

## **Rappahannock Christian Church – 7/25/10**

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

### **Communion Meditation**

As most of you know, we held our annual Children's Day here yesterday. It's always great fun to be with our children. They are so very precious. What a treasure they are!

We are God's children. We are precious to Him. We may not think of ourselves as children, but we are, and we are His treasure. What better sign of this do we have than this Gift of the Elements that He has given us to remind us of just how precious we are to Him. Let's think on this as we partake of the Bread and the Cup.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26** – For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### **Ask and You Will Receive**

As usual, I am not engaging in a sermon series this summer, rather I'm taking texts from the Common Lectionary. This means that thousands of pastors around the country are teaching from this very scripture. It is part of the teachings of Jesus about prayer.

**Luke 11:1-13** – One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

" Father,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.' "

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"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. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!"

This Scripture Reading contains several of Jesus' teachings on prayer.

We have all heard the expression, "Be careful what you pray for." What that means is that often we don't see the whole picture of what we are asking for. We can't see the unintended consequences or that things may not work out as we thought and hoped. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 8 that we don't know what to pray for. He says that the Holy Spirit intercedes for our prayers, interpreting our poor thoughts before the throne of God.

Yet here we have Jesus teaching that we are to be bold and persistent when we go to God in prayer. He gave a parable to explain what He meant.

Now, remember about parables...they can be difficult to understand. Parables are not usually intended to be allegorical, that is, every piece of the story is not equally meaningful and does not "represent" something significant to the teaching which the storyteller wants to get across. We are not supposed to try to uncover the "hidden" meaning of every character or action of the story. Rather, we are supposed to discover the single broad point being made or the response being called for.

So, we would not want to assign great significance to all of the pieces of this story. If we did, we would conclude that God is reluctant to help us. He doesn't wish to rouse himself on our behalf (vs. 7-8). Neither, may I add, do I think that Jesus wants us to picture God as a servant who must come, trembling, to do our bidding when we snap our fingers. God is not genie from a lamp who is there to grant us wishes. That is not what prayer is, and that is not the relationship which Jesus envisions us having with God. Indeed, it is God who will decide what happens and when..

Nevertheless, Jesus says that we should go to God in prayer and that, when we do, God will "give good gifts" to us.

Here's what I think Jesus has in mind. If we believe that our cause is just and that our request is consistent with God's will, then we should persist in asking Him, even if we don't receive it right away. We should be bold, persistent, even when faced with a delay.

Delay can be very hard, but Jesus says not to give up. When we don't immediately receive what we are asking for, our faith is tested. Do we really believe that God CAN grant our request, or do we stop asking because we never really believed God could answer the prayer? Do we have a heart-felt conviction that what we are requesting is good and right? Persistence in prayer is proof that our faith is strong and unwaivering.

Jesus says that God is a kind and loving Father -- and dads, if your child asks for a fish, would you give him a snake? If he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? Well,

God wouldn't do that either. He loves you and wants to do good for you. Jesus says that God is a kind and loving Father.

Many people have only one picture of God. They think of God as a stern judge, angry, displeased and continually ready to pounce upon and squash anyone who gets out of line. But Jesus reveals a different side of God's character. God is tender-hearted, loving, forgiving, gracious and merciful. God wants to bless you. He wants to make you happy and to give you good things. He wants to make your life a joyful song.

But then, what should we ask for? Jesus doesn't get into that here in this passage. It is a question we must ask, however, all the same.

Perhaps "What would Jesus do?" might be a good guideline. Would Jesus ask for selfish stuff? I think not! Then we shouldn't either. But I don't think we need to water down Jesus' teaching and keep our requests "spiritual" either. It's fine to ask God for faith, courage or patience. Don't get me wrong! But why should we not ask God for specific, tangible things if we are determined to use them to His glory? For example, if you are committed and determined to support Christ's Church financially, then why not ask God for financial success? Not so that you can have pride and power over others, but so that you can use it for God's kingdom! If you wanted, say, to create a Rappahannock Christian Church Facebook page on the internet, then why not ask God for a computer to do it on? If your heart is burdened for someone; why should you not pray for that person and ask God specifically to speak to them and to prompt them to respond to your invitations to come with you to church? What would be wrong in persisting in asking?

I am convinced that these are the kinds of things Jesus wants us to request from our heavenly Father. God is good and God is great! He is able to answer our prayers. God knows about the wonderful things we would like to do in His service. *Ask, and you will receive!*

### **Benediction**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. ~ 2 Corinthians 13:14