

“The Seeker Sleeps Uneasily”
Psalm 85 Luke 11:9-13
August 19, 2007

It is an old saying; *“the seeker sleeps uneasily.”*

In this Chapter of Luke, the prayer Jesus taught to his disciples often overshadows the instruction about prayer - to ask, search and knock.

- *Ask and it will be given*
- *Seek and you will find*
- *Knock and it will be opened*

This summer in my sermons, I have been addressing some of the *‘hard sayings’* of Jesus. Today, it is easy to believe in a Jesus who is largely a construction of our own imagination – an inoffensive person whom no one would really trouble to crucify, writes British Biblical scholar, F.F. Bruce in his book *Hard Sayings of Jesus.*

Jesus, in reality, gave offense right and left, and to the right and left. He upset established notions of religious propriety, spoke of intimacy with God, enjoyed questionable company, and walked a road many considered a disaster.

There are two kinds of *‘hard sayings;’* those that are difficult to understand and those that are easy to understand, but difficult to trust.

Mark Twain once said the things in the bible that bothered him were not those that he did not understand but those that he did understand.

In today’s NT lesson, Jesus makes a promise that is easy to understand, but in the face of human reality difficult to trust - ***Ask, Seek, and Knock.***

Who among us has not asked for a miracle, searched for a solution, or knocked on a door?
An old bluegrass song by Harry McClintock:

*One evening as the sun went down
and the jungle fire was burning
Down the track came a hobo hiking
and he said boys I’m not turning
I’m headin for a land that’s far away
beside the crystal fountains
So come with me we’ll go and see the
Big Rock Candy Mountains*

Many days of our lives we search for that Big Rock Candy Mountain, where the handouts grow on bushes and you sleep out every night, only to find that the sun does not shine every day, and that mountains are made of rocks.

Our lives take place between what is above and what is below, between heaven and earth, and we ask, seek, and knock in this tension.

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I can no longer remember the number of times I have been with someone praying for a miracle, healing, good news; one who asked, searched, and knocked with all their might only to face more days of suffering and sorrow.

It is a moment of great rejoicing and praising when the prayers are answered, and the miracles delivered. We give thanks to God when the storm passes over our home, and when our child is spared.

How is the person whose home was blown away or child taken away to understand God?

The central themes of Dr. Karen Armstrong’s impressive best-selling book *A History of God* is that there are two parallel concepts of God running side by side in the Bible.

1. ***Supernatural Theism***, which imagines God as a person-like being, up there in heaven, who intervenes in acts of miracles for us down here.
2. ***Panentheism***, which imagines God as the encompassing Spirit, in whom we live, move and have our being, a God who is both transcendence and immanence.

Supernatural theism has dominated Christian theology since the 17th century, when the Enlightenment thought of God as ‘out there’ and separated from the natural world of humans. It is so common today, that for many it is the only way to think about God. Just listen to Larry King ask questions about God, and those he chooses to give the answers.

The teachings of Jesus and St. Paul give us another way of understanding God, a way of understanding both the transcendence and presence of God, whereas supernatural theism emphasizes only the transcendence of God.

When I bow my head to ask, move my feet to search, and raise my hand to knock I trust that God, in Christ Jesus, has already joined me in the asking, searching, knocking, and that regardless of the realities, I will be given the spiritual strength to endure all things.

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