

Lessons for Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

July 24, 2016

Psalm 138 (*antiphon: v. 3*) ~ *A psalm of praise for God's faithful and loving answer when the lowly call to him.*

Genesis 18:(17-19) 20-33 ~ *On Abraham's behalf, God offers grace to Sodom for the sake of ten righteous.*

Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19) ~ *On Christ's behalf, God has extended grace to us, forgiving the debt of our sins.*

Luke 11:1-13 ~ *God's grace to us in Jesus Christ invites us to pray boldly to God as our heavenly Father.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Lord, Teach us To Pray!

Our gracious Lord doesn't stop with just teaching us how to pray. By his Holy Spirit he teaches us to pray, like Abraham who persistently bargained with God on behalf of the righteous ones in Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus taught the disciples a pattern and an urgency for prayer, using for example a neighbor in need of bread at midnight. A healthy prayer life is one of the things that belongs to our new self in Christ Jesus, which we are learning to practice daily.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Our Father in heaven, all power is yours to do your will in heaven and earth. In Christ your Son, you have put to death my old ways of selfishness, and given me a new life in Christ's image. Renew me daily by your Spirit that I may always live in the power of Christ's resurrection and with the confidence that you hear my prayers. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Our gracious God responds to our requests for our own needs and on behalf of others. Ought we not be just as urgent in our pleas for our neighbors who do not know their Savior, as Abraham was for the few righteous inhabitants of Sodom?

OFFERING PRAYER: Our Father, who from heaven above
Has showered us with Your holy love,
Empower these gifts that they succeed
To bring Your grace to those in need. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We are rarely as bold to pray to our Father as Abraham, when he besought God to spare Sodom for the sake of only ten righteous. Instead, we are often "taken captive" by worldly arguments that convince us the effectiveness of our prayer depends on the excellence of our lives, our asceticism, or our visions. Jesus reassures us that God stands ready to respond to our needs as a loving father who knows what is best for his children. St. Paul insists that our relationship to God is sealed by the cross of Christ, who is in fact, fully God himself!