

***“Ask, Search, Knock in the New Life!”***

“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. (PAUSE)

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!’ (PAUSE)

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.’” (PAUSE)

After sharing that story, Robert L. Allen went on to say, “Prayer is not a magical means by which we get God to do what we want.” (PAUSE)

**Allen continued, “Prayer is an inner openness to God which allows his**

**divine power to be released in us. (PAUSE) Ultimately, the power of prayer is not that we succeed in changing God, but that God succeeds in changing us.” (PAUSE) (Robert L. Allen, Greatest Passages of The Bible, CSS Publishing Company)**

As I was reading our Gospel Lectionary Scripture or when you read the sermon’s title, did a thought about unanswered prayer or magical prayer come into anyone’s mind? (PAUSE) For many lay and clergy folks those are important issues related to our Scripture. However, even though the subject of being encouraged to pray for what we want is lifted up in the Text, it quickly becomes troubling. (PAUSE) Are our prayers merely magical incantations? (PAUSE) When we don’t get what we pray for, does that prove we are lacking faith or poor magicians? (PAUSE) On the other hand, as suggested by Robert L. Allen, (pause) earnest prayer is about our relationship with God and not about getting what we desire. It “is an inner openness to God which allows his divine power to be released in us. (PAUSE) Ultimately, the power of prayer is not that (pause) we

succeed in changing God, but that God succeeds in changing us.”

(PAUSE) Our Relationship with our Divine Parent is enhanced (pause) as God changes us, while we live our daily lives – while we live the New Life in Jesus Christ! (PAUSE)

Although the original disciples were frequently slow to comprehend what Jesus meant or the meaning of what he did, our Scripture starts off with some of them noticing Jesus’ practice of frequently praying, and then, after deciding it might be helpful for them to know how to pray, they asked him in **verse 1c**, “*Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.*” (PAUSE) At first, Jesus responded by teaching them what we call the Lord’s Prayer – the prayer we and millions of Christians continue to use in our Worship Celebrations. (PAUSE) A whole series of sermons could easily be preached on this very important prayer. (PAUSE)

Next, (pause) Jesus taught them a parable – a story of a man with (pause) out of town guests, who begs his neighbor to give him three loaves of bread. After protest from the neighbor, the man continued to beg for help.

Finally, Jesus spoke in **verse 8**, “*Well, what then?* (PAUSE) *I tell you that even if he will not get up and give you the bread because you are his friend, yet he will get up and give you everything you need because you are not ashamed to keep on asking.*” (PAUSE) Now, what Jesus said next, may seem to be him suggesting or promising (pause) God will also give us what we want, if we will harass our Divine Parent or never give up asking for what we desire. (PAUSE)

Yet, let me suggest, that (pause) was not the message Jesus intended his disciples to understand from what he said in verses 9 through 10. Instead, he sought to encourage his disciples to understand the relationship he came to reveal to them – the New Relationship with God and the New Life in Christ, (pause) which means (pause) depending on our Divine Parent to transform our lives and our relationships with God, one another, and with all people. (PAUSE) I believe that is what Jesus was getting at when he told them in **verses 9 and 10**, “*And so I say to you: Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to*

*you. For those who ask will receive, and those who seek will find, and the door will be opened to anyone who knocks.” (PAUSE)*

Now, comes again that issue of unfulfilled prayers or magical prayers or what is it ok for us to pray for. Jesus begins to address those subjects when he returned to talking about how we human beings treat one another's requests. **In verses 11 and 12, he asked, “*Would any of you who are fathers give your son a snake when he asks for fish?* (PAUSE)**

***Or would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?* (PAUSE)**

In our relationships with our family and loved ones, most of us will provide good food for our children – at least most of the time. Our relationships are so important to us and the welfare of our family and loved ones is so crucial, (pause) we will often undertake hardship and sacrifice for our beloved ones – yes, we will especially show them agape self-giving and suffering love. (PAUSE)

In the same way, through the New Life lived by Jesus Christ, God's Son, (pause) our Divine Parent's Agape Self-Giving and Sacrificial Love for us

has been repeatedly demonstrated. Indeed, the ultimate expression of God's Agape Love for us was shown in the Son's death for us on the cross. So, Jesus' point is (pause) in the New Relationship with God and our New Life in Christ, which our Creator has given us as a Gift – through the Almighty's Grace, we are to expect – depend upon (pause) the same Agape Love from our Divine Parent. (PAUSE) Jesus revealed this in **verses 13 and 14, “As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children.”** (PAUSE) **“How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”** (PAUSE) Did you notice how Jesus slipped something new in about this asking God? (PAUSE) Actually, it was only implied that we would ask for it but, nevertheless, Jesus promised God would give it – the Holy Spirit! (PAUSE) The meaning of this gift of the Holy Spirit is most likely far more than most of us think or expect. (PAUSE) The Holy Spirit is all at the same time – the constant Agape Loving Presence of God, the Guide when we are in need of the Light of God's Wisdom, and the Comfort, Healing, and Forgiveness we need, (pause) as we face our own suffering,

illness, and transgressions against one another. (PAUSE) **When we intentionally depend on God, it is God's Holy Spirit, which enables the transformation we need, so we resolve our problems, which have brought us to depression, despair, and meaninglessness.** (PAUSE)

Again, it is God's Gift, which gives us our New Relationship with God and New Life in Christ. Trusting in this relationship with our Divine Parent is the call Jesus gave to his disciples and us when they asked him about prayer. (PAUSE)

**How, then, are you and I to fulfill this call to Ask, Search or Seek, and Knock?** (PAUSE) Clearly, one way is to have a frequent prayer life.

(PAUSE) Another, complementary way, is to approach your everyday life – New Life in Christ (pause) from a perspective of constant dependence – expectation of God's Agape Loving Presence in the Holy Spirit enabling you to discern the best path to be the Divine Parent's and Jesus' agent of agape love toward God, one another, and all people. (PAUSE) Indeed, relating with our Creator in prayer and the constant dependence on God's

Holy Spirit (pause) is so closely related to our New Life in Christ, (pause)  
our continual Asking, Searching or Seeking, and Knocking of God's

Agape Loving Presence is very crucial for our identity as members of the  
Body of Christ – the Church and the New Life in Christ. So, (pause)

**Pray – Ask, Search, and Knock for the Agape Loving Presence of God  
and God's Holy Spirit! Amen.**