

**July 25<sup>th</sup>**  
**Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:6-19; Luke 11:1-13**

Questions discussed by congregation with one another:

- Is it hard to pray? Why/Why not?
- What do you pray about?
- If you don't pray, why not? What's stopping you?

In our gospel reading, one of the disciples says to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." He responds, "When we pray, we say. . ." and there are the words of a prayer that we find very familiar, a prayer that we pray together in worship every Sunday – the Lord's Prayer.

There was a woman rescued after a week of being under the rubble in Haiti and she was rescued by "The Gophers." When they found her and pulled her out, she was still singing after one week of being in the rubble. As her hoarse voice rose above the rescue noises, The Gophers began to cry as they carried her out to hand her over to medical personnel.

This wasn't the first time this search and rescue group had worked. They've worked around the world because of their reputation, after forming in Mexico City in 1985. At that time, an earthquake had struck and during the disaster, rescuers didn't appear soon enough. So, the Tlatelolco residents formed their own rescue group and learned on the job and they continue to do this dangerous work.

Unlike other rescuers who start at the surface and work their way down through the rubble, this group tunnels into the rubble and props up makeshift tunnels with the debris. It's very dangerous work, but it helps them get to the victims faster and saves more lives, like Ena Zizi, the singing Haitian woman.

This story is one of courage and following a call. But this story also says something to us in light of our gospel reading today and how we approach prayer. Do we come to God in prayer by just scraping away at the surface of things or do we tunnel down into the nitty gritty of our lives and really take a chance on what we pray?

At times we may shy away from prayer because we aren't sure about how we should pray, what words we should use, or we don't want to waste God's time with the small things in life – there are so much bigger things going on. Plus, what do we do with those verses that tell us to ask, seek and knock and it will be given to us – Jesus doesn't REALLY mean that, right? Or, if we actually do pray, what happens if our prayer is actually answered? Do we at times not pray because of the fear of what that change could bring to our lives?

Look back and see how Jesus teaches his disciples, including us, how to pray, a prayer that we pray together every Sunday. It actually sounds like we can be pretty demanding – give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us. That doesn't sound like we are to back down

from prayer or to stay on the surface. That sounds as if we are to tunnel down into the rubble of our lives and be shamelessly persistent in what we pray about!

Tom Long writes about a time that his congregation was receiving an offering for hunger in Trenton, New Jersey. An older woman, one of the “bag ladies” of the town was in church that morning and she had everything that she owned in a shopping bag and was dressed in well-worn hand-me-downs. She came forward when the offering was received and the congregation watched her shuffle down the center aisle to the front. Many people were probably thinking that when she got to the offering plate she just might take something out of it rather than put something in it, knowing that she herself was in need and had nothing to offer. But she did have something to offer. When she got to the front, she put nothing in the plate. She did not walk past it, though, but folded her hands, knelt before the plate and prayed.

You are invited, not by me, but by Jesus, to come before God and pray shamelessly for yourselves and for your neighbors. We have a God who teaches us to pray in this way – give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us! If God can free us from our sins through Jesus who died and rose for us – If God can extend mercy to us who do not deserve it – how much more can a God who loves us listen to us as we fall before him on our knees with our hands folded in prayer?

### **Resources**

- “Out of the rubble” by Paul Jeffrey, United Methodist missionary, as written in *Christian Century* March 23, 2010
- Tom Long story from *Pulpit Resource*, July 29 2007
- [WorkingPreacher.org](http://WorkingPreacher.org)