

First Reading: Genesis 18.20-32

Second Reading: Colossians 2.12-14

Gospel: Luke 11.1-13

The readings that we have just heard today speak of the relationships between God and his people.

The account from Genesis tells of two cities which were filled with evil and idolatry. Even today when we are describing a place that is filled with hatred and sin we refer to them as being a real Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asked God – if there are 50 people there in the city who are good and faithful will you spare the city and God said yes - if there are 50 righteous people. Abraham asked: well what about if there are 30 and then 20 and finally if there are 10 righteous people and God relented each time. Abraham dared to ask God for this favor. I believe he dared to ask God because his faith was so strong that he believed if he asked God for something it would be granted to him. How many of us are that daring? Have that much faith?

In the Gospel we are presented with the Lord's Prayer. This version from Luke is slightly shorter than that of Matthew but it contains all the elements necessary for perfect prayer.

It begins with calling God Father: "in Hebrew the *name* means much more than merely the name by which a person is called – it means the whole character of the person as it is revealed and known to us.

As the prayer continues the glory and reverence due to God is stated first and then we continue with our requests. This prayer covers all of life – our present needs, past sins and any future hard times. It is a prayer which speaks to the trust of the person who is saying it. We pray trusting not only that God hears us but also that God will respond to us.

After telling us how to pray Jesus spoke of the traveller who came to the door of a friend in the night but the owner of the house had no bread to offer for hospitality. In the middle east hospitality is a sacred duty; and in the villages back then, bread was baked at home with only enough for a given day because if it was kept and become stale no one would be able to eat it. Jesus tells how the man went to his neighbour to get some bread, he tells of the persistence of the man asking for bread – so persistent was he, that his neighbour who was already in bed finally got up to open the door for him and give him some bread. He is telling us to be just as persistent as the man in his parable.

Growing up with a great deal of violence I believed that there was no good in me – and that made me unlovable. I would ask God every day to put some good in me – just a little bit of good – enough so that I could be loved. And then off and on over the years I would sometimes ask God to put just a little bit of good in me. My grandmother - for more than 30 years would ask God every day to take care of me and hold me close. And then one day, God answered: "*Eleanor – I love you – you are mine.*" It was my grandmother who was persistent - she more than I trusted that God would give her exactly what she was praying for.

Jesus spoke of the strength of prayer when he talked of a father's love for a child and how a father would respond to a child's request. Paul in the letter to the Colossians spoke also of how God, our Father, responds with love and compassion – not by the letter of the law but with total mercy - a mercy which is more than just forgiveness for a sin committed – a mercy that is compassion, charity, grace... Like Abraham, we must have faith and trust that God will have mercy on us, that God will bless us and will hold us in the most tender of embraces.

We ask God – we ask as a child asks his or her parent(s). We dare to ask and we have faith that God will answer us – then we wait in faith - knowing we will be answered and we wait in openness for whatever will be God’s response.

How many of us at one time or another have said “*God – what would you have me say? or Give me the right words to say.*” This has been my own prayer in the past few weeks as I prepared this reflection.

Today – we gather together as a community – to pray together - in relationship with God and one another.

*Our Father, who is in heaven – holy is your name.*

*Your kingdom come – your will be done.*

*And give to each of us our daily bread.*

*Forgive our sins and weaknesses the same as we forgive the sins and weaknesses of others.*

*And don’t put us to the test but deliver us from all harm.*

This says much about God’s relationship with us -- but it says even more about our relationship with God.

Resources:

Genesis 18.20-32

Colossians 2.12-14

Luke 11.1-13

William Barclay – The New Daily Study Bible – *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and the Thessalonians*

William Barclay – The New Daily Study Bible – *The Gospel of Luke*