

Sermon
Seventh Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday, July 27th, 2025
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott
Readings:

My husband, Randy, is an avid outdoorsman. Hiking, hunting, fishing. He loves all of it. A particular passion, though, is fly fishing. Some of you will know that “angling” is a broad term for all fishing that uses a hook. A regular fishing rod relies on a weighted lure to cast a line into the water. A fly fishing rod relies on the weight of the line to cast.

Today’s readings offer us an opportunity to consider angles, and angling in our prayer life. What is our angle as we approach God in prayer? Do we have a particular agenda, or hook and lure, as we cast our prayers to our Creator, to our source of life? Or, is it the line, and the connection to God that matters to us? What are we fishing for in our prayers? Is it about us, and our desires, our particular angle and perspective? Or, are we casting a line to God with a view to aligning ourselves with God’s angle, with God’s mission?

Our Gospel passage today brings us Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer. Some of us might think of this as “the other Lord’s Prayer”, as the one we recite in worship is from Matthew’s Gospel. There are some key differences in Luke’s version of how Jesus teaches the disciples to pray. There is a particular angle.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is seen praying more than in the other three Gospels, starting with his baptism. He prays after curing the leper, and before choosing the twelve disciples. He is praying alone when he asks the disciples “Who do people say that I am?” and he prays at the Transfiguration. It’s only in Luke’s Gospel that we hear that Jesus prayed for his crucifiers, and committed his spirit to the Father. At these times, Jesus makes his connection to God visible, tangible, modelling prayer as connection for those he walked this earth with, and for us.

Luke places this story of Jesus teaching the disciples to pray during the travel narrative when Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to die. He is teaching his disciples that they must also take up their crosses if they want to

follow him, and he is telling them that the way will be treacherous. In this context - from this angle - he tells the disciples to pray to God for past, present and future. For the present: give us what we need. For the past: forgive us for what we can't undo as we forgive what others have done to us. For the future: don't let us be taken into something that's too much for us. Give us, forgive us, deliver us.

Luke connects this instruction on prayer to a parable to emphasize how willing God is to give gifts to God's children. God is not a distant tyrant, waiting to be appeased. God is a loving parent, wanting what is best for God's children. Ask, seek, knock, God is there with you.

All this infuses the act of prayer with trust. Trust in God to give what is needed. Trust in God to forgive, and to give us the grace to forgive. Trust in God to deliver - to free us - from trials, with presence, and love and grace.

The parable also emphasizes persistence. In verse 8, the Greek word that appears as "persistence" in most translations can also be translated as "shamelessness". What might it mean to pray without shame? Praying without shame gives us the freedom to name anything and everything that is on our hearts. Praying shamelessly lets us be bold and audacious in what we ask for while trusting in God's presence with us, while trusting in God already at work in anything and everything around us.

If we trust God - if we trust that we are loved beyond measure - we are freed from our own angles and perspective, we are freed from having to be right and righteous. Last week I mentioned Rowan Williams' invitation to see faith as mystery not mastery. Part of the mystery is trusting - believing - that God has a different angle on things than we do. Part of faith is trusting that our angle, our perspective will always be limited. Prayer is a way to connect with God's angle and perspective, with God's mission, with God's glory in the world.

What if our prayers are like the line from Randy's flyfishing rod? What if each prayer is about the line, the connection to God, not about the weight and lure - the particular petition, request - on the end? What if we can trust in God to catch each prayer - each fly, each hook - and to hold the other end of the line, so that we are hooked, tethered, held in love? This gives new meaning to holding the line - God holds us, and we

hold onto God every time we pray. Each time we pray, we have the opportunity to acknowledge the flaws in our own angle and perspective - we have a chance to consider whether we're angling for our own mission, or for God's mission - and we have an opportunity to place our trust in God's angle, in God's perspective, in God's mission. We have an opportunity to tether ourselves to God's mission, and to move with that line - that connection, with the Spirit - wherever we are pulled, knowing that God has a hold on us, and that hold is all about love.

This morning, may our prayers fly up and around and over and under us, hooking into God's love, and connecting and holding us in that love. May we catch a deep sense of God's presence with us, always. May we catch and hold onto the knowledge that God gives us enough for today, and that God heals the hurt and damage of yesterday. May we hook into a faith that fills our hearts and minds with trust that God will be with us forever, whatever happens. May we cast lines of prayer not with our own agenda and mission in mind, but with a deep desire to hook into God's mission, today and every day. In Jesus name. Amen.