

**Sunday 24 July 2022**  
**Holy Trinity – Holy Communion (8.00am)**  
**Trinity 6**

Genesis 18:20-32

Colossians 2:6-15

Luke 11:1-13

**Jesus' teaching on prayer**

I was thinking about the story we heard from Genesis this morning and it occurred to me that the general tendency has been to think of this as a story about Abraham bargaining with God.

You know the sort of thing, Abraham, the generous and merciful one, pleading with God, the bloodthirsty and violent one, with Abraham gradually managing to calm God down and get him to agree to keep the killing to a minimum.

But actually that's not what this story is about at all.

In the passage which comes just before today's reading we find God debating whether or not to let Abraham in on his plan. You could read this to mean God's plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but I think it's more likely to be God's larger plan, of how the mighty should treat the weak - a plan that eventually comes to fulfilment in Jesus.

So, what follows in the conversation between Abraham and God is a lesson from a master teacher. God doesn't just tell Abraham the plan, but he allows Abraham to discover it and how much it should mean to him personally. This is the catalyst for Abraham's instinct for justice which is matched by God's own sense of justice. It is also another instalment in the ever deepening intimacy between Abraham and God. God allows Abraham to make the running and take some responsibility for what is to happen. It almost feels like there is a teasing pleasure in God's voice as he dares Abraham to test him further and further. Maybe God was waiting for Abraham to realise that what he is asking for is actually what God already wants.

This same kind of discovering the nature of God is what seems to be going on in our other reading from Luke's Gospel. The chapter starts with Jesus at prayer. There's an obvious quality in Jesus' prayer that attracts the disciples and makes them want to learn. "Lord, teach us to pray" they say. Jesus' response is brief and clear. He teaches them a prayer. He doesn't go on about the importance of stillness, or correct posture, or focusing the mind. He just teaches them to talk to God.

And for us, this is how to bring the whole muddle of our lives, the sublime and the mundane, to God. So, in one breath we can ask for the coming of the kingdom and our daily bread.

A little further on in our Gospel reading we hear Jesus tell this funny story of the irritating friend at midnight and he does this in order to get the disciples to see prayer as something basic, day-to-day.

Prayer shouldn't be something carefully sanitised, so that we bring to God only what we think he will like. Rather, Jesus is encouraging the disciples to bombard God, to tell him everything, to talk to him constantly, to involve him in every part of their lives. And, as a starting point, Jesus gives the disciples, and us, a model prayer to use.

Abraham had the courage to go straight to God and question him, and Jesus is encouraging us to do the same. He starts with amazing directness...

"Give us...Forgive us...Lead us...Deliver us..."

but then he finishes with a plea for persistence...

"Ask...seek...knock..."

So, don't shut 'God' and 'prayer' into a small box that only comes out on Sundays because, as you pester God, just like Abraham did, as the irritating persistent friend did to the sleepy householder, you **will** learn more about God, and about yourself in your relationship with him.

Amen.