

Knock, Knock, Knockin' on Heaven's Door (with Kudos to Bob Dylan) — Luke 11:1-13

Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV –

28 July 2013 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost

¹ Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” ² And he said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation.”

⁵ And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷ and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, 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!”

Harvey wasn't quite sure how it had gotten to this stage. He hadn't been feeling quite right for months now. But that was the problem with life: as the body aged, you just never could be certain between when you were sick or when you were just feeling the aches and pains of getting old. If he ran to the doctor every time he felt his body showing its age, then he'd spend all of his time in the doctor's office.

But, he'd finally gone to his primary care doctor, and that had started the avalanche of diagnostic procedures. And, now, here he was getting ready for this procedure.

“Procedure.” When did they start calling it that? It used to be called “surgery.”

“Procedure” – the dictionary says: Noun; (1) an established or official way of doing something; (2) a series of actions conducted in a certain order or manner. Synonyms: process, proceeding, method.

Yeah, “maybe.” Call it whatever you want. It's a surgery.

He lay there on the gurney in pre-op. A long line of different people came in, telling them his name (he hoped there wouldn't be a name recognition quiz later on) and what they did and asking him so many questions. So many of the same questions, over and over.

Finally the doctor came in: asked him how he was doing. Reminding him of what he was going to be doing in the “procedure.”

Reminding whom? Harvey didn't need reminded. He kind of hoped that the doctor didn't need to remind himself.

“Do you have any questions,” asked the surgeon.

“Questions?” Harvey's mind raced. He had at least 100 questions ... questions that had been running around and around on the little hamster wheel up in his head. Questions that he knew the doctor could not answer.

Then, as if the hamster wheel came off track for a moment, Harvey thought of a new question: “What kind of music do you listen to, during surgery, Doc?”

Why did he ask that? Well, if he had a doctor who listened to Bach, that would mean one thing. If he listened to ... well, if he listened to songs or musicians, the names of which he did not recognize, that would tell him something quite different.

“Oh, an eclectic sort of mixture. Mostly 60's and 70's kind of music. You know, my parents' music: Dylan, Lennon, a little Zappa, Simon & Garfunkle.”

“Oh,” was all Harvey could say. Somehow that made him feel better, but he didn't know why.

The time arrived and the orderly came and wheeled him down the high gloss shiny floor from pre-op to the next “pre-“ staging area – whatever it was called. It felt like being on a runway at the airport.

As he waited, a person came over to him. He thought he recognized her, but, indeed, he flunked the name recognition test. She explained that she was going to give him a little shot into his IV to calm him down, but that he would not go to sleep right now. He felt the stuff running up his arm from the IV.

As he lay there, he knew that he ought to pray.

What should he pray?

“Now, I lay me down to sleep...”

No, that’s what children prayed. This was time for grownup prayer.

“Our father, ...

Yeah, that’s the one. He began to say it over and over. Before long Harvey noticed that he was developing a certain pattern of clustering, and taking a break, in how he said it. Without realizing it, he began to organize the prayer Jesus taught into a set of Prayer Needs.

- **Father,* hallowed be your name.** recognition and maintenance of proper relationship between Creature and Creator
- **Your kingdom come.** [on earth as it is in heaven] the most important part of Jesus’ life and teaching: the Kingdom is at hand. Jesus’ whole life demonstrated his belief in, and reliance upon, the Kingdom of Heaven at hand, alongside the easily apparent of Wrlld of the Five Senses.
- **Give us each day our daily bread.** Recognition of our radical dependency every day. We make choices, but we don’t make life. We depend on God for everything.
- **And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.**
Recognition and maintenance of proper relationship between creatures
- **And do not bring us to the time of trial.** The best way to avoid sin is to not be tempted by it

“Funny,” Harvey thought. In the way Jesus prioritized life, the sinning thing was at the bottom of the totem pole. **Relationships – (a) with God, (b) with the Kingdom of Heaven at hand, and (c) with one another ALL come ahead of the sinning thing.**

Harvey hoped he could remember this when he woke up. He’d bring it up in his Sunday School class.

Harvey tried his best to remember; he closed his eyes and kept repeating: **Relationships – (a) with God, (b) with the Kingdom of Heaven at hand, and (c) with one another ALL come ahead of the sinning thing.**

And then he began to hear music. Was his still on the runway? Was he awake or had he “gone under.”

He wasn’t sure, but the music continued to play. **[sermon title music begins to play in the background.]**

He began to wonder if he were dreaming it – or was he really knocking on Heaven’s Door.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Knock, knock, knockin’ ...

Jesus talked about people knocking:

- The man who needed bread for a guest coming at midnight.
- The woman knocking on the door of the unrighteous judge.

Knock, knock, knockin’ ...

Harvey was trying hard to think. Was he awake?

He kept picturing bloody knuckles. **Knock, knock, knockin’ ...**

Who was knocking?

A voice began to appear in the darkness: **It's me knocking. It's me knocking?
I stand at the door and knock. Knock, knock, knockin' ...**

Whose voice was it?

- **You don't have to knock for me. I always am knocking for you. Always knocking for you. Always knocking for you.**

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

- **Behold: how you think of me will shape how you pray.**
- **If you give good things to your children, how much more so will I take care of you.**
- **There's nothing you can ever do to take you out of my care.**
- **Would you send your children away from you forever for misbehaving?**
- **If you give good things to your children, how much more so will I take care of you?**

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

- **I am not your enemy.**
- **You don't have to appease me.**
- **You don't have to make me want to love you.**
- **You don't have to make yourself good enough.**
- **You are my beloved child, precious and beautiful to behold.**

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

Harvey heard the ticking sound of the machine beside his bed.

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

Was he awake?

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

- He was loved. How he thought about God determined how he prayed to God. And how he prayed to God would determine how he thought about God.
- He was beloved child of God's, precious and beautiful to behold.
- He was in God's hands.
- There was nothing he could ever do to take him out of God's care and love.

Knock, knock, knockin' ...

Yes, the Kingdom of God is at hand.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.