

PRAYER IS VITAL IN TODAY'S WORLD

The family had just moved to a new home - Mom and Dad and Stephen who was nine years old. Stephen was now in the fourth grade and proud of how “grown-up” he was. In the place where they used to live, he walked to school all by himself. Of course, it was a very small town - a place where everyone knew everyone and everyone looked out for each other. It was different now. They now lived in a very large city. People locked their doors. Most people didn't know their neighbors. Police sirens were common. Newspapers told of drug deals, kidnaps, knife fights, and rape.

The moving truck delivered their furniture on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday they unpacked their boxes. By Thursday, Stephen was ready to go to school. The school was only two blocks from their house. His parents had shown him the school and taken him to meet his teacher on Wednesday afternoon. Thursday morning Stephen was up early and dressed and ready to go. When it was time to leave, his father went to the door with him, ready to walk him to school. But no, Stephen insisted that he walk alone. Nothing the father said made any difference. Stephen insisted that he walk to school alone. After all, he was proud of how “grown-up” he was.

And so reluctantly, the father let him walk to school by himself. The father, though, was aware of all the dangers along the way. There was a busy street to cross. A neighborhood bully lived at the end of the block. The father had heard there was a crack house in the next block. And so he followed Stephen. Close enough he could watch him and hear him if he cried out. Far enough back that Stephen wasn't aware he was there. The father made sure Stephen made it to school safely.

We are so much like Stephen. We feel we're all grown up and we're not always aware of the danger around us. The Bible reading for today from Colossians talks about these dangers. It says, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.”

We could spend hours talking about what these dangers are and how they threaten to take us captive, but for now, we just need to know that we are surrounded by danger, whether we realize it or not.

We do not face these dangers alone, though. Like Stephen, we have Someone who walks with us through life and is ready to help at a moment's notice. All we have to do is ask. “Ask,” says Jesus, “and it will be given you.” And then to emphasize this awesome promise he says, “everyone who asks receives.”

Jesus is teaching us to pray. Notice, Jesus doesn't explain all about prayer. No, he takes us right to the source of power. What Jesus says is this: “When you pray, say, Father!”

With this one word Jesus teaches the secret of prayer. Prayer connects us to the One Jesus calls “Father.” We can pray all we want, but unless we pray to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ our prayer is nothing more than empty words. We might as well be praying to a stone or a tree. Only the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hears our prayers and gives us good gifts.

It is Jesus who gives you access to God the Father. Through his suffering and death, Jesus wipes away your sin and makes it possible for you to approach the holy God. Through his redeeming work, Jesus reconciles you to God so that nothing now separates you from God. Because of Jesus you now have full access to God.

When you pray, say: "Father." Jesus reveals the heart and will of God. Jesus reveals God to be a Father to you, and not just any father, but a good Father, the best Father. Some of us have good parents and some of us don't, but the Father of Jesus Christ is the ultimate Father, the ultimate Mother, the ultimate Parent. If we give good gifts to our children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give good gifts to us!

What a privilege it is to pray to our Heavenly Father. To pray is simply to talk to God, as a child would talk to a loving parent. Nothing more is needed than this simple faith that God is your Father for the sake of Jesus Christ.

And so you can pray. And you can pray with confidence. You can pray knowing God, who is the source of all power, will use his power for your good. You can pray. And you can pray with confidence. You can pray knowing God, for whom all things are possible, will make a difference in your life and in the lives of those for whom you pray.

Prayer is vital in today's world. Absolutely vital! There are dangers all around, some we can see and some we don't, but we have nothing to fear, for our Heavenly Father is walking with us. "Ask, and it will be given you," says Jesus. Yes, ask, and it will be given you!