

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

7/25/10 **Teach Us to Pray Luke 11: 1-13**

Jesus' disciples all knew how to pray. After all, they were devout Galilean Jews. They knew very well that in prayer they were to spread their hands in upward devotion or lay prone with face to the ground.

So when the disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray," they were not asking for technique of prayer. Rather, they were asking, "Teach us what to pray."

Jesus' answer was clear. It can be summarized in five points.

First. "Father, keep showing us who you are." That is, "Deepen and strengthen our faith in and commitment to you."

Second. "Set the world right." That is, establish justice in this world where so much goes wrong.

Third. "Give us three square meals." That is, eliminate hunger from this world of ours.

Fourth. "Forgive us as we forgive others who are indebted to us." That is, help us reflect your forgiveness in our dealings with others.

And finally, "Keep us from all kinds of danger." That is, may war, violence, hatred, and jealousy be no more.

So what should we pray? We should pray for faith, justice, and the spirit of forgiveness.

Jesus goes on. When you pray, you must be persistent. Keep asking. Keep seeking, and Keep knocking. God will give you what you need.

But let us not put our own words in Jesus' mouth. Jesus does not say that our selfish motives will be rewarded, nor does he mean our desire for vengeance will be given a chance.

Remember, we are to pray for faith, justice, and the spirit of forgiveness.

In this context, Jesus' last words are important. "The heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask it."

That is to say, God will answer our prayers in his own way. His answer may not be what we want or expect.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sweated blood as he prayed. He wanted God to remove the burden of the cross from him.

But he ended his heart wrenching prayer with these words, "Nevertheless, your will, and not my will be done."

God sent Jesus the Holy Spirit. Why? It was to enable him to seek the will of God.

Through the Holy Spirit, God enables us to understand that God knows what we need more than we ever know.

The Jewish people wanted the coming of a worldly king who would defeat other nations on behalf of Israel. They wanted a messiah of worldly power. But God gave them the crucified Messiah, the Good Shepherd, the prince of peace.

So let us keep asking, let us keep seeking, and let us keep knocking. God will send his Holy Spirit and transform our prayers into the prayer Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but your will be done."

It is in this sense that our prayers will be answered, answered fully.

Thanks be to God.