

## Proper 12 C

Many historic Christian prayers speak of God as "Almighty Father."

Some historic prayers & contemporary ones speak differently.

Future prayer books will balance masculine and feminine metaphors.

Will speak to "Gracious God" and "Holy One" and avoid family metaphors.

For God is like a father and mother and unlike them as well.

Not like me when I am short with my children because of someone else's misdeeds.

God is not like the mother, father who neglects, abuses.

Certainly not an old white man, sitting on a throne, dressed up like a bishop.

But I wonder if we are nonetheless not very much like children.

Summer, children, and their demands.

Code to the ipad, the wifi key for the week, spend the night, more dessert...

"No" not readily accepted.

Some parents are firm; all collapse in the face of the persistence at some point.

By later July, the battle a weary one.

I comfort you with these words: August 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Scriptures today suggest our prayer should be like a child's demand.

Audacious, persistent, shameless, honest

Demanding, expectant: This is what I really want

But not to wear God down;

we expect that God knows our needs before we state them.

Shared because God is like a parent, friend, and lover;

needs are expressed to those who matter most to us.

And so in the Lord's own prayer, we ask for what we need:

For the forgiveness of sins and the ability to forgive others

We will not have family, churches, communities, marriages, or nations  
without mutual forgiveness.

For daily bread: spiritual nourishment, divine love, and beans and cornbread.

All that will satisfy the body and the spirit.

For preservation from temptation, from the shadow side of our being that too  
many surrender to.

And for the Kingdom in which Christ is all in all

For the day of perfect love and restoration

When the tragic gap will be closed forever

This is a prayer for every day, persistent, audacious, comprehensive.

It presumes the goodness of God and calls out to God in it.  
As did Abraham, who spoke shamelessly to God to invite God to live into his  
mercy.

Yet, like children making requests, we pray often unaware.

We think we know what daily bread is to us

We think we know our needs

Which grow more extravagant in every generation

What we need to be forgiven

What others should seek forgiveness for from us.

And we live in difficult days in which our capacity to name what justice is, what the  
kingdom might look like, is painfully broken.

And so our prayers often do no result in the change we have wished for but for  
something deeper.

We might even have concluded, after some disappointment, that prayer doesn't  
mean much.

Ann Lamott wrote of a friend whose morning prayer each day is "Whatever," and  
whose evening prayer is "Oh, well."

A bit too detached, if we count those as prayers, but perhaps resigned to the  
providence of God.

For in the fullness of time, and in the fullness of our lives,

In what we might call a godly self-knowledge

We may know that God's gifts are greater than anything we would be able to  
name.

"If you...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the  
heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The Holy Spirit, you see.

The Spirit who brings us into the presence of Christ the Savior,

the Spirit who heals and sustains,

the Spirits who sanctifies and sets apart.

I don't think that any of our prayers go unanswered;

the persistent soul receives what God intends to give.

That will often be a gift of the Spirit that we may at first not even notice,

A supernatural strength to face a crisis

The ability to forgive the undeserving

The capacity to give with no strings attached

A willingness to accept the gifts, love of others, even in the face of our pride

My children have told me that my favorite word is "No,"

that everyone else has things that I regularly deny them.

I hope in the end,

they will see that they had an abundance of everything that mattered most.

I hope we, who are being given the Spirit, will too.