**20261025 'Friendship is not enough' – Ps Bruce McDonald**

**Luke 11: 1 – 8**

INTRODUCTION:

Is there anyone here today who likes receiving answers to prayer? Me too… I like it a lot, and I like lots of answers. After being a follower of Jesus for a long time now I have concluded that not all prayers are created equal. While it is good to pray, and right that we ask the Lord for things it is equally important that we learn to pray with increasing effectiveness.

So, in view of that let's consider the teaching that Jesus brings in our text this morning…

Immediately Jesus concludes teaching His disciples the pattern prayer, He chooses to tell them the story about the man asking his friend for bread AT MIDNIGHT! Now that is a test of friendship. But the priority thought in the story is that while he received what he needed it was not because of friendship, he received the answer to his request because of persistence!

I have been a Christian for 58 years and can say with certainty that the great answers to prayer that I have received have almost without exception been because of persistence. Often persistence over a prolonged period. Now, I don't resent that, I expect that.

In Luke 18 we find another of the parables of Jesus focused on prayer… the parable has been called 'The Parable of the Importune Woman'… the widow who would not give up!

In both these stories Jesus is giving us instruction, encouragement and permission to be persistent. That is helpful and EMPOWERING! But we should discuss the WHY for this:

I want us to consider 4 important reasons:

1. We think that it is all up to God:

God will do all that He has promised to do, BUT He won't do what He has told us to do! a. We must consider what our responsibility is.

Dodie Osteen, the mother of Joel, had a ministry of praying for people right up until she went to be with Jesus. She was asked, Do you worry about people not getting healed when you pray? Her answer was simple, 'Sometimes we are so worried about God's job that we stop doing ours'!

b. Jesus said, 'If you believe, all things are possible if you believe'. Prayer will rarely work if we say within ourselves, 'There God, I have prayed, not I will see what You will do'. No, pray in faith, stay in faith, and never give up.

2. There are forces at work who oppose the prayer, that resist the answer:

The language of war is a repeated theme in New Testament writings. This not metaphorical. We are in an identifiable war against an experienced enemy.

Matthew 11: 12, is a permission slip from the Principal to take an aggressive stance when in prayer. For Christians, living in NZ this is neither natural nor comfortable. We live with a peacetime and not a wartime mentality. We need to reverse this. We are too nice. When was the last time you were aggressive in prayer?

‘For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against… (Ephesians 6: 12). BUT we do wrestle, we must wrestle.

3. We forget that with all the vital pieces of armour we are told to put on only one is uniquely designed as a weapon of attack:

Ephesians 6: 17, ‘… the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God’.

I lead a healing ministry and get to pray for a lot of people who are facing health issues, often health crises. One of the questions I ask Christians I pray for is, ‘What is the promise you have from God?’ Too many have not even considered the answer to this. We don’t need every promise, but we do need a promise, we don’t need every verse, but we do need a verse… and not just for healing! As you engage in prayer use the Word of God as a weapon, and ally in seeking your answer from God.

Persistence:

1. While I was Pastoring in Whakatane, we had a serious need for a larger building… and what was our verse? Genesis 26: 22
2. The Liberty Trust story… and what about the verse? Deuteronomy 28: 12
3. A home for my family. Proverbs 19: 14

Ephesians 3: 20, 21 ‘Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21) to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen.’

Friends, I can ask and I can think a lot… how about you? Was Paul, the human author here, the Lord, the Divine author here simply using hyperbole? No. I am simple enough to believe He was speaking literally.

So, what is the power that works in us?

1. The great Holy Spirit.
2. The power to believe.
3. Persistence. The power to not give up!

Challenge:

In prayer are you relying only on your friendship with God, your relationship with Jesus to gain answers to prayer. I would that I could tell you that is enough, but I believe the Bible tells another story. It speaks of a cosmic battle that rages against human beings. We are enlisted to join the battle. To pray prayers that unlock the resources of heaven on behalf of our generation.