

Genesis 18:20-32

Then the Lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know." So the men turned from there, and went towards Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there," Again he spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there," He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there," He said, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

Luke 11:1-4

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."



"Father, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive
everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation."

“The Lord’s Prayer”

Main Street, Littleton Colorado was the place where my daughter Amy unexpectedly found herself in one of those ‘unexpressed’ (wordless) moments of prayer. It probably began in the candy store as a smile in her heart when Reese (her three year old daughter) squealed with delight at taking a lick of the huge, pinwheel colored lollipop that she had chosen from the one hundred other sweets at the shop. I suspect that later it moved to the sweet place of joyful communion as Reese danced down the sidewalk humming and singing her made-up tune: “This is the best day of my life. LA, DE, DA . . . Hum-Hum-Hum!” And I know for sure that it changed to a place of pain and disappointment as her happy go lucky child tripped over a crack in the sidewalk, fell down, and shattered her sweet prize. As with most three year olds it did not take long for frightened tears to turn into screaming sobs against the irretrievable, cruel loss of her heart’s desire. In good motherly style, it took even less time for Amy to try and pick her up out of disappointment with a string of comforting words. “The pieces are big. We can wash them off and you’ll still have the whole thing,” she assured her. **“No we can’t! No we can’t! No we can’t, it will melt!”** responded the inconsolable child. When the litany of ‘I want, I want, I want’ continued to pour forth from Reese’s mouth as tantrum without end, Mom simply bent over, firmly but gently picked up her screaming child and said, ‘We’re going home. When we get there we’ll put a band-aid on your knee and clean up your lollipop up. End of story.’ When we got into the car my daughter Amy put her hand on my knee, looked over at me and said: “Thank you for not throwing me under the bus when I was a kid.” “You’re welcome. It was really hard not to sometimes,” I truthfully replied.

Just outside Sodom and Gomorrah was the place where Abraham unexpectedly found himself in ‘expressed’ or ‘word’ prayer, talking with God about throwing all the wicked city

people under the bus. According to the story God did not do so in his moment of righteous anger because Abraham braved a persistent heart-to-heart talk with his Maker. Six times during Abraham’s talk with the Lord he called upon the Holy One to not forsake the work of the Creator’s hands. Six times he appealed to Yahweh the Judge of evil and executor of justice, to consider Holy forgiveness and Love’s redeeming work of tethering wounded souls to the heart of God . . . for the Divine purpose of forming human community into a Holy One. “For the sake of ten,” spoke the Living God, “I will not destroy it.” I like this heart-to-heart talk between Abraham and his Maker because it makes me mindful of God’s intolerance of human wickedness; it awakens my gut fears to the wisdom of the Power of God; and it transforms my ‘get rid of rotten apples before they spoil the whole bunch’ attitude to a ‘Do-No-Harm’ perspective. “Prayer” wrote Soren Kierkegaard, ‘does not change God, but it changes the one who prays.

Heart center was the place that the disciples found Jesus, loving God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, by spending time with his Abba in prayer. Uncertain- in-faith was the place that the disciples found themselves when they heard what the Steadfast Love of God had to say about The Almighty’s Way of keeping good people from throwing wicked people under the bus. ‘Forgive us our sins as we also forgive everyone who sins against us,’ Jesus’ faint-hearted disciples heard the Lord’s Just-Peace Teacher pray. I like this part of Jesus’ prayer because it opens my heart to the Spirit of Forgiveness, effectively disarming my Sodom and Gomorrah thoughts of killing as a way to rid our society of evil and to keep our families, cities, and nation safe. I like, ‘Forgive us our sins as we also forgive everyone who sins against us’ because when we corporately pray it, it holds the power to soften the hearts of ‘just-shoot-em’ militants in Christ’s Church today.

Prayer. For the sake of our Lord and Savior, come Holy Spirit.
Grace us and all God’s people, with forgiving hearts.
Amen.