

Please!

Sermon for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter

Sermon Text: Luke 11:5-13



*<sup>5</sup> And He said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; <sup>7</sup> and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is*

*now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. <sup>9</sup> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup> What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*

In our sermon last week, we learned that we are connected to God, just as the child is connected to its mother in the womb. Because of this connection with God, we have a basic need to talk with God. That's exactly how God made us! And that's exactly how God wanted it! He made us in such a way, that we want to talk with Him. We want to talk with God! We want to tell Him everything! We want to pour out our hearts and lay our worries as well as our thanksgivings at His feet. God loves it when we do all that. That's exactly why He made human beings in His own image. God wants a relationship with us. God wants us to talk with Him. And that's why today's sermon text encourages us to do exactly that. We should talk with God! We should talk with God because God didn't make robots but people. People who make bad mistakes. People who make the wrong decisions over and over again. But people who can talk. And so, talking with God is one of the most fundamental parts of being a Christian. We can tell God everything. We can whine, beg, even accuse and yell at Him. But in any case, also praise Him with cymbals, trumpets, organ, recorders, bagpipes and whatever else there is in the world! Praise at full blast! Praise because He is there! Praise that He made everything so wonderfully.

To encourage us to pray, Jesus prepared a special parable for us. The example comes from Israel at that time. In ancient Israel, you couldn't just go to the grocery store any time to buy bread. That's why it was a normal part of life to lend bread to your neighbor if he hadn't been able to get to the store, especially if he was also relentlessly annoying. As Jesus tells us – if the friend is able to be roused by his annoying neighbor, how much more is God—who is literally already at the door—just waiting to pour out His heavenly blessings on us. God just wants us to ask Him. He wants that because He wants to pull us out of dull disbelief. Because whoever asks, believes. And whoever asks much, believes much! That person is also in a living relationship with God. There is a constant back and forth between God and those who believe. From one to another and back again. What a wonderful relief prayer can be in such a

relationship. Because without prayer, I'm on my own. Without prayer, I must achieve and accomplish more and more, so that things go better for me and so that I reach my goals. And I am never satisfied. If I fail, I can only look bitterly and disappointedly at the others who contributed to my failure, or I can get frustrated with myself my failures are my own fault. I But with prayer, I can get out of this vicious cycle. I can step outside of myself, lay everything before God and make a new start. Besides, regardless of what my situation may be at the moment, I can believe that God has a good purpose planned for me. With the human example of the annoying friend at midnight, his disruptive knocking is the reason why he is heard. Now there is the question of why God should answer our prayers at all. Surely not because we annoy Him in His heavenly peace, right? No, at this point, the situation is actually different. Because our God is not really annoyed by our prayers. He wants us to pray to Him. But at this point, we must make one basic thing clear. When we pray, it's not as though we have to persuade God that He must give us a new car or a lot of money. When God doesn't do that, it would then mean that we didn't pray enough! No, God isn't being redirected by our human will whenever we pray. No, it's quite the opposite. When we pray, we are changed and not God. In prayer, it may well be that we don't get our will at this point. When Joseph was thrown into the well by his brothers, from a human understanding, it looked as though he would die. There was no more hope for him in this well. His life was over. But precisely in this deep well, Joseph could nevertheless know that God had a plan for him. And even in the most dangerous and hopeless situation in the well, he could hold on to his faith. Even then when he was led into Egypt as a slave. Joseph had to suffer for many years, waiting for an answer to prayer. And yet he believed in God's plan. Only at the end did it become clear that God had a great plan in mind for Joseph. None of that was visible or perceivable as Joseph sat in the cold, dark well. It's often like that for us when we pray. When we are in a dire strait, we only see the hardship and see no way out. God wants us to open our eyes and see the plan that He has for us. Even when we can't immediately see this plan. To understand this plan of God's, Jesus again used a wonderful example: When a child asks its father for an egg, he doesn't hand over a snake or scorpion, right? No, that's unthinkable! Any normal person says such a father must go to jail. "Exactly!" ... Jesus says to that. And if such a bad thing can't even be expected from an earthly father, how much less would our heavenly Father do something like that? Jesus wants to make it clear to us that God is really our Father! If Jesus weren't there, we couldn't say that so clearly. But we know that that's exactly why Jesus came to us so that we may be called God's children again. And that's exactly why Jesus also died on the cross. We are children of God because of Jesus! And because of Jesus we may also pray to God and say: Abba Father! Jesus wants to strengthen our faith. He wants that because we human beings can so quickly lose faith in God's good plan. "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Many will be disappointed about this answer. Isn't that too cheap? I wanted something specific from God and He only gives me the Holy Spirit! Yes, it can even be that our will rebels against these gifts of God and like a child in a toy store, we loudly shout: "But I want to have something else!" But God truly gives us much more than we can ask. Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us back our fellowship with Him. Indeed, God sees an entirely different horizon that is yet hidden from our eyes. He sees the fellowship that we have with Him now and forever, that can't ever be destroyed. The Indian doctor, Mary Verghese, became a quadriplegic because of a bus accident. She prayed for her healing – And sadly, after many operations, she wasn't healed. God didn't answer her prayers at first. She didn't understand that at first. And later she wrote: "I prayed for feet – He gave me wings." God always gives us more than we think or can imagine. We can name so many things in our lives that were very important to us. But now, like the wind, have flown away. God has a different horizon. He always wants to give us the best. He literally

waits for us to ask Him. He literally waits and stands with the switch before the heavenly blessings that He would like to pour over us. He only waits for one word: "Father, please!" Amen.