

SERMON: "PRAYER THAT EXPECTS RESULTS"

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 11:5-13

DATE: AUGUST 16, 2015

Luke 11:5-13 (NIV)

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

During the Depression, an old man operated a lunch counter along the highway. The old man was a little blind and deaf. He wasn't completely aware of all the negative things that were going on around him.

Not knowing there was a depression on, he had a remarkably prosperous business going. He painted his stand nice and bright. He

put up a huge sign on the highway advertizing his restaurant. He served good, hearty meals.

The old man worked hard and saved enough to send his son to college. The son took some economics courses and learned just how bad things were.

When the son came home for Christmas he said to his father, "Dad, something's wrong here. You shouldn't be so successful. Don't you know there's a depression going on?"

The son told how everyone was retrenching and counting their pennies very carefully.

The man listened and began to think he had better take it easy. Perhaps he shouldn't repaint the stand this year. Perhaps he should cut down the amount of meat in the sandwiches. Perhaps he should save where he could---after all there was a depression going on.

The result was that business fell off.

When the son came home at Easter the father told him, "Son, I'm so glad you told me about the depression. You were absolutely right. I can feel it in my business."

We have more power over our lives than we give ourselves credit for. The way we view life, with its opportunities and challenges, can make all the difference in the results we find in life.

As Christians we need to recapture a positive expectancy. We need to live life expecting that God will be with us and answer our prayers and needs. We need to hold that truth close to our hearts and be ready to live with assurance and enthusiasm.

Our Scripture lesson this morning speaks to us of the reasons why we can live expectantly.

There are three distinct but related portions in this lesson. Underlying each portion is the clear truth that as we pray---as we live---we are to expect God's gracious involvement in our lives.

The first portion is a parable.

Jesus tells of a man who had an unexpected visitor at midnight. Custom called for hospitality to be shown to people in need but the host had no food to offer. So he went over to a neighbour who was asleep. He woke the neighbour up and asked for food. The neighbour was hesitant but finally relented because of the host's persistence.

Here we find the truth to be persistent in prayer.

If something means enough to us we need to bring it before God on a regular basis. We are to be persistent because, through persistence, we learn patience and discipline. We learn to search ourselves as we pray and come to grips with what we should pray for.

In our persistence, we're not nagging God. We aren't showing a lack of faith. Our persistence, instead, is to be a constant reminder to us of the expectation that God can and will touch our lives.

The next portion of our lesson includes a threefold promise of encouragement for those who pray:

Ask!

Seek!

Knock!

What we have here is a guarantee that God will listen to our prayers and God will answer them.

We need, of course, to recognize that God's will must be taken into consideration and that our answers will always be according to what God wants for us. But given that truth, we mustn't water down what this passage says.

God answers prayers.
Expect it!

God hears!
God acts!
God becomes involved!

Ask!
Seek!
Knock!

Bring to God all you can in prayer and stand back as God touches your life in response!

Expect it!

The third portion of the lesson tells us why we can have such confidence.

In this portion earthly fathers are compared to the Heavenly Father. The point made is that if earthly fathers, who are imperfect in their love, seek to look after the needs of their children then how much more does the perfect love of God seek to reach out to us in our needs.

The supreme, sovereign God has the power of the universe at God's fingertips. And the good news of the Gospel is that God is our loving parent and we are God's beloved children.

Pray, then, with persistence.

Pray with expectation---because God cares more deeply for us than we can possibly imagine.

God wants more than anything to answer our prayers.

All three portions of today's lesson are inter-related. They are meant to be held together---to be kept together---to be taught together. The foundational truth underlying the whole passage is the fact that, as we pray, we are to expect God's intervention into our lives.

A man entered a train compartment where a husband and wife were sitting. The wife was quite upset. She complained about the car being damp and drafty. She said the service and the food were awful. Nothing seemed to suit her.

The husband seemed rather embarrassed so he asked the stranger what business he was in. The stranger told him and asked about the couple. The husband stated he was a lawyer.

He then turned to his wife and declared that she was in the manufacturing business.

"She manufactures her own unhappiness!" he said.

I think we're all in the manufacturing business.

Sometimes, unhappiness and discontent are by-products of what we manufacture. Many times we manufacture the problem of unlikelihood. We think so many things are unlikely.

We think it's unlikely that God really hears us.

We think it's unlikely that God really cares about us as individuals.

We think it's unlikely that God will answer our prayers.

We think it's unlikely that God would bother to touch our lives.

Such an attitude is deadly.

Instead let's learn to live expectantly. Let's manufacture something positive!

We can begin by doing two things.

First, we need to remember what we know about God.

We need to remember that God is a great and powerful God.

A lady was babysitting her grandson. The little boy asked her for a piece of paper so he could draw her a picture. She gave him several different size sheets of paper but none of them would do. They were all too small.

Finally she asked him what he wanted to draw.

"I want to draw a picture of God," he replied.

How big is our picture of God?

We often make God quite tiny by thinking God can't do this or God won't do that.

In reality, God is so vast and powerful that we can only understand snippets of God. As a result we devise, in our own mind and heart, only a caricature of the real God.

Let's not limit our God to a caricature.

God is all powerful and God is also aware of each small, personal problem we face.

God is all knowing and God is also understanding of our pressures and stresses.

God is perfect and holy and God is also ready to forgive us whenever we come to God in repentance of our sins.

We lose out, immeasurably, when we limit our God to a caricature.

The second help we can use to learn to pray expecting results, is the experience of our own life.

I doubt very much if there is one person here today who can look back over their lives and not see God's guidance and answers to prayer somewhere in their past. It may not always be the guidance we desired or the answer we wanted but, if we are honest, we can see how God has met our deepest and most basic needs over and over again.

God speaks to us of love and care for us as God intervenes in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Sometimes subtly.

Sometimes dramatically.

Our experiences, when we remember and cherish them, overwhelmingly affirm for us the importance of living with humble expectation.

God is all around us. God's answers---God's touch are pressing in on the hectic pace of our lives all the time.

God wants to make a difference in our lives.

God wants to express God's care.

God wants us to draw closer.

We will make it easier for God and ourselves if we can trust that God is reaching out to us---yes---even us.

In great expectation, let us reach back as we take our needs and issues to God in prayer.

God's answers---God's wonders will amaze us!

(1441)