

Sermon preached at Gisborne, 24 July 2022

Luke 11:1- 13

Lord God, may your Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Praying to God

Not long ago, one of my friends in Korea contacted me, saying that she had begun to go to church with her husband. She used to go to church when she was young. But as she grew older, she lost interest in church for many years. She has led a very successful life in both her family and her job career. Now she was back in the church, which was still new. Then she cautiously asked me how she could listen to the voice of God when praying - more specifically, how she could discern if it were from God, not her own thoughts. For a reason, she was about to decide something important in her life. That was, she wanted to know when was the right time to retire from her successful career and how she could continue such an active and fruitful life for the rest of her life. She must have been thinking about it for a while. I could see that her questions were not very different from those of other people whose main focus of prayers is on their overall well-being. But if it is why we pray to God, what differences are there between Christian prayers and prayers to idols?

Especially in her question about hearing the voice of God, there are a few working beliefs: one is that God may always want us to live a good life as God is love. Second, God will listen to us and reply if we keep praying to God until we get the desirable answers. Indeed, today's reading in Luke vv5-13 seems to emphasize the perseverance of prayer. We read something similar in Luke 18:1-8, titled "the Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge" Especially in vv2-5, it reads,

"In a certain city, there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city, there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while, he refused; but later, he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" Jesus adds to this, saying that God is beyond comparison with this judge and will grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night. Yet if we don't know what God's justice is about, we won't understand Jesus' words either. As part of continuing prayer practice, we'll have a prayer workshop on 6 August in which we'll especially focus on personal prayers in our quiet time. Once it is done, we'll explore the Lord's Prayer at another time – through sermons. Understanding what prayer is

and practising it every day is important in our faith life. In the end, daily prayers will help us enjoy our intimate relationship with God and continually live by God's love.