- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

RAVENOUS PRAYER ?

Do these two words seem out of place with each other? Maybe that's because most people tend to think of prayer as something that goes *out* instead of *in*.

But prayer is a TWO-way conversation with God. Not that He needs us to tell Him what's on our minds. He already knows all things. But WE need to unburden our thoughts by bringing our anxieties to Him. And prayer is more about getting our thinking in line with God's than it is about getting Him up to speed with us.

In Luke 11:1-10, Jesus answered His disciples' request about how to pray. He also gave them an example. It's sometimes called "the parable of the friend in need." It's about a first-century person who was unprepared to feed an unexpected house guest who arrives late at night. What to do? You'd ask your neighbor to lend you some bread. But late at night, your friend doesn't want to disturb his family, since they all sleep in the one room they live in. Yet, Jesus says your neighbor will get up and give you the bread, not because of your friendship, but because you keep on asking.

In the same way, Jesus says, "***Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will opened to you.***" Point is, God is not sleepy and indifferent to your needs. And since God is good, we should pray expectantly and earnestly.

Such boldness in prayer is what the Robertson clan of Duck Dynasty fame calls *"shameless, audacious, persistent, and ravenous prayer."* In their new "Faith Commander" Bible study resource, Phil Robertson explains: *"Such prayer isn't disrespect. Our family doesn't go to God demanding that He do things. But we don't hesitate to ask Him, because He's said He wants to hear from us, and because we know He's generous, and because it's midnight and He's the only one in town with bread."*

Prayer is a big part of the appeal of Duck Dynasty, because every episode of the TV show ends with the family around the table in prayer. Robertson says the number-one topic of their fan mail is, *"Thank you for praying to God to thank Him for the food you're fixing to eat."*

Prayer is an essential part of the Christian life, but sometimes prayer seems unanswered. Jesus says, keep on praying, *"**for every-one who asks receives, the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened**."*

Robertson points out how these verbs keep getting bolder and bolder. Asking is like a first polite request. Seeking is active pursuit - like the Duck Dynasty clan going out to look for catfish or frogs or ducks. Knocking is pounding on God's door, until He answers, even if the answer comes in His time, not yours.

Sometimes, the answer comes in a surprising way. "*What were the disciples prepared for when they prayed unceasingly to God?"* asks Robertson. *"They were prepared for the Creator of the cosmos to say NO. See, you pray to God and you ask Him to bless you, your family, your children, your livelihood, your country, your world. Sometimes God says, 'No. It's your responsibility to stand up and do what you've asked Me to do. Get up and go forth. Love Me. Love your neighbor'."*

Much of the time, we want God to do everything for us from the comfort of our easy chair. *"God isn't ignoring you, but He may be waiting for you to learn to pray ravenously, shamelessly, with total humility and dependence upon Him,"* says Robertson. *"God won't necessarily give you everything you want, but He will give you what you need."*

Prayer is one of the great resources of being a child of God. When you are born again from above, by putting your trust in Jesus Christ alone as your Lord and Savior, you are adopted into God's family. This gives you access to the throne room of the King of the Universe, for whom nothing is impossible.

That's why we can pray with boldness and confidence. God knows everything, including what's best for us and the right time for Him to act, to fulfill His purposes in our lives. And that's why we close our prayers with *"amen"* - which comes from a Hebrew word meaning *"so be it*." **Amen*!*