

It Will Be Given to You

Luke 11:1-13

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, July 24, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Five police officers were murdered in Dallas. Three police officers were murdered in Baton Rouge. 84 people were murdered in Nice, France. Prior to that were riots in Ferguson, Missouri. Prior to that were numerous examples of police brutality caught on camera. African Americans were murdered in Baltimore and in other places. Such murders may have been legal according to standard police practices, but the Lord judges with a more righteous standard than any human court of law. Prior to this there were murders in Paris. ISIS is murdering thousands who do not agree with them and conquering territory in which they rule by terror. Let us not forget the hundreds that are murdered in Chicago every year including small children. A terrorist entered a night club in Orlando and murdered people there. Those who are mentally ill murder people at an abortion clinic. They murder people in a movie theater. When I was young these kinds of things happened only in foreign countries. Now you young people are growing up in a country where this happens from time to time. I would call it routine, but it is too horrible to label it with such a bland word as routine. And let us not forget 9-11.

And what do you do in the face of such horror? Some of you thank God that we live in Broadlands and Homer and other places where such things do not take place and yet buried in our cemetery is a mentally ill man who took the lives of his family. Perhaps we are safe because there are fewer of us here to be murdered and to commit murder and in a big city the odds are higher and they make a bigger target. I don't really believe that it has that much to do with a small town's inherent righteousness.

In addition to fulfilling your vocations in the face of the horror, the Lord commands you to pray. And so we pray. Have you been praying over such horror? And if you have not, why not? Is it that you believe that God will not answer?

Lack of prayer is one of the chief indicators of idolatry.

If you do not pray it means that you are relying on someone or something else to fix the problem. Do you really think that stricter gun laws will reduce violence? Do you really think that defending the Second Amendment will reduce violence? Do you really think that a stronger foreign policy will reduce violence? Even if Mr. Trump got his ban on people entering the United States from foreign states who have been compromised by terrorist organizations the problem of violence would still remain. There will still be radicalized Americans who will commit murder. Do you really think that electing someone who can shout loudly and express the anger and fear of millions of people will really be able to reduce the violence?

But some people trust the government to be able to fix these problems. And so they do not pray. They vote. They campaign. They have their political and social theories, but they do not pray. Not to pray for the state is an indication that we have forgotten that the state is God's institution and that it is to be a good one. For that to happen it requires prayer.

If you participate in the political process, but you do not pray, then you are not trusting in God, but rather trusting in the State.

But there are some of us who are smart enough to know that the State cannot fix everything. You would think that we would pray, but we do not pray. We are relying on some kind of social engineering. We want prayer in school, but only because the young people should be made to pray and not because

we actually want to pray ourselves. We think that if the Natural Law is taught in school and children are responsible to God that they will shape up out of the fear of Him. We believe that sound preaching and catechesis in vocational theology will shape the congregation into the kind of people who will raise their children to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

And like the State all of those are good things. They are gifts of almighty God, but if we are not at the same time praying for peace, then we are trusting in the means of God and not in God Himself. This is an easy idolatry to commit. The Church has committed it repeatedly throughout the centuries. We have worshipped His means rather than Him. We think that if we can just get our institutional church right it will solve everything. And we certainly need to get our institutional church right, but if there is no prayer, then we are worshipping an idol. Prayer reveals in whom we trust.

And why don't we pray?

It is because we do not believe. In the end we are all rationalists. We believe in human reason just like everyone else. We denounce evolution and then live like it happens. We denounce progressives and then hope they are successful. We do not pray.

We do not pray because we honestly believe that God is not there or we believe that He does not answer prayer. Look how awful the world is. How can there be a God who answers prayer? How can God be favorable toward us when so much terror is happening in the world?

And what does Jesus promise you when you pray? He promises the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit? Now what kind of promise is that?

We are living in a world where terror is glorified. The press reports on it and glorifies it by doing so. They may call it terrible, but it receives headline attention. It is not like the important news of the day that gets ignored. If they ignored it, it would be denounced, but they give attention to it and by doing so they glorify it. They subject it to analysis. They force the politicians to address it and why do they do this? Because we will watch it. We are afraid and we want to know. We want to know where the danger is. We want to know what is happening. We want to know what our politicians are going to do about it as if they are our Savior and not our Lord Christ. And what does the Lord Christ promise us when we pray? The Holy Spirit.

He tells you to ask and it will be given to you. He is making a promise here. He says to knock and it will be opened to you. He is making a promise here. He says to you seek and you will find. He is making a promise to you. He tells you that people will give other people something because they are responding to the other person's impudence and not responding out of love. Then He tells us to think about how much more we will receive from the Father in heaven because He gives out of love! He points out that we are evil and that we give good gifts to our children. How much more the Father in heaven who is righteous will give to those who cry out to Him.

