

Text *Luke 11:9-10* So I say to you, Ask and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Hebrews 12:1 . . .let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. . .

Ask, Search, Knock: Life's Pathway

Do you remember Thomas Merton? A man in holy orders who prayed wonderfully, thought beautifully and wrote well. We begin our meditation with this little prayer by him.

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always through I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen

Here we are on life's pathway. We don't know exactly where we might be on it. Do we have years ahead of us or only hours? We are not privileged to know. But we do know that Jesus gave us some interesting and challenging advice about life on the pathway toward meaning. He told us to ask, search and knock and to "run with perseverance the race" that is ours. Let us spend a few minutes exploring Jesus' set of instructions.

Ask is his first instruction. If you don't ask, you aren't even on the road, you have no real place in the race. This is a reminder that we do have free will. Ask, and it will be given to you. And just for what are we asking? Some of us might say, riches, others fame, others happiness or good health. But if we put our asking in the context of the Gospels, we are probably asking in different ways, for the same thing: Meaningfulness. Why am I who I am? What is my place in this universe? How is my being significant? It is tempting to say that these questions are only the speculations of college sophomores in Philosophy 101. But if you step back from the mundane for a moment and try to catch a glimpse of your whole self, you might well find the words, "here I am Lord, take me." That, is another way of saying give me meaningfulness Lord.

Then the Lord says "**search** for it." Well, that is not what I had in mind at all. I wanted meaningfulness to come in a bumper sticker with the copyright of Jesus on it. Now, here he is, telling me that I am the one who must search, if I am to find! Isn't it enough that I pray, take communion and contribute to the church? Jesus says "no, that is not enough, I want you to use your brain too." On this pathway of life, we are charged with using our brains to search tradition, reason and the Bible in order to find our meaningfulness.

But Jesus isn't through with us yet. If we want to live our meaningfulness, we must take action. **Knock** and the door will be opened. "Salvation through grace" is our anthem. But grace is not a

substitute for brains and action. Grace is the gift of capability. It is the enabling gift of God's love telling us to get off our knees and get to work putting those beatitudes in motion.

Ask, Search, Knock. The three horsemen of meaningful salvation. Paul tells us to run the race with perseverance. We will encounter all sorts of distractions and hardships and challenges, but by meeting all with the faith explorations of ask, search and knock, we will persevere.

There is a little poem by Robert Frost that catches the ambiguity of life's choices and the meaningfulness that results from those choices.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sign
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Amen

