

## WELCOME 16<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C

Luke 11:1-13 & Hebrews 4:14-16

**Welcome!** What a blessing to be together again today! With your worship order you have in your hands **Bible Study Qs/Growing Praise handouts...** Those are provided to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m. ... NO ZOOM NEXT 2 FRIDAYS! Resume 28<sup>th</sup> March**

**As we move into this week...Death and Taxes...** We joke about those being the only 2 certainties in the world but we know better...Our lives are organized around certainties...predictable repeated certainties. 4 regular seasons in unchanging order. Planes stay aloft. Cars go/stop on command. **Money** in → our choice in reply. We may not understand the math, physics, or other science around it, but without the many predictable repeated certainties of life, there would be only chaos.

As followers of Jesus, our lives are planted similarly in whole-hearted assurance. God is not predictable like a vending machine or your trusty automobile, but for all who trust in him, his invitation is always:

**So** let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God.

*There we will receive his mercy, & we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

We live with the assurance that our Heavenly Father desires our lives to flourish under his love & provision...that he wants our daily living to be lived from his abundant grace...& longs for our prayers to be brought to him trusting that he will hear, will respond & will grant his presence within our lives in every circumstance or situation.

**So** if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

Our assurance is in God we trust to hear & answer our prayers,  
not in the answers we receive to our prayers.

*Let's pray...then explore & experience that together...*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord God, heavenly Father, you know that we are set in the midst of so many challenges & seemingly great dangers. We become fearful & anxious & seek shelter instead of perseverance. We too often duck & cover instead of holding our heads high. Grant us your strength & your protection. Defend us from fear in danger & fatigue in our daily work. Equip us to stand triumphant over all temptations. At every step let our feet move in time to your stride & walk confidently in your way; according to the life you give through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord alive in us...Amen.*

*LET'S HEAR GOD'S WORD...*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. What is something for which you are currently praying?
2. Why does not getting what you pray for cause some to walk away from Jesus but others to cling more tightly to him?

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C – WHOLE-HEARTED ASSURANCE

For those of us who grew up in the Star Trek not Star Wars world...You'll remember the deep if unusual friendship **between** Captain Kirk & Mr Spock...the human captain of the Starship Enterprise & his Vulcan 1<sup>st</sup> Officer. As different as the 2 characters are...the abiding respect & admiration between them was striking. In one of the movies that followed the TV series, the captain is being investigated by Starfleet Command for some alleged violation of Starfleet Law & Mr Spock is brought in to testify...Mr Spock declares beyond a shadow of doubt that Captain Kirk **could not** have done what is charged. The prosecuting attorney asks how he could be so sure, given that he did not see the incident in question. Mr Spock replies, **"If I** drop a rock on a planet with positive gravity, I do not have to see it fall to know that it has. I am **THAT CERTAIN** of Captain Kirk. He **did not do** what you allege he did." That sounds great in a movie...**BUT...**

Is there **ANYONE** you know...in whom you bear that kind of certainty? Is there **anyone** you know...that in **any** given circumstance, you can predict **without doubt** the choice they would make...the course of action they would pursue? If someone has come to mind...has that person, ever surprised you...positively or negatively? Have you ever been caught off guard by something they said or did?

In statistics, things that are a predictable certainty are said to have a probability of 1; while things that have no chance of happening have a probability of 0. But what, & again who, in life is actually that completely predictable? What event, what outcome can you ever really guarantee 100%? Even Drs, will tell you that much of our standard medical practice is based on probabilities. They treat in such a way that is "most likely" to produce the desired results. "Most likely" is not the same as "dead certain." We hear the disclaimer in the ads, **"Remember, odds are you're going to lose."**

And yet...as we noted earlier, we organize life around an array of predictable repeated certainties. Without some of those...life become chaotic instead of orderly. We pull through green traffic signals confident the cross traffic will stop on the red. We flip switches counting on the predictable delivery of electricity to our homes. Our shops are expected to provide goods that are safe to use & appropriate for their intended purpose. Our politicians...Well I'm not exactly sure what we expect of them. But the Scriptures repeat over & over again that God wants us to find **in him** an assurance nothing on this earth can offer or provide...Assurance that our Heavenly Father desires our lives to flourish under his love & provision... Assurance that he wants our daily living to be lived from his abundant grace...& Assurance that he longs for our prayers to be brought to him trusting he will hear, will respond & will

grant his presence within our lives in every circumstance or situation. Let's start with the first of those...**Once** Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him & said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." I'm not sure anyone really knows, how "John taught his disciples" to pray, but clearly John & Jesus both act as rabbis/teachers for their disciples & as Jesus is often seen praying, his disciples want to do what their master is doing... What he offers is a version of what we pray, what we call the *Lord's Prayer*. **Jesus** said, "This is how you should pray: 'Father...'" When you pray, Jesus says...come with the humble assurance of a child approaching a parent. We know Luther got it: **God** tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father & we are His true children, so that with all boldness & confidence we may ask Him as dear children speak to their loving parents.

