

Rev Ken Wratten

July 28, 2019 – 7 Pentecost

St. Luke's Church

Genesis 18:20-32

Abraham was very persistent with God about the fate of Sodom.

Colossians 2:6-19

Luke 11:1-13

Persistence and Boldness.

I have a hard time reading today's Old Testament passage without laughing at Abraham's boldness. He was bargaining with God about saving Sodom. "Will you sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it?" And then 45; then 40; then 30, 20, and finally Abraham had God agree that "for the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

I think Abraham should get an 'A' grade for persistence. He wouldn't let the discussion go, but kept asking with confidence that God would answer him; and at the same time he showed humility and reverence that after all, this was GOD he was bargaining with.

In the Gospel lesson, the disciples had seen Jesus' strong prayer life, and asked him to teach them how they should pray. Jesus taught them the prayer we call the Lord's Prayer (more accurately the disciples' prayer). Then he told them the story about the man who came to a friend's house at midnight, asking for bread to feed a guest. Jesus' story is about the man's persistence getting him the bread he wanted.

Jesus was telling his disciples how important it is for all of us to be persistent like that friend in our relationship with God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." We should be persistent like Abraham.

God is not too busy; our needs are not too trivial for God; we have been given the invitation to ask. If we don't see an answer, we are to keep looking for God's answer, since God's ways are not our ways, and we might very well get our answer in a way we could not expect.

Example 1: funds to fix leaking church roof; it leaked MORE! Then it got paid for.

Do you find it hard to be persistent in your prayer life? We need to remember that prayer is not a monologue. There is certainly a place for talking to God when we pray. But the other side of prayer is learning to listen for God. We need to make space for the contemplative, meditative side of prayer. We need to practice the art of sitting quietly in the presence of God, and allowing ourselves to receive God's word. Brother Lawrence called it, "The Practice of the Presence of God."

Besides having persistence in prayer, we need to be persistent in our faith, by following God even when it doesn't seem to make sense or produce results we can see.

Example: Having no budget for a Memorial Garden, but knowing the need, and that it was the right thing for us to do.

How persistent are we in study and worship;

YouVersion Bible study plans (a one year plan to read the whole Bible),
 "missionstclare.com" - online MP or EP,

Forward day by day,

Buying a new Bible – different translation – study bible

Books that help provide spiritual focus – like;

Macrina Wiederkehr, "A Tree Full of Angels".

C. S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity"

Richard Foster, "Celebration of Discipline"

How persistent are you in living by a Rule of Life?

St. Benedict: prayer, spiritual reading, work, eating, sleep

Cursillo: piety, study, action

Purpose Driven: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, mission

Paul wrote to the Colossians, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him." In other words, following Jesus means that we choose to keep living our lives persistence in prayer; persistence in faith; persistence in study and worship; and persistence in living by a rule of life.

I encourage you to reflect this week on these areas of your life, and decide if you are as persistent as you want to be in your relationship with God. If your answer is 'no', pray boldly that God will grant you the persistence Abraham; and the persistence of the friend who came at midnight to ask a favor. Amen.