

Proper 12C  
July 25, a.D. 2010  
Luke 11: 1 – 13

Prayer is the response to faith. It is the heartbeat of faith and flows naturally from faith. Prayer cannot be stopped but simply happens wherever the gracious Spirit of God has worked faith. With every freshly bathed child of God in holy baptism, the prayers begin and ascend back to the God of its salvation. With every last breath of aged saints, the prayers for a blessed death in Christ and intercession for family and friends left behind are heard.

In this way, prayer is the work of every baptized priest and priestess, who intercede for the church of God and for the world. What makes these prayers and intercessions sweet-smelling in the nostrils of God is the perfuming sacrifice of God's Son. Every prayer of God's children is heard and is sweet-smelling because of Jesus, who teaches us to pray: Our Father who art in heaven.

Even though Jesus teaches us to pray to God the father, prayer happens because of and through Christ Jesus. Even though we are all made by the father, we can only come to know God as our loving heavenly father through Jesus. We love because God first loved us and brought us back to life through His Son. When this love of God moves the heart to pray, the child of God prays not because he has been commanded to pray, but because he wants to pray, he cannot help it but is always praying, he wants to stay in contact with God and knows that God is always and evermore good, loving, kind and merciful because of Jesus.

And so if you want to pray more, meditate on how good, loving, kind and merciful your heavenly father is through Jesus. If sinful and imperfect earthly fathers give gifts to their children through the child's persistence, how much more will God give, who is holy and who is love.

Isn't it hard for fathers to say no to their children's requests? When God says no to our prayers, to our requests and petitions, does that mean that he no longer loves us or that he has stopped being merciful, kind and good?

What happens when God slams the door when we knock? Or if we seek him cannot be found? What happens to the child of God who loses faith because God said no?

A minister's daughter was very close to her teacher. The girl was heart-broken when she found out that her favourite teacher was diagnosed with cancer and was dying. Naturally she prayed to God for healing and restoration for her favourite teacher. The teacher died anyways. What happened to all those sweet-smelling prayers and intercessions? Distraught and overcome with grief, the girl concluded that God cannot be good because he let someone die who was loved and furthermore, if God is no longer good, than He doesn't exist at all.

What happens when we keep on praying for world peace, for the homeless and poor, for widows and orphans and for all persecuted Christians and their suffering goes on? Don't you feel like giving up? Will you be tempted to throw away your belief in God because He said no?

Could this could even happen where there is fear, trust and love of God above all things! But God is still God even if the whole world fell into unbelief which is impossible. God is and always will be good because He allowed his perfect Son to suffer and die for the life of the world. God delights to give and always will give to his beloved children the gift of the Holy Spirit and faith and true fear and love of Him.

When it comes to praying for the poor, Jesus said that we will always have the poor among us. He doesn't want us to stop praying for them but something strange happens as we keep on praying for the poor, God begins to change me and I begin to look for ways to help the poor more and more.

When I pray for someone who is dying, then it becomes more important that God strengthen their faith and comfort them in the life that He gives through His Son, whether God grants them temporary healing or not.

With the gift of Jesus through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, you have been given every spiritual gift and by this your gracious heavenly father delights in giving you His kingdom because of His Son. Our prayer is not that all suffering on earth ends for this is not possible because sin and death will always strike us daily, but that God's kingdom of mercy may come to all.

The greatest gift of your loving heavenly father was yours in holy baptism. For there in that blessed washing of the Holy Spirit, your selfish nature was drowned and your old self was buried with Christ into his death and God raised you with Christ into life with Him that never ends. Where God gives faith, which He is delighted to give more and more, there will always be prayer on behalf of all people.