

Abba, Father! Please!

Sermon for the 6th Sunday of Easter

Sermon Text: Luke 11:5-13

And [Jesus] 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, ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷and 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'? ⁸I 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. ⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If 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!"

Anyone who has written down the prices of groceries in the last weeks and months will be shocked. There was a pretty extreme rise in prices. Everything became more expensive. That means that we must put up with restrictions here and there. Perhaps, we will have to be content with less. In some other countries, people don't have the luxury to make such decisions, they already had nothing previously, and now they must scrape the last few crumbs from the pots, run away, or even sell a kidney or some other organ so that their children can survive. We again see a food shortage spreading in many countries! In recent days, the richest countries have teamed up to discuss this very issue. There are many suggestions and ideas. The situation is not yet hopeless. If everyone would work together, there might be a solution after all. And that's good! God made people in such a way that we can search and find creative solutions. God made us so that we can work, so we can feed ourselves, and eventually even care for others. At the same time, we have discovered very clever machines that can work for us. We've gotten so good at it that we can even manipulate the laws of nature so that they suit us and we can feed even more people. With all this work, it can easily happen that we forget that we ourselves are a part of nature. We are not God, but His creations. Meanwhile, we have become so adjusted to our work and achievements in our lives that we have gotten used to doing everything on our own. We even order our food online and if not, there is a store around the corner where we can always find enough. However, our lives can't only be saved through our own efforts! We need help! We are subjected to the laws of nature too. And since we are subjected to the laws of nature, we suffer from the same limitations. There are times and events that we can no longer control. There are times where we are lost and must die. On such days, we realize that working hard just isn't enough. Nor is it enough to invent clever machines. In the end, we remain poor beggars! And in our sermon text today, Jesus encourages to do exactly that – we should and may ask!

To encourage us to be such beggars, Jesus told a special parable. The example is common from that time in Israel. In ancient Israel, you couldn't just go to the store all the time to buy bread. That's why it was quite a normal interaction to borrow bread from your neighbor if you didn't make it to the store. In Jesus' example, the neighbor was so annoying until he finally got what he wanted. This is a wonderful parable to explain to us that humans aren't in control of everything. No, we need other people. And above all, we need God. We need God. Through this parable, Jesus wants to make clear to us that at some point, we all have to scrape the bottom of the barrel and when we are in this situation, one thing matters above all else: We should and can ask. God even wants us to ask. He doesn't just want us to ask in times of need, but to always be asking! God wants to bring us out of dull unbelief and He wants to show us that not only work is important but also prayer – because whoever prays, believes. And whoever prays much, believes much! They are also in an active relationship with God. There is a constant back and forth between God and the person who believes – from the one to the other and back again. What a wonderful relief prayer can be in such a relationship! Because without prayer, I am by myself. Without prayer, I must always achieve more, do more, so that everything goes well for me and so that I reach my goals. And I am never content. If I fail, I must give up hope in myself because my failures are my own fault. Or I can find someone else to blame. I can get out of this vicious cycle with prayer. I can step outside of myself and can lay everything before God and start fresh. Furthermore, I can believe that God has a good purpose for me regardless of what my situation may be at the moment. With the human example of the annoying friend at midnight, his persistent knocking is the reason why he is answered. Now the question arises why God should hear our prayers at all – surely not because we annoy Him in His heavenly peace, right? No, at this point, the situation is really different because our God is not really annoyed by our prayers. He even wants us to pray to Him. At this point, however, we must clarify one fundamental point – when we pray, it's not like we have to persuade God to give us a new car or a lot of money and if God doesn't do that then it would mean that I just didn't pray well enough! No, when we pray, it's not that God allows Himself to be swayed by our human will, it's the exact opposite. When we pray, we are changed and not God. In prayer, it may well be that we don't get our way at this point. When Joseph was thrown into the well by his brothers, it seemed from a human perspective as though he would die. There was no more hope for him in this well. His life was over. But it was in that deep well that Joseph could still know that God had a plan for him. And even in the extremely dangerous and hopeless situation in the well, he could hold on to his faith. Even then when he was in slavery in Egypt. Joseph had to suffer for many years – all of that without answered prayers. And still he believed in God's plan. Only at the end was it clear that God had a big plan in mind for Joseph. None of that was visible or tangible as Joseph sat there in the cold, wet well. For us, it is often the same when we pray. When we are in dire need, we only see the need and can't see a way out. God wants us to open our eyes and see the plan that He has for us. Even when we can't see this plan right away. To understand this plan of God's, Jesus again uses a wonderful example: If a child asks his father for an egg, the father doesn't give him a snake or a scorpion, right? No, that's impossible! A father like that should go to prison, says every normal person. "Exactly!" Jesus says. And if you can't expect something that bad 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 really is our Father! If Jesus weren't there, we couldn't say that so clearly. But we know that Jesus came to us exactly for this reason – that we may again be called God's children. And that's also why Jesus died on the cross. Because of Jesus, we are children of God! And because of Jesus, we may also pray to God and say: Abba, Father! Jesus wants to strengthen our faith. He wants to do that because it happens so quickly with us that we lose faith in God's good

Plan. "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Jesus summarizes. Some people will be disappointed about this answer. Isn't that too cheap? I wanted something very specific from God and He just gives me the Holy Spirit! Yes, it can even be that our will rebels against this gift of God's and we cry out loudly like a kid in a toy store: "But I want something else!" But in fact, God gives us even more than we can ask for. It is through the Holy Spirit that God gives us back fellowship with Him. God sees things at a completely different perspective which is still hidden from us. He sees the fellowship we have with Him now that can never be broken. God has a different perspective. He wants to always give us the best. He is literally waiting for us to ask Him. He is literally waiting, standing with the switch in front of the heavenly blessings which He wants to pour out on us. He's just waiting for one word: "Father, please!" Amen.