And what does He guarantee and promise? The Holy Spirit.

Is this some kind of cop out answer? Is this our Lord's way of avoiding the subject at hand? Is this the Lord's way of trying to get us to pray without really promising anything concrete? We live in world of violence and hatred and we want it to end! Why doesn't He promise us some solutions to our problems? Why does He promise us the Holy Spirit?

He promises the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the solution to our problems.

The Holy Spirit is the One who creates faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit performs this miracle the same way that He performed the miracle of creation: through words. The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus

Christ to people. When people hear the great testimony about Jesus and all that He did for us they are moved to faith in Jesus Christ. When a person believes in Jesus such people believe everything that Jesus has said. One important thing that Jesus has said is that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This may initially sound like Jesus is advocating for the suicide of His followers. After all if he commands me not to resist an evil person and the evil person wants to do me harm, won't the evil person harm me or even murder me and I have a Lord that has commanded me to take no revenge and not to resist an evil person. He has commanded me to forgive those who sin against me as many as seventy times seven times in one day. How is it then that people follow Jesus at all? It seems that you cannot fight a terrorist if you are following Jesus.

And so the Holy Spirit testifies to eternal life in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit testifies to the death of Jesus which reconciles us to God and grants us eternal life. Therefore we live with the promise that no matter what happens eternal life will be ours. The Holy Spirit gives a practical demonstration that death is defeated in order to reassure our wavering hearts. He raises Jesus from the dead. He promises that in the forgiveness of our sins, we will rise from the dead and live forever in the New Creation that is coming.

This puts an end to violence because it puts an end to our violence. The Holy Spirit moves us to repent of our sins and that includes our violence. While governments can legislate and enforce laws to limit violence only the Holy Spirit can grant the new birth that removes violence. Only the Holy Spirit can put to death the old evil nature that longs for violence and power. Only the Holy Spirit can teach us contentment with what Jesus has given to us such that we will not covet what our neighbor has and try to take it from him. Only the Holy Spirit relativizes wealth such that we are generous to those who are covetous of us.

The Holy Spirit is exactly what we need!

Our congregation has supported the Lead a Child organization. They have been here for mission festival. A member of our congregation sits on their Board of Directors. On one occasion Christy and I had the opportunity to go to one of their organizational dinners. We heard about the work that Lead a Child was doing in Latin American and at the time the new work that they were starting in Africa. For those of you who may have forgotten or do not know Lead a Child is an organization that builds and underwrites Lutheran schools in third world countries. It gives children an education who would not otherwise have it and it gives them an education that teaches them about Jesus Christ. Lead a Child is essentially building schools where the Holy Spirit does His work.

At this particular dinner the president of the Guatemalan Lutheran Church spoke. He was educated in a Lead a Child school. He became a pastor and now preaches the Gospel that he was taught in school. And an African pastor spoke to us. He was remarkable. He told us that, "You of the Children's Christian Concern Society (which is Lead a Child's old name) are putting an end to demon possession in Africa." Being a traditional old school Lutheran and infected with my own form of rationalism I thought he was crazy to say such a thing. Really, Lutherans casting out demons! And doing so with Lutheran schools no less! Get out of town! But then he recounted to us the tribal violence in his country. He spoke about pregnant women being murdered by enemy tribes and how the violence had gone on for generations until Lead a Child built a Lutheran School in their country and began to teach them about Jesus Christ. He reported that when the Holy Spirit brought the children of these rival tribes to faith in Jesus the tribal violence ended because they believed in the One who laid down His life for them and who taught them to love their enemies and pray for those who persecuted them. When he got done reporting this to us he told us again that we were ending demon possession in Africa.

The Holy Spirit is exactly what we need. In fact the Holy Spirit is all that we need. When we have Him we have the kingdom, our daily bread, the forgiveness of sins. He leads us not into temptation. He is more important than any public policy, not that public policy is bad, but because public policy alone cannot do the job. Hearts must be changed and that is what the Holy Spirit does.

And so pray! Pray for the Spirit. You witnessed another person receive the Holy Spirit in our midst this morning. The Holy Spirit lives and dwells in the bodies and souls of all of the members of our congregation. He is active in our hearts to keep us in true faith in Jesus Christ.

Pray! Pray for the Holy Spirit upon our enemies so that they may have the same peace and reconciliation that we have found in Christ Jesus. What terrorist ever benefited from being a terrorist?

Pray because if you knock, it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Ask and it will be granted to you!

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.