

During Lenten midweek services, I will be sharing one of the six marks of discipleship each week. These marks include prayer, which we will look at tonight; secondly, worship; third, Bible reading; being a servant at St. Peter and beyond is fourth. Being an encourager of others, fifth; and finally, giving of your time, talents and resources to build the Kingdom of God. There's a book mark in each of your green hymnals to remind you during Lent of the six marks of discipleship. At the end of Lent, take them home and post them on your fridge or some other visual place.

Tonight's text are words of Jesus from Matthew 7: ⁷"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Christ invites us to talk with Him, with God, with the Holy Spirit. This is the first mark of discipleship. To speak with someone is to have some kind of relationship with that person. Jesus asks to be close to God referring to God as 'abba' or daddy and gives us the Lord's Prayer as one model prayer which begins with 'Our.' That also says that we are all in this together. It also follows Jesus comment that where two or three are gathered in My Name, I will be there in the midst of them. (Matt.18:20)

When we look at the scriptures, we see the widow and judge parable where she continues to persist to come to a judge that cares nothing for her. She comes back again and again and finally to get her off his back he gives her the justice she deserves. (Luke 18) We can be tempted to give up because God doesn't seem to be doing what we want Him to, but remember God is in control. Listen to the words of a song of that title by Twila Paris.

1) This is no time for fear. This is the time for faith and determination. Don't lose the vision here carried away by the motion. Hold on to all that you hide in your heart. There is one thing that has always been true. It holds the world together. Chorus - God is in control. We believe that His children will not be forsaken. God is in control. We will choose to remember and never be shaken. There is no power above or beside Him, we know. O, God is in control.

2) History marches on. There is a bottom line drawn across the ages. Culture can make its plan oh, but the line never changes. No matter how the deception may fly, there is one thing that has always been true; it will be true forever. Chorus

Bridge: He has never let you down. why start to worry now? He is still the Lord of all we see. And He is still the loving Father watching over you and me. every little sparrow, every little thing.

Jesus invites us to go into our closets and pray. In Matthew 6 in his sermon on the mount Jesus says, *“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

God wants us to be close to Him. This remembering you are dust before the One who created you is an act of humility and an affirmation of the reality of being creatures. We are not God. Listen again to a song by Twila Paris called *Destiny*.

Buried in the heart of every child of his creation is a deep desire for which we seldom find the words. As each poet sings of searching for his own salvation. once again, a common truth is heard beating out the question. Only honest and courageous hearts will answer.

Chorus: Do you know Him? This is your destiny. When you obey Him, there is an open door. Do you believe? And will you love Him? This is your destiny.

When you obey Him, there is an open door to your unspoken dreams even we who call his name so often miss the treasure. Still a voice of wisdom cries to those who will be stirred, sounding in the silence of dishonest weight and measure. Once again, a common truth is heard beating out the question. Only honest and courageous hearts will answer. Chorus

So, what is prayer like for you? Are you willing to seek, ask, and knock? God is with you but longs for your fellowship, sharing, trust and love. To pray is to give that especially if we think of the acronym, P-A-C-T. It represents four aspects of prayer.

Petition Adoration Confession Thanksgiving

(Explained)

If you feel awkward praying, give it a chance. Don't wait till you're so desperate that you don't know what else to do. Recognize that God is in control and He is your Destiny. May God bless you in your prayer life as you grow in Jesus. Amen