



Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

February 9, 2021

Asking for Help

By the Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.

The people of Immanuel, like so many parish communities, have a big heart. I don't say that lightly. We care for and about others. We care about our nation and our planet. We invest in doing what we can to make this world a little better – recycle; advocate; deliver meals; and make calls to offer support. We welcome the stranger and believe in education. We view all of this as part of our God-given ministry.

I've noticed, though, that folks are much less likely to ask for help for themselves, and even may be hesitant to ask for prayers when going through something difficult. It takes a while for us to reach out. Why is that? Could it be some of our heritage as Anglicans, with the stiff upper lip and all? Could it be that we feel it's selfish to ask for what we need?

This doesn't only extend to our relations with other people. Many, many people have told me it is so much easier for them to pray for something that someone else needs than it would ever be for them to pray for what they need. Again, why is that?

Are we afraid to show that we can be needy, too, even with God? Do we feel we always have to keep up the strong, put-together façade? Are we afraid that people might not like us as much if they found out we don't always have it as together as it would appear?

We have a birthright, my brothers and sisters. As beloved children of God, we are heirs of the Kingdom. The Epistle to the Hebrews says it this way:

“Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

I love that verse. It speaks of belonging, of taking one's place at the table, of asking our God, who loves us more than we can imagine, for what we need.

This scripture gives us a picture of approaching the God of the universe as a daughter or son who has a right to ask for help in time of need. A request from the heart that can be made with faith and trust – not groveling, bargaining, or with fear. That is a benefit of this most precious relationship.

There are benefits of our community in Christ, as well. As we are invited to approach God with boldness and holy candor, I would like to see us take that risk more often with our sisters and brothers in the Church, as well. Instead of saying, “Oh, fine.” when asked how we are doing, what would it be like to say, “You know, I'm really struggling with something,” or at least to feel perfectly free to say something like that.

I realize there are degrees of relationships even within the Parish, and I'm not advocating divulging personal information inappropriately. But I am saying that maybe, just maybe, life is too short, and our community is too precious, to be anything less than our real, authentic, unique selves with each other. I believe our community cannot only take it, but deserves it.

Find the right people to ask to pray for you; people who will be deeply honored and take that precious opportunity to heart. Find the people with whom you can let off steam; share your deepest questions; and maybe even be a bit irreverent.

They're all here. Look and you will find them. They are waiting for you. And they all need to hear more from you. We all need to hear more from you. And the same goes for God.

I hope you will hear this [song](#) and its message to be a prayer of new beginnings.