers. Jesus encourages us that our prayers should involve that kind of energy and effort. HE is not looking for an A grade essay. He does want us to work at it. Isn't that interesting? Concerning an exercise that we think of as being all about faith, Jesus says, roll up your sleeves and get to work. Work at it. Seek. Search.

The one who puts effort into it, is going to find real and lasting treasure.

Jesus invited us...no! instructed and instructs us, to knock and knock and knock on heaven's door. There are times when we go to someone else's house when we simply ring the rather musical door bell. And sometimes there seems to be no answer. So what do we do? We knock, usually gently, but making more noise than the lilting bell does. And sometimes we are so excited or frantic for assistance we pound on the door. Especially if we are certain the party we are seeking is at home. Jesus is assuring us our Heavenly Father is at home. And when Jesus says knock...HE means knock. And HE means, if the circumstances are desperate, beat on your Father's door. HE will open it. HE will come. HE will hear. Because HE loves you so much HE gave HIS only Son for you.

We (and I am speaking to myself as much as to anyone else here) need to remember, the story of Jesus' birth is the story of HIS coming into the world to save people. The story of Jesus ministry is about HIS gathering people close to HIMSELF that HE might save them and that through the telling and retelling of their stories, HE might save us. The story, the history which the Gospel accounts unfold is the revelation to us, that the Lord God Almighty loves you so much, HE would give Jesus life, to save yours and mine. We, you and I lose sight of that so very easily...especially when we are in trouble. And please, please remember I said, you and I...because I know

what happens to me when I am in trouble. I am tempted to lose sight of God's eternal purpose.

We prayed this morning over an elevator, a piano, and new members. These are gifts of God's grace. That our life with HIM, in HIS Kingdom might be enriched. They are signs that nothing is impossible, and that the Lord will always provide. Ask, Seek, Knock. Gifts will be given. Answers will be found. Doors will open. Why? Because Jesus Christ is Lord!

Let us pray;

Heavenly Father, we are sometimes tempted to forget that YOU make YOUR face to shine upon us. YOU love us. YOU watch over us. YOU do not hide from us, nor do YOU desert us when the going gets tough or painful. Sometimes we forget, that your first characteristic is that having made us, YOU choose to abide with us, to be present in every circumstance in which we find ourselves. Sometimes we find that hard to understand...usually because what we want is not the same as what we need. Bless us when we pray. Hear us when we ask, find us when we are searching, open the door when we knock. In Jesus name we pray. Amen