

## Luke 11:1-13 ~ July 25

<sup>1</sup>Another time Jesus was praying, and when he finished, one of his disciples approached him.

**Disciple** Teacher, would you teach us your way of prayer? John taught his disciples his way of prayer, *and we're hoping you'll do the same.*

**Jesus** <sup>2</sup>Here's how to pray:

Father [in heaven], may your name be revered.

May your kingdom come.

[Your will be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.]

<sup>3</sup>Give us the food we need for tomorrow,

<sup>4</sup>And forgive us for our wrongs,  
for we forgive those who wrong us.

And lead us away from temptation.

[And save us from the evil one.]\*

<sup>5</sup>Imagine that one of your friends comes over at midnight. He bangs on the door and shouts, "Friend, will you lend me three loaves of bread?" <sup>6</sup>A friend of mine just showed up unexpectedly from a journey, and I don't have anything to feed him." <sup>7</sup>Would you shout out from your bed, "I'm already in bed, and so are the kids. I already locked the door. I can't be bothered"?

<sup>8</sup>You know this as well as I do: even if you didn't care that this fellow was your friend, if he keeps knocking long enough, you'll get up and give him whatever he needs simply because of his brash persistence!

<sup>9</sup>So listen: Keep on asking, and you will receive. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened for you.

<sup>10</sup>All who keep asking will receive, all who keep seeking will find, and doors will open to those who keep knocking.

<sup>11</sup>Some of you are fathers, so ask yourselves this: if your son comes up to you and asks for a fish for dinner, will you give him a snake instead?

<sup>12</sup>If your boy wants an egg to eat, will you give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>Look, all of you are flawed in so many ways, yet in spite of all your faults, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to all who ask!

**Ultimate Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why  
Be Persistent! 7-25-10**

By Mary Jane Button-Harrison

Have you heard this story of persistence? A terrible storm came into a town and local officials sent out an emergency warning that the riverbanks would soon overflow and flood the nearby homes. They ordered everyone in the town to evacuate immediately.

A faithful Christian man heard the warning and decided to stay, saying to himself, "I will trust God and if I am in danger, then God will send a divine miracle to save me. The neighbors came by his house and said to him, "We're leaving and there is room for you in our car, please, come with us!" But the man declined. "I have faith that God will save me."

As the man stood on his porch watching the water rise up the steps, a man in a canoe paddled by and called to him, "Hurry and come into my canoe, the waters are rising quickly!" But the man again said, "No thanks, God will save me."

The floodwaters rose higher pouring water into his living room and the man had to retreat to the second floor. A Police motorboat came by and saw him at the window. "We will come up and rescue you!" they shouted. But the man refused, waving them off saying, "Use your time to save someone else! I have faith that God will save me!"

The flood waters rose higher and higher and the man had to climb up to his rooftop. A helicopter spotted him and dropped a rope ladder. A rescue officer came down the ladder and pleaded with the man, "Grab my hand and I will pull you up!" But the man STILL refused, folding his arms tightly to his body. "No thank you! God will save me!" Shortly after, the house broke up and the floodwaters swept the man away and he drowned.

When in Heaven, the man stood before God and asked, "I put all of my faith in you. Why didn't you come and save me?" And God said, "Son, I sent you a warning. I sent you a car. I sent you a canoe. I sent you a motorboat. I sent you a helicopter. What more were you looking for?"

Now you might say that the man in this story was persistent, but he sure missed the boat! And his kind of persistence, rather than helping him survive, got him dead! God, as it turns out, was the one demonstrating great persistence in trying to save the man. But the man's sheer stubbornness not to see what was right in front of him was greater. He was so convinced that his help would come in a very particular way, that he was blind to see the answer to his prayer when it came. As my mother used to say, "if it were a snake, it would have bit him."

In Jesus' book, persistence was a sign of great faith. In Jesus' survival notes, those with the greatest faith are not the ones who sit around waiting for a miracle, but rather, who act and work as a partner with God to find a way. There are a couple stories of persistence, in particular, that come to mind. The first is the paralyzed man. Do you remember the story? Jesus had come to town and was teaching and healing. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were right there. This paralyzed man had some friends with persistence. Of course the man

couldn't walk, so they put him on a stretcher and brought him to where Jesus was teaching. When they got there, however, the crowd was large and they could not find a way to get him to Jesus. Many people would give up, but not these friends. They somehow (and this must have taken great persistence) hauled him up the roof, cut a hole in the clay tile and lowered their friend right in front of Jesus. Jesus recognized this persistence, this creative ingenuity, as true faith and healed the man.

You'll recall another story like this one was the Canaanite woman who came to where Jesus was and called to him, shouted, even, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." But Jesus, you'll recall, just ignored her. She persisted and continued shouting to Jesus. This time Jesus basically told her she wasn't part of the group he was sent to save... sorry. The woman persisted, "Lord, help me." And he said one of those classic, unforgettable lines because it just doesn't match how we think of Jesus. He turns to the woman and says, "It is not fair to take the

children's food and throw it to the dogs." There, he said it! He basically likened her to a dog. But this persistent woman doesn't miss a beat and says, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." All eyes are on Jesus now! How will he respond to the audacity of this foreign woman? What will be his comeback? Jesus responds, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." Now that's persistence! That's what Jesus is talking about in his words to the disciples. Pray. Ask. Search. Knock. Whatever it takes, do it, and you will be heard and you will know life. Survival concept for today: Be Persistent! Don't give up. If you can't get there one way, try another. And know that the answer may come in a different way than you expect.

Another story of persistence. This one happened over twenty years ago, on December 7, 1988, when an earthquake devastated the northwestern section of Armenia, killing an estimated 25,000 persons. In one small town, directly after the earthquake, a father rushed to

his son's school only to find that the school had been flattened and there was no sign of life.

But he had no thought of turning back. He had often told his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you when you need me!"

Though the prospects appeared hopeless, he began feverishly removing rubble from where he believed his son's classroom had been. Other forlorn parents only wailed hopelessly. "My son!" "My daughter!" Some told the father to go home, that there was no chance that any of the pupils could be alive. To which this loving father replied, "I made my son a promise that I'd be there for him anytime he needed me. I must continue to dig."

Courageously, he proceeded alone. No one volunteered to help him. He simply had to know for himself: "Is my boy alive or is he dead?" With strength and endurance beyond himself, the faithful, loving father continued to dig... for 8 hours... for 12 hours... 24 hours... 36 hours. Then in the 38th hour, as he heaved away a heavy piece of rubble, he heard voices. "Armand!" he screamed.

A child's voice responded: "Dad! It's me,... Armand!" Then, "I told the other kids not to worry. I told 'em that if you were alive, you'd save me, and when you saved me, they'd be saved. You promised you would always be there for me! You did it, Dad!"

Moments later, the dad was helping his son Armand and 13 other frightened, hungry, thirsty boys and girls climb out of the debris. Free at last! When the building collapsed, these children had been spared in a tent-like pocket. The father lovingly carried his son home to his mother, where he was given the care he needed.

When the townspeople praised Armand's dad, his explanation was, "I promised my son, 'No matter what, I'll be there for you!'" The persistence of that father, in Jesus' book, was nothing short of true faithfulness. The world could use a lot more of that kind of persistence. And God could sure use our help to reach out and find and save those all around who need a hand, or some hope, or a break, that God's kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.