

The Day of Pentecost  
Sermon Text: Romans 8:22-27  
Related Text: Acts 2:1-21  
Date Preached: May 31, 2009  
Note: 2 baptisms

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

In preaching classes one of the things we were taught is to read two things every day. They were the Bible and the newspaper. This week I was reminded of the wisdom of those words.

You see, today is the day of Pentecost. It is the day the Church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' promise to send the Spirit, the Advocate comes true. In scripture, we get an idea of the many things that the Holy Spirit does. One of the things that the Holy Spirit does is that the Spirit helps us to pray.

Now, some people I know have trouble praying. Some wonder about if their prayers are heard. Some fear they don't have the right words. Some who have prayed are told by well meaning friends that they need to pray harder especially when it doesn't seem like our prayers are being answered.

Individuals who are praying for financial help in this time of recession might be among those who feel as if their prayer has not been heard. Thus, Tuesdays

headline from the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reports an option. For 3.95 per month, you can have a computer generated voice in Boston pray on your behalf. Now, out of curiosity and hoping this was actually a joke, I went to this website. It is not only real, but there are more specific prayers that can be offered for additional fees.

I'll admit that when I went to this website I found myself laughing at the foolishness of the disclaimers, as well as the fees that were charged for a variety of different prayer requests. Yet, at the same time I am very sad about the message this sends. Because what will happen is that there will be some who spend their money to try this service.

Folks, I can't be any more clear than what I am about to say. **You don't need to pay any money to anyone in order to pray.** Prayer is a **conversation** with God.

Prayer can be an individual conversation you have with God. We can pray quietly as you do other things. We can pray at home, by the streams, at work and yes, even individually at school.

As we do in our worship, prayer may be a communal activity. We pray together at Bible studies, in

Sunday school classes, at committee meetings and other times when the church gathers.

Prayer can take on many forms. Prayer can be poetic, like many of the psalms we have in scripture. Prayers can be musical, even if there are no words to match the notes. Prayers can find shape in the hymns that we sing. Even expression of emotion can take the shape of prayer, such as the sigh we offer from a cool refreshing drink on a hot day, to the tears that flow from our eyes as we stand at the grave of a loved one.

We offer prayers of joy and celebration, like those of high school and college students who are or will soon graduate. Many choose to get married in the church where the bride and groom are surrounded in the prayers offered by the congregation. Today, in worship, we pray for Brody and Kylee as we welcome them into the family of faith.

Yet for all the different occasions, types, styles, or forms of prayer, this holds true. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit. The temptation is to think of prayer as our work alone when it is not.

In prayer the Spirit helps us. The Spirit prompts us to lift the things of our heart that concern us. The Spirit

urges us to pray for others as well as ourselves. It is the Spirit that helps us pray the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught, even those parts of the prayer that for us are difficult, such as praying for ourselves to be forgiving.

At times we may struggle with what to say in our prayers. Even then, we are reminded that it is the Spirit that works in us. As we heard it read this morning, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

It is God's desire that we be in conversation with him so much that through the Holy Spirit he will give us the words to say. And when we struggle to find the exact words, simply listen. It is then that God may be trying to say something to us.

In prayer we experience closeness with God. Such closeness comes from God's gracious invitation. There is no cost.