



LIKE ELECTRICITY

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Luke 11:1-13

Adam D. Gorman, The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York

Almighty God, in you are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Open our eyes that we may see the wonders of your Word; and give us grace that we may clearly understand and freely choose the way of your wisdom; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

“Peter Annet once said that those who pray persistently are like sailors who have cast anchor on a rock. As they pull on the anchor, they think they are pulling the rock to themselves, but they are really pulling themselves to the rock.”¹

Today’s scripture lesson is urging us to pray fervently. To be persistent in our prayers. To enter into prayer in the morning and in the evening. To pray before anything, during it and after it because God hears our cries. He listens to us and the more we ask the more he provides for us. Not in a vending machine sense of giving, where the more we ask the more material goods we receive, but that the more we ask, the more we enter into conversation with God, to seek God, the more we begin to live in a wholehearted way of living. The more we pray, the closer we become to God, and the more we strive toward God, the godlier we become. This godlier is not in the sense of power but rather in knowledge, wisdom, love, devotion, care, hospitality, and all the other B-Attitudes we have learned before.

When it had come time to sit down and begin working on this sermon, one of our high-schoolers and I had just shared lunch together. We had been engaging in conversations about God and life, how to live as a Christian, what it means when Jesus tells us to be perfect (or really wholehearted), as well as a bit about the



Trinity and how Christians can still call ourselves monotheistic. You know, the usual lighthearted conversations that happen when teenagers and their youth pastor get together....

Reading today's scripture lesson leads me to share with you something I shared with that student. It's a prayer I use to address God, this Triune God of ours, nearly every morning when waking up. It is a prayer that sets my day in the light and in the life of Christ. It binds or re-binds me to God. This prayer helps me get into the mindset of God's will on this earth. Or rather the prayer centers me, opens my heart toward God, and helps remind me of the gift of each new day and what I am called to do with that new day. The daily prayer goes like this:

Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for this day, for all that you have given me, and for all that I have been blessed with. Lord, fill me with the gift of the Holy Spirit and control my actions and reactions today and every day. Lord, help me to be kind to everyone, help me to be patient, help me to be more loving, help me to hear what you want me to hear and see what you want me to see, and Lord God guide me to do what you want me to do. Help my will to be your will. I ask all these things in your wonderful son, Jesus Christ's name, amen.

This prayer is certainly not the Lord's Prayer that was in today's scripture lesson, but in many ways it reflects what Jesus was teaching His disciples. It is a fervent and daily prayer and it is something that has developed within me over the many years I've been a Christian. It is in my bones and in my heart. It is in my DNA now. It is a routine with which I start my day and if there is ever a time I miss saying it a void is left within me that day. The Rev. Dr. Charles Reeb says that, "Effective prayer is a continual connection to God. And if you look close at today's reading you will also notice Jesus telling us that effective prayer is not about what we can get from God, but what we receive from God. There is a big difference! For, often times, what we want from God and what we receive from God are two different things."



As I thought and reflected on prayer for us, I looked to Scripture. And what I found in our Bible should be of no surprise. In it I rediscovered that Scripture contains passages that tell us God hears our prayers and sometimes doesn't. And it provides countless examples of prayers for forgiveness, praise, thanksgiving, asking, listening, and requesting confirmation. Many times we find in Scripture that prayer is affiliated with waiting or taking action. We have examples of when to pray, such as seasons, times of day, days of the week, holidays, troubled times, good times, and on and on.

There are stories of answered prayers as well as seemingly unanswered prayers. There are reminders for us to never assume that the answer of any prayer is the same as another. There were directives to pray to God and pray in Jesus' name. And even Jesus prayed. People prayed out loud and silently, while others fasted and prayed. Some people seemed to command or demand God, while others used great verbose repetition.

Our hymnal is another great place to find examples of prayer. In the Topical Index there are eight hymns listed under the topic alone and countless others that incorporate prayer and are prayer. One of these hymns that's a beautiful prayer is number 390, *O Savior, in this Quiet Place*. It is our recessional hymn for today and I thought I would read these lovely words written by Fred Pratt Green for all of us. The words say:

O Savior, in this quiet place, where anyone may kneel,
I also come to ask for grace, believing You can heal.

