

Ordinary 17C - July 27, 2025

God Changes Us

A mother sent her fifth-grade boy up to bed. In a few minutes she went to make sure that he was getting in bed. When she stuck her head into his room, she saw that he was kneeling beside his bed in prayer. Pausing to listen to his prayers, she heard her son praying over and over again. "Let it be Tokyo! Please dear God, let it be Tokyo!"

When he finished his prayers, she asked him, "What did you mean, 'Let it be Tokyo'?" "Oh," the boy said with embarrassment, "we had our geography exam today and I was praying that God would make Tokyo the capital of France."

Prayer is not a magical means by which we get God to do what we want. Prayer is an inner openness to God which allows his divine power to be released in us. Ultimately, the power of prayer is not that we succeed in changing God, but that God succeeds in changing us.

First Lesson in Prayer

A little boy was sitting next to a grizzled holy man seated beside the Ganges River. "Will you teach me to pray?" the boy asked. "Are you sure that you want to learn?" the holy man asked? "Yes, of course." With that the holy man grabbed the boy's neck and plunged his head into the water. He held them there while the boy kicked and screamed and tried to get away. Finally, after an interminable period the holy man let the boy out of the water. "What was that?" the boy asked.

"That was your first lesson in prayer. When you long for God the way that you longed to breathe, then you will be able to pray."

We Are Not Tenacious

Around 1870 New York City had one of the most hotly contested mayor's races in its history. The incumbent was Mayor John Tweed--Boss Tweed he was called. He was running for reelection. The Boss Tweed machine represented politics at its very worst. The entire administration was corrupt to the core. A number of dedicated people decided that they were fed up with this kind of politics and the good people of the city took on the Boss Tweed element. At first, they seemed to make headway. But as the campaign drug on they began to feel the pressures of machine politics. Many of these good people began to drop out. When the election was held and the results counted, to many people's disappointment, they discovered that Boss Tweed had been reelected. The next day the New York Times ran an editorial and analyzed what had happened. It said: The good people quit being good before the bad people quit being bad"

Isn't that so often our dilemma. We are not tenacious. We throw up our hands in disgust. In our witnessing if we don't have instant affirmation then we throw in the towel. The same thing is true with prayer.

Active Prayer

God is not passive, and neither are we. In fact, Jesus calls us to an active life. We tend to think of prayer as a passive affair, which in many ways it is. After all, prayer is listening before it is speaking. However, it is active listening. You know the difference between passive and active listening? Passive listening is the husband who has one ear to the television when his wife speaks. Passive listening is the wife who has her "to do" list between her and her spouse. Passive listening is the young person who hears everything through ears that are "bored" with anything and everything that isn't more exciting than what is possible.

Active listening, on the other hand, is giving 100% attention, and facing toward the One who speaks, putting aside remote-controls, "to do" lists, and boredom. Active listening is anything but passive. It's really hard work, when you think about it. It's not "zoning out." Far from it. Prayer is, in part, active listening. How do you receive daily bread from God, if you're not faced in his direction, attentively reaching out? How does forgiveness become a reality if we don't step into it - and how are we to step into it if we're not walking in the direction of, toward the One from whom forgiveness flows? The Lord's prayer, whether it be the version Matthew remembers, or the one Luke recalls, encourages active movement toward God on our part. (by Peter L. Haynes from *Asking...Seeking...Knocking*)

The Captain Is My Daddy

A little boy was standing on the banks of the Mississippi River waving and shouting at a steamboat that was going by. He was beckoning the steamboat to come to shore. A stranger came by and said, "That's foolish young man. The boat will never come ashore because of your request. The captain is too busy to notice your waving and shouting." Just then the boat turned and headed for shore. The little boy grinned and said to the stranger, "The captain is my daddy."

The captain of the universe is our Abba. He pays attention to our petitions because he loves us. The first word in the Lord's Prayer encourages us to believe in the affectionate intimacy of the Lord of the universe, but that doesn't mean we should take God for granted. (by Ron Lavin from *Sermons for Sundays After Pentecost (Middle Third): Only the Lonely*, CSS Publishing Company, Inc.)