**Growing the Pie Week 2**

**Vision Requires Faith**

**Message Notes**

### This series is not about pastries but about our vision for the future. Jesus told his disciples to “grow the pie” by making more disciples, and that’s our vision too.

* *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”* (Matthew 28:19).

### Our vision statement is that:

* “We strive to be a community growing in faith where everyone loves to belong.”
* This week, we’re looking at the meaning of “FAITH” in that statement.

### Faith allows us to see in the DARK.

### Fifteen hundred years ago, the world was plunged into cultural and spiritual darkness during a period called the Dark Ages. Many thinkers believe we are entering in another type of Dark Ages today because of a loss of social cohesion and a general crisis of meaning. Postmodern thinking has debunked the belief that universal truth exists. Nihilism, skepticism, and positivism as systems of thought are rising sharply.

### But faith still offers clear vision and the only real answers in the midst of darkness and confusion because we believe that:

* Truth can be known;
* Beauty is not always subjective and reflects a perfect created order; and
* Goodness and morality are not merely relative but point to a perfectly just God, natural law, and an objective moral order.

### The story of Bartimaeus is a story of how faith overcomes blindness through:

* A sense of wonder about the world and our place in it;
* The courage to ask profound questions believing that there are answers; and
* The desire to know more and become explorers on the way to truth.

### We believe that reason and revelation, theology and philosophy, science and religion, faith and rational understanding support each other and lead to the truth.

### **Action Step:** Do one thing this week that feeds your soul and your sense of WONDER.

**Praying with the Gospel of Luke:**

**The Power of Persistence**

*By Lisa Rosenlund*

Dante described Luke as *scriba mansuetudinis Christi* which translates to a “scribe of the gentle mercy of Christ.” Indeed, the Gospel of Luke instructs us to trust in God’s mercy by praying continuously and persistently.

When Jesus pauses to pray along the way to Jerusalem and the disciples ask how they should pray, he gives them a version of the Lord’s Prayer that is considerably shorter than that of Matthew and beautiful in its simplicity:

“Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

The Lord’s Prayer was intended to be said every day to keep the disciples on track. We who are also his disciples can benefit from saying this abbreviated form of the Lord’s Prayer every day, in addition to the extended one on Sunday.

That simple prayer is followed by a short parable known as “The Friend at Midnight,” in which one friend goes to the house of another at midnight asking for food to feed an unexpected guest. Jesus says that even though the friendship is not a strong enough basis to induce the man to get out of bed, his friend’s persistence will ultimately win out and cause the sleeping man to give his friend “whatever he needs.” The implication, of course, is that, if we knock at God’s door through continuous and persistent prayer, our requests will be heard and answered.

Among all the writings of the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke stands out for its emphasis on prayer. Indeed, only Luke contains the two parables of prayer: The Friend at Midnight discussed above and the Parable of the Widow and the Callous Judge.

In the latter, Jesus teaches the disciples about the need to pray always and not to lose heart.  The widow, a symbol of powerlessness who has been denied her economic rights, appeals to a judge who, by his own admission, has no fear of God or respect for anyone. Yet, because of the widow’s persistence, he gives in and she ultimately receives justice.  The parable teaches us that continual prayer is not simply passive waiting but an active quest for what we seek.

There are many ways to integrate the Gospel of Luke into your prayer life.  One of them is a new movement of looking at and praying with art called *visio divina,*literally “divine watching.” *Illuminating Luke* is a series of books written by a biblical scholar in collaboration with an art historian with examples of artwork depicting the events written about in the Gospel of Luke. Using books like this or even art found on the internet, we can use the Gospel of Luke in a new way to enrich our prayer life.

*Reflection Questions: (1) Has there ever been a time when you persisted in prayer against all odds and your prayers were answered? (2) If you were to pray using an image or the memory of a personal experience, what would that be?*