

Sermon Proper 12 Year C

I do not recall when I began to pray, but it was probably not until I had started school. Certainly the oldest memories that I have of praying had to do with school. I remember praying that I would get a certain teacher in fifth grade, which I did not get and the horrible year that I had with the teacher that I did not want. I remember praying as the school year was about to end that I would not fail fifth grade and I passed. I had probably been saying the Lord's Prayer in church as long as I could recall, but had not realized that it was a template for prayer.

In day school chapel we say the Lord's Prayer each time we have chapel. I love to hear those little voices as they say those words. At the beginning of the semester they do not know the words, but quickly they learn the words and learn the cadence of how we say them. This is their introduction to how to pray and it is a way that we have prayed for 2000 years. A part of what I seen in reading this guidance in praying is the use of the pronoun us. We say give us out daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Jesus is teaching us to pray collectively, to pray together, to pray in common. In teaching common prayer to us as Christians Jesus is teaching a central message which is that the faith is not an individual effort. Jesus calls us to live in union with him and with each other.

After the prayer Jesus teaches that lesson about divine generosity in which he says ask and it shall be given, knock and the door shall be open. It is the second part of the lesson. In the first part we are taught how to speak with God. We are taught to address him as our divine father. In this prayer we are reminded that if we share a single divine father then we are all brothers and sisters. In the second part of the lesson we are taught about God and his nature. We are told that God makes all that is available to us. It would be easy to misunderstand and think that Jesus is saying that God's generosity is about human things, but in the last line we are told that the gift of God's generosity is the Holy Spirit. This should be totally reassuring to us because Jesus is saying that the divine gift from God is that he gives of himself.

I think that we should pay attention to what Jesus teaches. To me the

underlying central message is that we are not alone. Another way to say this is that we are all in this together. In praying as Jesus teaches, we are united by all having the same father and we are to think of God as a parent. After we say that God's name is holy we then pray that God's Kingdom will become a reality and that what happens will be what God wants. This may be the greatest challenge in the faith, that being to pray for what God plans to happen, not for what we want. For us who pray this is a lesson as well. We are to put our own desires away and pray for the greater good. What then follows is where we pray for what is essential for our physical existence in saying give us this day our daily bread and we pray for what is essential in our spiritual life in asking God to forgive us and pledging that we will forgive others. The use of rings through the prayer. When we pray for us to have what is needed, we are praying not just for our own personal physical and spiritual needs but for all of the rest of what makes up what might be called the great "us." For me that us for whom we ask god to provide bread and forgiveness, as well as keeping us from being tested by trial, is all people.

Today is Sunday, the day of Christian worship. I imagine that a billion Christians will say the words of the Lord's Prayer today. A billion of us, in countless different languages will see those same words that we will be saying in a few minutes. A billion of us will ask that God provide for our basic needs. A billion of us will ask that God forgive us. When you say those words you will be asking God to forgive all the other people in the great "us." When they say those words a billion people will be asking that God forgive you. I hope that each of us will recall that when we pray the prayer taught to us by God incarnate.

AMEN