Presbyterian Bible Scholar Robert McAfee Brown **once** wrote: "Prayer for many of us is like a foreign land. When we go there, we go as tourists. Like most tourists, we feel uncomfortable & out of place. Like most tourists, we therefore move on before too long & go somewhere else." But Jesus calls us to be at peace in the Father's presence...**AND. STAY. THERE.** As at peace in conversation with God as we are around the family table. I suspect whichever disciple asked that question was looking for a formula...a recipe...an acrostic template to pray from...and maybe if you get all the right ingredients you'll get the answer you're after. But Jesus offers no such thing. He produces no formula & no magic words. Instead Jesus teaches about who God is & who we are alongside him. God is holy & we are his beloved children; his holy sons & daughters. That's the given reality of our lives before we even open our mouths & utter our first word. The relationship already exists. Jesus assures us prayer is at its heart about a relationship with the Father trusting his presence in all things at all times. We're don't tell God something God doesn't know. We remind ourselves of what already is, always has been, & always will be.

**That relationship** means that our life, our existence, our very being, comes from our Father who wants our lives to flourish under his love & provision... **Every word that follows:** the coming of God's Kingdom, the accomplishment of God's will on earth as in heaven, daily bread, forgiveness & restoration in our human relationships, protection from the attacks of the evil one & the final triumph of God over every enemy pour forth from within the embrace of our lives by the love & provision of the Father. **We try** & convince ourselves that we are or must be self-sufficient & independent. Prayer reminds us: we are anything but...Our sufficiency comes not from ourselves but from God. God sustains & nourishes our life. As God told Moses: **"Be** careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then you will live & multiply, &

enter & occupy the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you & testing you to prove your character, & to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. <sup>3</sup> Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry & then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you or your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, & your feet didn't blister or swell. <sup>5</sup> Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good. – Deut 8:1-5 Jesus assures us as God assured his people in the wilderness; our life, our existence, our very being, comes from our Father who wants our lives to flourish under his love & provision...He preserves, protects & provides...

Jesus then offers an extended parable that highlights the assurance that the Father wants our daily living to be lived from his abundant grace...the key parts of the parable: **Suppose** you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread...though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up & give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. --- For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. --- So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

1<sup>st</sup>...in the parable, "shameless persistence" doesn't best convey the original Greek. What's in play here is **NOT** that our prayers "badger" God into submission, but that **Jesus** commends bold prayer in the face of unrelenting need...The surprise house guest like an unexpected illness, injury, or setback won't simply go away by wishing, hoping, or ignoring them...Faithful prayer does not have room for selfish requests, but in prayer we reveal our complete dependence on God. We open to the Father, in complete vulnerability the crushing circumstances in our lives & the needs both spiritually & physically. Jesus says, "Go to God in prayer boldly. Ask for great things to happen in your life." Jesus opens the door for us to make bold, audacious requests to our Lord. What have you been afraid to ask God to do in your life? **ASK!**

Then...2-fold assurance...**no** bold audacious prayer goes unanswered **AND** **God's** heart is inclined toward our good. I know...we don't always see the outcome we desire... even "good" outcomes from our perspective, but God **always** brings his comforting restoring Spirit into **every** situation...*"How much more?"* Sometimes more than we are willing to acknowledge or admit...Look...honestly... I don't understand **HOW** prayer works but I know this: It's not a mechanical process. It's not a transaction nor is it passing information to God that he doesn't already know. It is however the bold audacious courageous trust of the completely dependent on Him who holds all power & authority & on whom we rely knowing, **God** causes all things to work together for the

good of those who love God & are called according to his purpose for them." – Rom 8:28 As followers of Jesus, our lives are planted in whole-hearted assurance. God is not predictable like a vending machine or your trusty automobile, but for all who trust in him, his invitation is always:

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As you leave today, be specific & share <sup>w</sup>/ your neighbour...

#### **TAKE IT HOME**

Who can you assure this week that God knows their needs, hears their prayers, & does indeed love and care for them?

*(Be specific...who in your life needs that assurance?)*

#### **Prayer after the sermon...**

*Lord Jesus, you have declared our freedom through your death and resurrection. We can offer nothing in return but thanksgiving and our hearts turned to receive your Spirit. Make our lives a living gospel, an unceasing proclamation of your love and our praise to you. Let your mighty love so fall on us that we have no choice but to tell the world what we have received freely in you from the Father's grace. We pray in your Name. Amen.*