

## Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For

### Matthew 6: 7-21

This should have been an easy sermon to prepare. After all, we as a community of faith say the Lord's Prayer every Sunday. We know the Lord's Prayer. It is a part of our liturgy. It is a part of who we are as people of faith. So again, preaching on it should have been easy. Except it wasn't. As I studied this text, I found myself with more questions than answers. As I meditated on the words of this well-known prayer, I felt myself longing for something more. I recognized the gaps between the vision this prayer presents and the reality we face each and every day as people of faith. As I lived with these words all week, I found myself repeatedly asking, "How am I supposed to talk about centering ourselves in prayer when I don't feel as if I even have a firm foundation under my feet?" This world is too hurt. It is too broken. It seems like the glimmer of hope dies out more and more each day. As I kept the words of this well-known prayer in front of me all week, I found myself just one question over and over again: "How am I supposed to talk about centering ourselves in prayer when I'm not sure what good it will do in the first place? (Side note: Don't ask that question if you don't expect the Spirit of God to show up and show you how. We may be kicking and screaming all the way but the Spirit of God always shows up and shows us how to become the people God created and calls us to be.)"

Because when we lift up this prayer, the Spirit of God shows up and remind us that faith has never been nor will it ever be about us. It is and will always be about God.

Or let me say it this way...I love how Matthew's version of the Lord's prayer is so different from Luke's version. In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples come to Jesus and ask him to teach them how to pray. They frame their conversation about prayer as a spiritual discipline, as a way for them to grow in faith. Again a lovely sentiment, a needed sentiment when it comes to spirituality but for me, this week, it was Matthew's version which resonated with me.

In Matthew's version of this story, Jesus frames their conversation about prayer as a way of seeing faith differently, as a way of changing the narrative. Jesus frames the conversation about prayer as a way for the disciples to engage the world differently. In Matthew's version of this story, Jesus points out to the disciples how so many people in the Temple offer showy displays of faith, practicing piety in front of others just for the sake of being seen. Then Jesus lifts up the praying practices of the Gentiles, pointing out that for some of them, prayer is simply a way to gain the attention of a certain deity, meaning that the longer the prayers were, the more flowery the language, people believed that the more favor a deity would display to them.

Jesus recognizes that for many in the Temple and for many of the Gentiles, prayer had turned into a transaction...the more you give, the more you get.

Jesus sees this behavior displayed by the supposed faithful and changes the conversation. He states that the whole purpose of prayer has never been about us. It has always been about God and our relationship with God. Jesus tells his disciples that God already knows us. God already has named us and claimed us as Beloved Children. God already knows what is on our hearts. God already knows our needs. Notice I said needs, not wants.

What Jesus points out to the disciples and in turn points out to us is that God already loves us and there is nothing we can do, such as flashy shows of piety or offer flowery words to make God love us anymore. We are already fully and wholly loved by God. I'll say that again...there is nothing we can do to make God love us more.

I'll let that one sink in for a minute.

Jesus tells the disciples that instead prayer is an invitation to re-center ourselves. It is a chance to pause and figure out what God is already doing in our lives to transform us into people of love and grace. Jesus reminds the disciples that prayer is a way for us to shift our focus from the business of life and to once again,

find our foundation, which has been there for us all along...that foundation being the very presence of God.

I don't know about you but that is what I needed to hear this week, to be reminded, to be invited to get out of my head, and to breathe deeply. I needed to hear the invitation to once again re-center myself in the presence of God. Because ultimately, that is what strengthens us. That is what stabilizes us. That is what gives us courage to continue the journey.

It is the very presence of God in our lives which shows us time and time again, that yes there may be gaps between what we hope for as the people of God and the reality we face each and every...but this world will never have the last word...because we know that one day, thy kingdom will come here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

And until that day comes, this is our prayer...a prayer which makes us mindful of God's presence in our lives, a prayer which declares that God will set the world right, a prayer which reminds us of God's abundance. Until that day comes this is our prayer, a prayer which challenges us to see others, as we see ourselves, to forgive others as we forgive ourselves, a prayer which reminds that no matter what, we are fully and wholly loved by God and there is nothing we can do to change that. Until that day comes, the day when the vision this prayer

presents and the reality we face each and every day, until they become one, we as disciples will pray this prayer, knowing that no matter how broken this world may be, no matter how overwhelmed we are, God's love and grace will always have the last word. Amen.