

Rogation Sunday 2019

Abiding in Simplicity

St. Luke 11:1-13

St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, OR

by Fr. Bill Baker

"Say, Pooh, why aren't you busy?" I said.

"Because it's a nice day," said Pooh.

"Yes, but—"

"Why ruin it?" he said.

"But you could be doing something important," I said.

"I am," said Pooh.

"Oh? Doing what?"

"Listening," he said.

"Listening to what?"

"To the birds. And that squirrel over there."

"What are they saying?" I asked.

"That it's a nice day," said Pooh.

"But you know that already," I said.

"Yes, but it's always good to hear that somebody else thinks so, too," he replied...

– The Tao of Pooh, Benjamin Hoff

In the hustle and bustle of life there is a strong tendency to complicate the simplicity we all seek. We live fast paced lives trying to accomplish as much as possible so that we may lay some claim to success. There's even a tragic saying used to express this; "if you ain't cheatin' you ain't tryin'". But is that what life is all about? Is this the meaning behind our existence? Scripture tells us that it is appointed unto man to die once (Hebrews 9:27). This is important because it also reminds us that until that time comes we live everyday. And it is how we live these days that make all the difference in the outcome of our lives.

As Christians, our contentment is found in the very words of Christ. And one of those foundational statement is found in the Gospel of St. John, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"* (St. John 14:21). It is this very statement that I believe makes all the difference for a successful life. While the world around us ridicules the Ten Commandments and rolls their eyes at our ceremonial observances of baptism and Holy Communion it is the Christian who understands the

deeper commitment of a life lived in the body of Jesus Christ. The words of Christ matter and adherence to them makes all the difference in how we react as we continue our journeys this side of heaven.

Jesus said in John 3:5, *“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”* And so we baptize with water and invoke the Holy Spirit as an initiation into the very body of Christ. Likewise at the Last Supper, as Christ sat with his disciples, he instructed them (and us) to consume Him bodily in the consummation of bread and wine under the real presence of His body and blood. And so we continue the Lord’s Supper as commanded to this very day. These words of Christ are the path to a truly Christian life. They are a direction that leads to eternal life. But in and of themselves they are merely acts that would be empty gestures if it were not for the prayers that give them life, where our security in Christ is expressed both verbally and spiritually.

In our Gospel reading today we come across another directive of Jesus and the most well known prayer in all of scripture. And since Jesus himself personally directed this prayer it is appropriately called “The Lord’s Prayer”. *“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him Lord, teach us to pray.”* It is here where we see a calling to something deeper. The disciples are not new to prayer. The Jewish people have been praying for a very long time. But now, in Jesus, they sense something more, something closer and they feel an urge to enter in to a place more intimate than before. “Teach us to pray” they ask. *“And he said to them, When ye pray, say, **Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**”*

And so, Jesus brings us back to the simplicity that a life lived for Christ should exude. A simplicity that tells us we don’t have to be stressed out to be part of the human race; a simplicity that says we don’t have to join the maddening crowd; a simplicity that reflects the true Christian spirit. This prayer draws us to seek Heavens peace in place of sins destruction, to only desire what is truly needed day by day, to be forgiven by our

Lord and express that forgiveness to others and lastly to be protected from anything that would lead us away from the Almighty. It is not a prayer for fame or fortune but a prayer of abundant faith, a prayer that gives us permission to rest and rely on the divine nature of a personal God.

In our reading Christ is telling us that it is through our consistent prayers that our faith reaches His divine spirit and that we will receive that which is according to His will, *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*” It is in prayer where spirit touches spirit, where the divine nature of God speaks to the soul of man. The Venerable Bede declares, *“Christ bears witness that the kingdom of heaven is not given to, found by and opened to those who are idle and unoccupied but to those who ask for it, seek after it and knock at its gates. The gate of the kingdom, (he continues), must be asked for by praying. It must be sought after by living properly. It must be knocked at by persevering.”*

“Say Christian, why aren’t you busy?” He asked

“I am, I replied, I am praying.”

“Praying, why would you do that?”

“Because the Lord asked me to.”

“And what are you praying for?”

“To love the Lord with all my heart and soul and mind and to love my neighbor as myself.”

“Ha! Human beings can never love like that!”

“Maybe not...but through me God can.”

And so...we pray, trusting in the promises of a loving and compassionate creator. Trusting that while a deceitful worlds operates without concern, we have given our lives to a Father in which there is no deceit.

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

The Lord asks us to enter in by the anointing of the Holy Spirit in baptism. He asks that we partake of Him at the Table where he remains the final sacrifice for sin and He asks that we pray a simple prayer of simplicity that we might remain the sons and daughters of God.

Life can have its crazy moments and can seem, at times, to be unbearable, but through prayer Christ brings us back into communion where we can rest and find peace.

Today we are with the living and the peace we seek can be found in a heart to heart through the Holy Spirit where God and man come together in Christ.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.