

**July 26, 2020**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Sermon – Pastor Barnes**

***What Would You Pray For? Solomon and Wisdom***

Texts – 1 Kings 3:5-12; Psalm 119; Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31=33, 44-52

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

**THIS IS A PRAYER TO OUR LORD!**

Do you know where these words come from? Do you know why you hear them often in the beginning of a sermon? What are they about?

Words of my mouth – that which is heard. Meditation of my heart – that which translates from my heart to words for you. Be acceptable – to be in line with. To be what needs to be heard from God or Jesus to me, to you. I PRAY and HOPE!

Be acceptable – to whom? To YOU, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. And acceptable to what is in YOUR heart when heard.

This is where I place my trust. This is my prayer.

So again: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

What are those words? They are prayer! – to be acceptable to you. They are not just words of repetition, where people sitting in the congregation say: Okay, settle in, Pastor is getting started.

Or like a prayer that isn't a prayer without saying..."IN Jesus name."

These words are truly what I am praying for and other pastors if they use Psalm 19 should pause and let these words sink in.

This is what we are praying for! I have to tell you, more than once in different congregations I would start out with this prayer or the familiar "grace and peace to you from God our Father. "

I wouldn't get more than 2 sentences in and a couple of heads would start nodding.

It's almost as if "let the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart," were the beginning of a hypnotic trance that these tired folk could disconnect with!

Solomon is beginning his reign and in a dream God ASKS! Isn't it interesting, rather than Solomon praying first! What should I give you? God says.

This reminds me of Romans 8: We don't know how to pray as we ought the Spirit HELPS us in our weakness – that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

What do we pray for? Power and control in our relationships? Money, like the lottery, so supposedly, all of our problems will be solved. Wellness, health or endurance if we, or family are suffering from some illness or problem in life. Success in life in job in retirement. To be respected by people outside of family. To be loved and supported by family and/or spouse.

What do we pray for? And what if - God is already listening/asking/connected with you? Do you remember the Ask/Search/Knock passage?

Listen to the end again: Matthew 7:11 - If you then, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Solomon said: God you have kept me in your great and steadfast love. So how about wisdom? Since I have no clue how to rule and need to be able to discern between good and evil. Have we prayed to have a discerning and wise mind and heart? What is wisdom anyway?!

Even God (in this story) was surprised! What! Not long life? Not riches? Not conquering your enemies? BUT you asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right for those you rule. For others!

God listens. God is Love. God hopes in his children. God has steadfast love, is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounds in all these things for us.

This is why we can pray all that is on our heart and mind! Not always getting it right or having the right focus. Because the Spirit does intercede.

You will receive my letter in the Hope on the Hill". One quote I repeat about prayer: You don't have to be 'religious' to pray. Nor do you have to do it very well. Some of the most helpful prayers I've heard have come from people who stumbled around for something to say. The stumbling and hesitancy fit the intensity of the moment! The really important prayers, the most meaningful, are probably ninety-five percent 'stumble' and five per cent well-organized thoughts."

Most people who seem to have this special wisdom, also have hearts that ponder. They have hearts that listen. They are in prayer, even when they are not "in prayer," officially!

But if we pray we also believe and if we believe and have faith. Then the Spirit intercedes with sighs to deep for words! Wisdom, an understanding heart and mind.

From Psalm 119: "When your word is opened it gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments. Turn to me and be gracious to me, As you always do to those who love your name."

Understanding to the simple. Solomon said, he was just a youth, not highly educated. I have known many people who do not have numerous initials of "degrees" after their name and are wise and understanding. They have taught me many things and a deeper heart of caring.

H. George Anderson was the president of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary where I attended. He has/had written many books. Dr. Anderson also became the president of Luther College when my daughter Stacey was looking. We stayed at his house when visiting! AND he became the Bishop of the entire ELCA.

Yet, we had pizza together. He uplifted our hearts. Never spoke "over our heads," as he could have. Connected with our thoughts.

Like Solomon – the prayer for wisdom was answered. I have also known many people who do have numerous initials of "degrees" after their name....or at least claim to be "educated."

A line from a movie said: "You are one of the dumbest "smart" people I know". I would never say that, but it left me questioning, what were THEY praying for? They seemed to have no sense of sensibility when it comes to community. Or, when it comes to caring for others. Or when it comes to compassion, that does not always follow conclusions by the book.

Again 1 Kings: And God said – Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right. So shall it be.

Love does not always follow the world. Love may not be the conclusion you hoped for, but is a way that God in Christ walks with you and makes you strong of heart.

There is a verse in Romans today: verse 28: We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

I sometimes wonder if we might translate "work together for good," As being the good we want or look for?

I have to work hard at keeping myself out of the "center." It has always been harder than I thought to walk with God and not pull away. There is an apocryphal story (means not written anywhere!) That when I was little I tended to not stay close to mom! In fact, when we walked the downtown of Joliet (there was no such thing as "malls" back then) Shopping the stores. My mom could never look away for a minute. Her solution was a "human leash!" You know, around my chest attached to a leash! I do remember her telling me that she would often get strange looks from people walking by.

It's amazing that Solomon facing so much power, stayed close to God and wanted wisdom!

Psalm 32:8-11:

*I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.  
Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
Whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
Else it will not stay near you.  
Many are the torments of the wicked,  
But steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.  
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,  
And shout for joy, all you upright in heart.”*

**Now, at this point you may be wondering, or maybe not!** What has all this prayer about wisdom have to do with a mustard seed or with yeast?

A tiny seed planted begins to grow and then becomes strong enough to carry birds and more.

A pinch of yeast, mixed in with a couple of cups of flour.

Add some water, some sugar.

Mix it up well together and put it in a warm, dry place. IN just about an hour that lump of dough has tripled in size. The Seed. The Yeast. How did this happen? IN our world of bigger is better you know how many things happen! We live in a culture that often believes that bigger is better. Go to McDonalds or other fast food they always want to “super size it!” Look at the commercials, those hamburgers keep getting bigger and bigger never mind the calorie count!

When a prominent Televangelist was exposed for financial improprieties and wrongdoing, a commentator said, “Well, he must be doing something right. Look at the size of his congregation.”

Yet, Jesus had only 12 disciples. He taught in parables and prayed: Matthew 11:25

*“At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank’ you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”*

The parable of the mustard seed and yeast is NOT about bigger is better.... But is rather how God continues to grow in our hearts as we pray for wisdom. It is this wisdom of God that permeates the dough. Jesus is beckoning us to imagine a world that is the arena of God’s action.

Maybe the lives that we’re living are not totally our own? Perhaps God regularly intrudes. We just don’t have the imagination to see those defined incursions. Those “incursions” so that Solomon wanted to be wise enough to understand and then connect with the people. Those “incursions” are what we should be asking for and praying about.

I want to end with a couple verses from the Romans passage, Vs. 31: *What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?* And Vs. 35 and 37: *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Praying for wisdom then gives us the patience, hope and endurance to walk with God...who keeps asking.

And we pray: Amen. Let it be so.