

Courage to Ask!

Genesis 18²⁰⁻³²; Psalm 138; Colossians 2⁶⁻¹⁵; Luke 11¹⁻¹³

*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?
[Genesis 18²⁵]*

The simple question at the heart of the readings for today is, ***how far do you really trust God?***

Prayer, properly understood, is about trust. We can say anything we want to God; we can be absolutely honest about what we want, what we want to happen to us, what we want to happen to others; but in the talking we release control of what happens next to God. We trust him to do what is right. I love the final set prayer at Evensong (***A Prayer of Saint Chrysostom.***):

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee; and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Amen.

It seems to get the theology praying right *as may be most expedient for them.*

We have two models of how to engage with God in the readings set for today:

- ✘ I love the way God includes Abraham in his plans and says what he intends. The three men who had visited and stayed for a meal (and who promised the birth of Isaac) set out and Abraham went to show them the way (as if they needed that!). God says, in the verses before our reading, **shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?** The answer was no as Abraham would have responsibility to govern himself.

Sodom and Gomorrah had a terrible reputation, but God wanted to know for himself – **I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry:** they had!

That's when Abraham begins talking to God - **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?** As Abraham asks for the city to be saved if there are righteous people there, he works his way down from fifty to ten it must have begun to dawn on him that God was right.

When we pray, sometimes we have to talk our way to that point of accepting God is right.

- ✘ So, too, when Jesus responds to the request to teach his disciples how to pray, it is a simple formula – God; food; forgiveness (received on condition that we forgive others); and avoiding difficult testing. It is when we have to say, **your kingdom come**, that we realise that we are putting God in control.

Jesus makes the point that even the most miserable humans will relent if you are persistent enough. *I like the story of the businessman who went into Church because he had business debts in the millions but he couldn't concentrate on his prayers because the chap next to him was loudly asking God for £10. So the businessman put his hand in his pocket, gave the other chap £10 and then says to God, 'now may I have your undivided attention?'* We know that at least one of the prayers was answered!

Ask – search – knock – the deliberate and sustained acts of people who really want answers, knowing that sometimes on the journey we are changed and what we want changes. It is about God! It is about trust. When a child asks for a **fish** no-one would give a **snake**; if an **egg** no-one would give a **scorpion**. **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?**

God allows us to say anything we want, to ask for anything we want, but he restricts himself to what is best for us. That is why we trust him!