

August 8, 2004 (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)
 10th Sunday after Pentecost [c]

[In this sermon is a story about Joni Earickson Tada. If you want to show a photo of her, or have more information about her, to go the web site www.joniandfriends.org]

Luke 11:9-13

⁹ "So I tell you, ask, and God will give to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will open for you. ¹⁰ Yes, everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find. And everyone who knocks will have the door opened. ¹¹ If your children ask for a fish, which of you would give them a snake instead? ¹² Or, if your children ask for an egg, would you give them a scorpion? ¹³ Even though you are bad, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (New Century Version)

Lectionary gloss:

Luke 11:9-13

9. Now I tell you, ask and it will be-given to you. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be-opened for you.

10. Anyone asking will receive and anyone searching will find and anyone knocking will have the door opened for him.

11. If your son asks you for a fish, will any of you give a snake instead-of a fish?

12. Or if your son asks for an egg, will you give your son a spider?

13. Now if you sinful people know enough to give your children good gifts, then think much more your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those asking HIM!"

Question: If God already knows what we need,
Why do we need to pray?

God knows everything. He knows what is best for us.
Why does God want us to pray?

Maybe you can remember the time when you were a small-child. If you lived at home in a big city, you maybe remember ice-cream trucks going past [pass-in-front] your house. If you did not have money to spend for ice-cream, what-did-you-do [*do-do*]?

You ran to your father or mother. And maybe you stood in front of your father, holding-your-hand-out, expecting money. But before your father gave you coins for the ice-cream, you must first use words, use language, to ask that you want money for ice-cream.

Your father wanted you to learn four things:

- (1) Your father wanted you to learn how to communicate.
- (2) Your father wanted you to learn MANNERS.
- (3) Your father wanted you to learn that his money was a gift.
He did not owe money to you only because you ask.
- (4) Your father wanted you to learn to be thankful.

Our Father in Heaven acts the same way to us.

God wants us to communicate with Him. He wants our fellowship. God wants us to learn that we always depend on Him, and He is kind to us because He loves us. God owes us nothing. God wants us to show thanksgiving.

Notice in our lesson today,

Jesus never said, "God will give you everything you ask."
Jesus never said, "God will give you everything you want."

The Bible does promise that God wants to give us what we need."

You may remember lessons from long ago, that God answers our prayers in three ways. God says:

- (1) Yes
- (2) No
- (3) Wait

We may add a 4th way that God answer prayer:

- (4) Yes, but in a better way than we ask and hope.

Dr. HOWARD HENDRIX, a teacher (professor) in Dallas Theological Seminary, tells about one young man who came into his office, complaining:

"God doesn't answer my prayer! Why not? I prayed for God to show me the woman He wants to become my wife. But so-far [since], nothing!"

Dr. Hendrix asked, "How old are you?"

"14."

Dr. H. answered: "Maybe God already chose your wife for you. But God knows you are not-yet the man that He wants for her."

Jesus describes God as "**Our Father in Heaven.**"

Wise fathers don't give their children everything they want.
Wise fathers don't give their children everything they request[ask].

Wise fathers give their children only what is best for them.

Wise fathers are not concerned that their children have many things.

Wise fathers want their children to have good character (attitudes).

Wise fathers want their children to learn how to play, and how to work.

Wise fathers want their children to become wise themselves.

God, Our Father, wants the same for us.

One teen girl, named JONI EARICKSON, gave her life to Jesus. She understood that she is a sinner, and that Jesus died on the cross. Trusting Him, she received His forgiveness and peace.

Joni also trusted His promise for a wonderful life.

But her idea what a "wonderful life" meant: Married to a man, with a big house, and two kids.

Jesus had a different idea.

One year later, Joni Earickson, diving in Chesapeake Bay, broke her neck in shallow water. She almost drowned. Later, sometimes she wished that she did drown. Now she is paralyzed from the neck down. She can't walk. She can't use her arms and hands.

She couldn't understand how God can let this happen to her. She loved sports. She was skilled in riding horses. Now, she is stuck in a wheelchair.

Then one day she learned: God CARES more for our inner character, than our physical ability or beauty. God will work with us to make us most successful in serving Him, not serving ourselves.

Today Joni Earickson is famous.

She helps other people with disabilities understand that God still has a wonderful plan for their lives.

She helps churches learn how they can share Jesus' Love to people with disabilities.

Every year Joni gets many old used wheelchairs. She takes the wheelchairs to prisons. Prisoners work to fix the chairs. Then she airlines to donate planes to take those chair to disabled people in poor countries.

And Joni is still in a wheelchair.

She can't dress herself.

She can't bathe herself.

She can't use the bathroom by herself.

She can't brush her teeth or brush her hair.

But she has learned to use her limited skills for God's glory. And many more people know God's love better through her experience.

Sometimes God gives the best things through the worst experiences.

What are the best things that God can give us?

[Answer:]

All our sins forgiven, and life forever with Him in heaven.

How does God give us those very best things?
Through His only Son's terrible suffering and death on the cross.

In our lesson today, Jesus used three words to describe prayer:

- (1) Ask
- (2) Seek
- (3) Knock

Ask for what?
Seek for what?
Knock for what?

Jesus answered that in the last verse:

Now if you sinful people know enough to give your children good gifts, then think much more your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those asking HIM!"

The work of the Holy Spirit is
to give us the character of Christ.
The work of the Holy Spirit is
to make us more like [as] Jesus.

And Jesus is eager to answer that prayer.

Psalm 37:4 says,
"Delight [thrill] yourself in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart"

If we thrill ourselves in the Lord,
our hearts will desire what?
Him!

In the "Lord's Prayer," we pray:

Our Father who art in heaven.

Martin Luther wrote about the Lord's Prayer:

With these words God tenderly [gentle] invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence [faith] we may [can] ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

If we understand that God is our loving Father, then we know that God will only do what is best.