

This Wesley United Methodist Church

July 24, 2016

“Jesus’ Secrets.”

Luke 11:1-4

A nationally known pastor was involved in a question/answer session. He was on stage with several prominent church leaders in front of a large audience made up of pastors and lay persons. The minister had just responded to a question from one of the other leaders on the panel when he was shocked to see someone rise in the audience. The person who stood up seemed to be out of place. Actually, this person was a friend from the minister’s past whom he had not seen since he had professed his faith in Christ and had entered the ministry. This friend had never seen the man on stage as Christian and certainly not as a minister of the Gospel. They had been drinking buddies and their past activities had not been something that either one could be proud of.

When the man from the past was recognized, he came straight to the point. He asked the pastor on stage, “Could you tell us what made you become a Christian and a minister? I knew you as a young man. There was not a clue in you that would have made me believe that you would ever be doing what you are doing today. What changed you?”

The man on stage responded, “Hello Joe, it is good to see you, and it has been a long time. I am glad you are here. The answer to your question is Jesus Christ changed me.”

Joe followed by asking, “If Jesus Christ changed you, how did it happen? How did he get your attention?” “He got my attention through my wife.” Then Joe said, “In the past you seemed to go your own way without any real concern for what she wanted. I would like to know what she said that caused you to be open to the leading of Jesus Christ.”

“It was not what she said, it was what she did,” the pastor replied. Joe laughed, “What in the world could she have done to make you change?” The response from the pastor was this, “Do you remember how I would stay out late at night drinking? Then I would try to slip into the house without her knowing when I came home. It never did work. When I would see her, I would be either ashamed or very angry. I always expected her to yell at me and cry, but she never did. When she would hear me come into the house, she would get up and get on her knees by the bed. She would stay on her knees until I got into bed. She kept praying and praying for me. God used her to open my heart and mind to Jesus. A tough man can cope with a nagging wife, but a praying wife will get you every time.”

“A praying wife...” He could have said a praying husband or a praying parent or a praying friend. If you really want to help someone, spend more time praying for them than you do criticizing them. There is great power in prayer.

Once when Jesus, Peter James and John returned from being away for a few days, they found the other disciples frustrated with their ineffectiveness. A father had brought a son who was sick and asked the disciples to heal the boy. They could not. When Jesus arrived on the scene the father turned to him and Jesus healed the child. Then the disciples asked, “Why could we not help the child?” Jesus replied, “This kind of healing takes place only after much prayer.” We find this event in Matthew 17:14-21.

Luke tells us that the disciples recognized their need. If they were going to be used of God to help people, then they must learn Jesus’ secrets. Therefore, they found him praying and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Jesus gave his disciples a guide for prayer. That guide was not only good for them but it is relevant for us today. We know it, of course, as the Lord’s Prayer. “Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive our sins, as we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

The disciples discovered that through prayer, God gave them great power to help others. For example, after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended to the Father, Peter was taken prisoner by king Herod. Herod intended to kill Peter. The disciples did not have the fire power to rescue Peter from prison, but they had the prayer power. While they met in a home and prayed, an angel came and released Peter from prison. He came to the very house where they were praying. From the very beginning the church learned that if you want to help someone, to pray for them.

We are encouraged to pray, not only because of the biblical examples, but because of the credible witness in our own experience. We don’t have to turn to the disciples to find prayers answered. We see the power of prayer in our daily living.

Several years ago, a young pastor visited in the home of one of the young couples in his church. At the close of the visit he asked if he could read Scripture and have a prayer. When they responded with a yes, he asked if there was anything in particular they would like to have included in the prayer. The young wife responded, “Please pray there we will be able to adopt a child. We have been on the waiting list for a long time.” He then asked if they had found it impossible to have children of their own. They shared how they had been to several doctors to seek help so that they could have children. All efforts had come to nothing. Now they were both frustrated, because it looked like even their

efforts for adoption might fail. When the pastor prayed, he asked for the Lord to give this couple a child. He asked the Lord to find a child who needed them as adoptive parents. He also included in the prayer that the parents really wanted to have their own child. After he prayed that simple prayer, he never thought of the prayer again until about four months later. It was Sunday morning. They had just finished the worship service. As they left the sanctuary, the wife whispered to the pastor, "We are going to have a baby."

Less than a year later he had the privilege of baptizing Michael at the altar of the church where the parents dedicated him to the Lord. About a month later, as the couple was leaving the sanctuary, the wife whispered in the pastor's ear, "Stop praying." They were expecting another. One year later, as he baptized little Charles, the pastor shared with the congregation how God had answered prayer for this young couple. Then he closed the baptismal service by saying, "Every time I see little Charles I am reminded that the Lord gives us twice as much as we ask."

Do you really want to help someone? Then pray for them. God is always at work even if we're not aware of it. Prayer is powerful. When we pray, God answers our prayer in ways we never realize. When we pray, God helps us show the love of Christ to the person for whom we are praying.

I want to close this message by us bowing our heads in silent prayer. This one minute of prayer can easily be wasted. Let us recognize that in this one minute, God can, through you, give great power to help someone else. Think of someone right now. Close your eyes. Picture that person standing before you. If that person is crippled, picture her standing before you healed. If that person is angry and unforgiving, picture him with joy in his face, forgiving joy. If that person is poor, picture that person sitting before a feast. If that person is lonely, picture that person surrounded by friends. If that person is lost, picture that person being brought home by Jesus to a celebration with family and friends. Now pray this simple prayer, as you picture that person. "God bless you." And God will bless your friend, and God will bless you too.