

February 28, 2010
Echo Hill Presbyterian Church

Luke 11:1-13
2nd Sunday of Lent

Called to Follow: Daily Prayer

We have been talking about the disciplines that those who have committed their lives to following Jesus are to commit themselves to in order that they might be equipped to be the church in the midst of this community – so that they might show the love, the grace, and the mercy of God out there – where all of us live most of our lives.

Remember the 6 disciplines?

- Commitment to community
- Daily Prayer
- Generous Giving
- Weekly Worship
- Regular Bible Study
- Service in the church and beyond

What I have said to all as a way of a promise – that I would take these disciplines during this season of Lent in order that we might understand a little better how they equip us to be the church in this community – in our places of work – in our schools – and even in our homes.

This morning we will be looking at daily prayer and our reading comes from the gospel of Luke – and well I think as we read it – you will understand.

Read Scripture

Donna and I celebrated our 21st wedding anniversary last week. – We really didn't get to do anything special for our 20th so we decide to get away for a couple nights to Galena, Illinois.

We had a great time. We sat by the fireplace in our room and watched the Olympics. We lounged in the hot tub and swam in the pool. We drove to Dubuque to see the Eagles and to walk along the river. We spent time together lingering over meals. And we talked.

We talked about the past. We talked about our wedding day. We talked about the kids and grandkids – shared the joys they brought and hurts we had for them. We talked about this last year – about all the change for us. We grieved for our friends in Miles. And celebrated our new friends in Cedar Rapids. We listened as we shared disappointments and as we shared dreams.

This is not the way it usually is for us. Normally we see each other at the end of the day and the question is 'How was your day?', 'Did you get a chance to...?', 'Did you see...?' 'Did you know...?' 'Could you please...?' When we have time off it's: 'What are we going to do?' 'Do you want to run to Lowes with me?' 'Would you help me with...?'

Maybe it's not that way for you. Maybe those more intimate – more relational conversations – conversations through which we get to know others better – conversations by which we express care and compassion – conversations that leave us more vulnerable and therefore build trust – maybe these come easy for you – but they are not so easy for me.

I am much more comfortable using what Eugene Petersonⁱ calls the language of information – what Walter Brueggemannⁱⁱ calls the language of reporting and describing. I am much more comfortable with the how, what, where, and whens.

Let me tell you about this morning's text. Jesus has been traveling with his disciples – equipping them to be the church – by teaching them and modeling for them the things they should do. Luke tells us that Jesus' disciples have seen John's disciples praying and that they would like to have a prayer – a special prayer that would mark them as a unique community.

What else do you want to know?

I am pretty comfortable with reporting the facts. It keeps some distance between me and you. I am safe and you feel much safer too.

Relational language is often not so safe.

The question “Tell me how you feel about this?” leaves us exposed and vulnerable.

Peterson talks about another type of language. He calls it the language of motivation. This language inspires us to act – it motivates us to get things done.

When I was out at Camp Wyoming last summer, as pastor in residence, on the last night of camp we had a naming ceremony. The name I was given was ‘motivating’. I must be pretty good at the use of this type of language.

We must pray, you and me, we must pray each and every day. How else will we draw closer to God. How else will we experience the fullness of God’s grace that comes to us in God’s healing, in God’s provision, in God’s forgiveness, in God’s comfort, and in God’s peace.

Daily prayer teaches us the language of relationship so that we might be equipped to come close to our God, to each other, and to those we do not yet know. And so if we are to be the church of Jesus Christ in this community we must pray every day.

What do you think – how did I do? Are you ready to start praying?

I am pretty comfortable with the language of knowledge and the language of motivation – and I think that you are too. But I am not so sure that you or I are very comfortable with relational language – the language that we use to share ourselves with others – to be open – transparent – vulnerable with others.

Peterson says that prayer is the language of relationship. *“It is not language about God or the faith; it is not language in service of God and the faith; it is language to and with God in faith”ⁱⁱⁱ.*”

Richard Foster in his book, *Prayer; Finding the Heart's True Home*^{iv}, says that, "... *prayer is nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*"

Jesus' disciples come to him and ask him to teach them to pray and Jesus does. This is more than a fact – it is instead their desire for closeness. Jesus' disciples have seen something in John's disciples that they long for. Jesus' disciples have observed something in Jesus' own prayer life – it is more than a do this and this and this and this. Teach us to pray, they say.

Jesus says when you pray say:

"Our Father hallowed be thy name." This word, Father, is personal – it is a term of endearment and respect for many and that's the point – that we address God in prayer in relational ways. "You who have created me from nothing." "You who carried me through all of life." "Lover of my soul."

Jesus says when you pray say:

"Thy kingdom come." This is more than a petition it is a sharing of our deepest hopes and dreams – that someday God's love will penetrate our hearts and minds – that God's love will permeate from all creation – that life as God intended it to be – life that is good and kind and generous and filled with peace – will be present here and now.

Jesus says when you pray say:

“Give us this day our daily bread.” This petition calls us to be vulnerable – to speak into the midst of our basic needs – our every day needs – no matter how trivial they might seem.

Jesus says when you pray say:

“Forgive us our sins.” This petition has us standing naked before our God – all our brokenness and sin exposed.

Jesus says when you pray say”

“Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive those indebted to us” – which is true unless it is not – which is quite humbling – I mean that we would demand forgiveness while we ourselves were unwilling to forgive.

Jesus says when you pray say:

“Lead us not into temptation.” This petition – this request – reveals the fragileness of daily existence – that we are not perfect – but able, at any moment, to give in the temptations of this life – to speak only in the language of knowledge and the language of motivation – and to shy away from the language of relationship – the language of love.”

Daily prayer equips us to be disciples by helping us to develop the relational language that will help us in building meaning relationships with our God, with one another, and with those we have not met or do not know yet. This language – is not the language of facts and figures – it is

not meant to convince or convict – instead it is the language of love – it is stories shared – it is speaking and listen – it is everyone having a voice – it is the deep places within us shared – it often sounds like poetry and song – there can be laughter and tears – the sentences aren't always complete.

Friends – let me tell you something – there is a world out there that is hungry for meaningful relationships. There is a world in here that is hungry for meaningful relationships. Prayer equips us so that we can use the language of love to share the love of God with each other – and with others “out there”.

So what I am going to challenge you to do today – is to pray – to pray daily – (5 min – 10 min).

To pray and to listen – to breath – and to receive (God's blessing of presence).

ⁱ Peterson, Eugene, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1989. Pg. 90

ⁱⁱ Brueggemann, Walter, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* 2nd Ed., Cascade Books, Eugene, OR, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Peterson p.93

^{iv} Foster, Richard, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Harper Collins, New York, 1992. p.13