

March 1, 2020

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:4-7

Have you ever had a conversation with God? I am not asking if you have ever prayed. I am asking if your prayers are conversations with your Father in Heaven. I am convinced that most of us seldom, if ever, use the avenue of prayer to have a simple conversation with God. God is, in deed, our loving heavenly Father. He has demonstrated his great love for us in the sacrifice of his one and only Son for our sins.

As our loving Father, our 'Abba', I am convinced that God would really enjoy having real conversations with us all throughout the day, as opposed to the stilted, word heavy lists of prayer requests that we so often fall back on. Consider the prayer of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus.

"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." (John 11:41-42) If you translated that into modern English it might sound like this: ***"Dad, thanks for hearing me. Of course I know that you always listen, but I wanted these people to hear this so they would believe that you sent me."***

Jesus had conversations with his Father and I am convinced that we are being called to talk with God anywhere at any time under any circumstances. But what should we talk about, you ask.

Well, if this were your actual father what would you talk about. When I was with my Dad in Salt Lake City a few weeks ago we spent hours talking. I told him about my kids and about my grandkids. We talked about their struggles and joys. He talked about his life at 92 and the things that are hard and he told me that he is more than ready to leave this life. We had conversations about serious stuff and about our lives and about the things we have shared over the years. We even talked about his favorite TV shows. I loved that time. Do you talk to God like that? Do I? Why not?

The Apostle tells us to take everything to God in prayer. There is literally nothing that we can't talk to God about. Nothing. He is always near us waiting; longing to hear from us. He wants us to share our days with him. Paul tells us to be thankful in our prayers. Why? Thankfulness means I recognize the source of the good things in my life. If I am thankful to my Father for what he is doing and has done then I recognize that he is the source.

Paul tells us to present our requests to God; to ask him for what we need for ourselves and for others. And I believe that most of us probably do just that, but what do we do next? Why don't our prayers bring us the ***"...peace that transcends all understanding..."***?

If our prayers are honest conversations with God, then the result should be peace. Paul says it will be peace; peace that transcends all understanding. So, why don't we experience that peace? I am convinced it is because of what we do after we pray. We bring our concerns and struggles and needs to our loving Father. We lay them at his feet in prayer. We ask him to do what he needs to do to help us with all these things. And then, instead of leaving them with him, we take them back.

"Father," we say, "please fix these things, clean up these messes, take care of these needs." And then, having given those burdens over to God, we take them back so we can worry about them some more, because, you know, worry helps. Either we believe that God can and so prayer makes sense, or we don't believe God can, so prayer is a total waste of time.

Prayer combined with a deep, personal faith, brings peace. Prayer without faith is meaningless and empty. When I talk to God do I believe he is listening, do I believe he cares, do I believe he can? Do I believe?

Lord
Teach
us to
Pray
Luke 11:1