

The Door to God's Grace  
Luke 11:5-9

Imagine this scenario. You have fed your family. They were hungry and ate everything in the house. You make a note to yourself to get up early in the morning to buy flour from the vendor, so you can make bread for breakfast. Just as you are about to turn in for the night, suddenly there is a knock at the door. It's your cousin and her family. She apologizes. But she just got word that morning that her mother was seriously ill. She and her family immediately set out to go to her. They have walked about fifteen miles, and they are very tired and hungry. Could they stay the night with you?

"Of course," you say, "Here's water. Wash up. I'll get something for you to eat."

You remember when you and your family spent the night with her, on a trip. She treated you like royalty, just as she was expected to do. It's a shameful thing not to feed your guests well and tend to all their needs. But you are in a panic. You have no food in the house. What will you do?

Then you remember your neighbor. She's a good friend. She was telling you today that she had guests coming tomorrow, so she was making up extra loaves of bread. So you go next door and knock on the door.

You hope she answers the door, and not her husband. He is a very churlish, ill-tempered guy. But, he does answer. He says through the door, "Whoever it is, go away. We've gone to bed for the night, and I have no intention of opening the door." You tell him who it is, and explain the situation. You tell him that if they will give you three loaves of bread, you will replace them early in the morning. He says, "No. If I walk through the house to get bread, I'll wake up the animals, and they will wake up the baby, and I'll get no sleep tonight."

Well, at this point your desperation and exasperation combine to make you lose your temper. "Look," you say, "If you don't open this door and give me some bread, I will start beating on this door as loudly as I can and start shouting at the top of my lungs. Then see how well you sleep."

There is silence. Suddenly the door opens and he shoves a loaf of bread at you and says, "You better have two loaves back here the first thing in the morning."

You get back to the house, rummage around and find enough wine for your guests and some sauce for them to dip the bread in. The table is set as the guests finish cleaning up. As they hungrily eat, your cousin says, "I'm so sorry to come in on you unexpectedly. I hope we didn't inconvenience you too much." You smile and say, "Not at all."

That is an expanded version of a story Jesus told in Luke 11. He goes on to say, "Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened unto you."

There are many reasons that Emmaus has such a powerful impact on the pilgrims. One of the most important of those is that so many prayers are being lifted up

for them. The pilgrims are our guests. We want them to experience the depth and power of God's grace in such a powerful manner that their lives are transformed.

We work for that goal. Just as importantly, we pray for it. The Emmaus community prays for the pilgrims. Emmaus communities from around the world are praying for them. And you, the team, are praying for them. Your constant prayers are surely as important as the time you spend preparing and rehearsing your talks, or making sure the meals are prepared, or getting the outside equipment ready.

If an ill-mannered neighbor will give you what you ask, just because you are so persistent, how much more will God give you what you ask—especially when what you are asking is exactly what God wants to give.

There is a wall which separates heaven from our everyday world. God wants to reach across to touch us. But God won't do so without an invitation. That's why Jesus says, in the book of Revelation, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone answers the door, I will come in and sup with him."

Jesus is standing at the door of the lives of these Emmaus pilgrims. It's up to us to open the door to him. We do that by our prayers. It's a heavy door. It's not easily opened. But if we all join together in opening the door to God's grace through our prayers for these pilgrims, the Spirit of Christ will enter in to that walk, and we will all spend the weekend in the presence of God.

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