If pain of body, stress of mind, destroys my inward peace,
in prayer for others may I find the secret of release.

If self upon its sickness feeds and turns my life to gall,
let me not brood upon my needs, but simply tell You all.

You never said, "You ask too much," to any troubled soul.



I long to feel Your healing touch; will You not make me whole?

But if the thing I most desire is not Your way for me,
may faith, when tested in the fire, prove its integrity.

Of all my prayers, may this be chief: Till faith is fully grown,
Lord, disbelieve my unbelief, and claim me as Your own.

I wish I could pray this elegantly myself but I know that God receives my prayers anyway, made up of broken utterances, just as much as He receives this hymn made up of graceful poetry.

One blogger I try and follow is a gentleman named Mike McHargue, better known as Science Mike. He is an [author](#), podcaster, and speaker focused on the science behind spiritual experiences. Mike lost his faith via atheism as an adult, but rediscovered God in cosmology and neuroscience – a journey that led to his life’s mission: helping people reconcile their faith with modern science.

In one of his blogs, “The Doubt Series on Belief,” he walks his readers through his axioms of faith. He says that, “An Axiom is a premise so evident as to be accepted as true without controversy.” And his axiom on prayer is that, “Prayer is AT LEAST a form of meditation that encourages the development of healthy brain tissue, lowers stress, and can connect us to God.” And he says that, “EVEN IF that is a comprehensive definition of prayer, the health and psychological benefits of prayer justify the discipline.”

Today, as we are all encouraged to pray more, I recalled a message that I gave when I was a chaplain at a hospital in seminary. A message that was for people of all faith backgrounds. The message was about encouraging the patients to pray or to try praying, because often times in the hospital, patients were happy to have me pray, with and for them, but they didn’t feel comfortable praying on their own.



This concept or message about prayer came to me while watching the movie *Billy Elliot*. *Billy Elliot* is a movie, and is now a Broadway play, and it takes place in England. It is about an eleven-year-old boy growing up in a blue-collar mining town in northern England. The town Billy lives in is facing a financial crisis because the major union there, which his father and brother are both a part of, is on strike. Billy is being raised to be a boxer at this time; however, he realizes that he does not want to be a boxer but rather that he loves to dance.

Against some angst from his family, as well as others, Billy continues to dance. His instructor takes notice of how great he is at dancing and recommends that he try out at the distinguished school of ballet in London.

His loving father, brother, and grandma, all end up supporting him. Their love and desire for Billy are seen when they give up everything they own for him to have a chance to try out at the school. So... his father and he get on a bus and head to London to the prestigious Royal Ballet School.

At the end of his tryouts, as Billy and his father head for the door to leave, both are left with the feeling that they don't belong. Yet one of the judges asks Billy a final question:

Tutor 1: Just one last question, can I ask you Billy... What does it feel like when you're dancing?

SILENCE... disappointment on the judges faces, then Billy breaks the silence with his answer and says:

Billy: Don't know. Sorta feels good. Sorta stiff and that, but once I get going... then I like, forget everything. And... sorta disappear. Sorta disappear. Like I feel a change in my whole body. And I've got this fire in my body. I'm just there. Flyin'... like a bird. Like electricity..... Yeah... like electricity.



The movie ends with Billy going on to be a brilliant professional dancer but I think the most important part of the movie was Billy's answer to the one last question.

I shared this story in the hospital back as a chaplain in seminary, and I share it with you all now, because I believe that Billy's response about dancing is how prayer can feel for some people. Prayer takes practice and anyone can try, and the more one tries the more engaging it feels. There may be times we feel like we don't know how to pray, but that's okay, we need to just try anyway.

So pray to God, remember who it is you are praying to, don't treat Him like a vending machine who dispenses material goods for us, rather continue to build your relationship with Him, and thereby live a freer life, which in turn will help you to live a happier and healthier life. Let His will be your will each and every day. Engage God. Listen to God.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

¹ [The Rev. Dr. Charles Reeb, http://day1.org/320-the_rev_charles_reeb](http://day1.org/320-the_rev_charles_reeb)