

Reflection for July 24, 2022

Outcomes – Based on Luke 11:1-13

Apart from my relaxing and mystical experience on my recent time at Naramata Centre, there were other inspirational moments outside of wild church. One of those was down at the beach during my wandering. A mother and a small child, perhaps four, were sitting close to the lakeshore. As the lake has started to recede it left behind a good-sized pond perhaps 6" deep at most and there was a stump that crossed it.

The youngster was on the lakeside and wanted to cross over without going around. So, he says to his mother, "mommy can I cross over that log?" His mother says, "yes you can, but there might be outcomes." Outcomes! What a great reply I thought. I watched and wondered what would happen next. The boy says, "what does that mean mommy?" "Well, you might get wet she replies." The boy thought and walked around. Smart lad! I was quite amused.

"Knock and the door will be opened for you" says Jesus. It doesn't matter if the occupant is in bed asleep or if he or she just does not want to be bothered if you keep on knocking the door will eventually be answered. Not only will the door be opened, but the gifts you receive will be beneficial, the outcomes will be in your favour. Jesus says God is there behind the locked door to answer any need.

Now that presents a challenge. If God is behind every door, how would we know? Often those who seek a little kindness, or a little generosity have doors shut in their faces. Others who would just wish to escape their trauma for a while and perhaps be lovingly held, find doors barred. Occupants in their comfortable surroundings see the needy coming down the street and treat them like the travelling salesman, "don't answer, let's just pretend we are not at home." "There will be outcomes if we answer the door, we will have to do something or give something up." And so, the doors remain shut as our knuckles become bruised and chafed. The frustration results in another outcome, we can become discouraged and even feel defeated.

"Knock and the door will be opened for you," perhaps. Perhaps, but only if we remember whose threshold the door to the entrance sits upon. The Holy Presence may be behind the door, but we have the key. The door will not be opened unless we unlock it. But inside, the God we pray to is present in each welcome, each hand-shake and each hug upon entry.

The God of this July day resides in our generosity, our willingness to serve, our stewardship, our graciousness. This God that Jesus speaks about is also present when we seek forgiveness and forgive others. Whether or not the door is opened to the Creator's loving embrace depends on us.

Author Richard Wagamese, from his book *Embers* writes this Dialogue:

Me: How do I find Creator?

Old Woman: You become what you seek.

Me: I don't understand.

Old Woman: You decide what creator is. If you decide she is peace, love, humility and non-judgement, you decide to work toward embodying those qualities in your walkabout world. The closer you get to that, the closer you are to finding Creator. That is what our

ceremonies are for. To teach you that Creator is in you, that she always was and always will be.¹

As Richard speaks about ceremonies, we might speak about prayer. As we pray for hope in the world and an end to all that we know to be unjust, we pray as well that our hearts remain open to the spirit of a loving, and compassionate God. A presence who is the benefactor of hope, joy, love, and peace in the world.

The outcomes of doors that remain locked, doors that shut out all of God's goodness are what we experience as hostility, abuse, apathy, selfishness, and greed. Behind those doors lurk oppression, violence fear and hatred. But there are, through our faith and prayerful actions, opportunities for far better outcomes.

Jesus is asked to teach his disciples how to pray. He said Father, Yahweh, your name is blessed. The Kingdom you profess will come. As this unfolds, we ask to be fed and nourished. We know we are going to make mistakes, so forgive us when we do and remind us to forgive those that do likewise. And remind us to resist the easy path, the temptations to personal gain that would favour ourselves at the expense of others.

Jesus also told his disciples that they are called into being a part of the answer to prayer. We, all of us, are in relationship with the Holy, God now in this place, in this time we are together. God is not external to our existence but lives in and through us. God weeps when we weep, if frustrated when we are, and objects to all you and I object to that undermine this creation we are all a part of.

God is frustrated when a child goes hungry, discouraged when someone must sleep on the streets, and angry when another innocent life is sacrificed. God grieves with us. And most assuredly God laments when the knock on the door of someone in need is not answered with Grace but instead with the reply ***"Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything."***

The choices we make, like the toddler on the beach, have any number of outcomes. Jesus tells his disciples to make the decision that enhances relationships. He implores them to seek out goodness, kindness, and generosity. He asks them to keep their doors unlocked and the welcome carpet on the front step clearly displayed. He asks them to be a part of a growing kin-dom of believers that trust in Holy Love.

Jesus asks us to do the same thing. If a school child needs a bag lunch, would we deny them? Is a cup of flour, some milk, and eggs too much of an inconvenience to offer a neighbour? Would one deny a stranger a ride to the nearest bus stop? Would we not offer consoling arms to someone in grief? Would we not stand up for the falsely accused or the falsely imprisoned? Would we not object to laws limiting our freedoms or actions?

When we do, our knock on the door is answered and God is waiting. That is a reply to our prayer.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen

¹ P. 122