

SERMON NOTES: AUG 4TH
SCRIPTURE READINGS.... Luke 11: 5-13, Acts 12: 1-19

A PRAYER-DRIVEN MOVEMENT...we can't grasp Acts apart from prayer. The Early Church was growing. They gave talks, did miracles, and crowds just got larger. Their prayers seemed to have INSTANT RESULTS. It was as if nothing could stop them. Then Stephen got killed, their prayers seem to dry up. Herod puts Peter in jail. With James dead, and Peter in jail, their backs are against the wall. What Apostles do now? Would the Jesus Movement end? They had no clout. They had prayed for James, and yet he got killed. Would they lower their hopes and just ask God to keep Peter comfortable in jail? Or would they stop praying? Was God less faithful to James than Peter? Is God less loving if we don't see results? Prayer isn't telling God what we want to happen.

PETER GETS A NUDGE...Luke adds drama to the story: an angel appears at Peter's jail, shining his light, but he is asleep. An Angel navigates Jerusalem, travels through 3 sets in iron doors and a squad of guards, only to find Peter snoring. The angel gives him a nudge; he wakes up; the Angel escorts him to Mary's house. Did Luke chuckle as he wrote this? It goes from the sublime to the ridiculous: while the Church prays inside the house, Peter stands outside, banging on a gate. Praying for a miracle, they didn't come out to see the answer standing at the door.

LIVING HONESTLY BEFORE GOD... Prayer is the desire to be near God; we let God love us. You may be disillusioned, too many prayers have gone unanswered. Know that God loves you. It isn't our words that connect us to God; love connects us to God. Prayer is an ACT OF LOVE. To love someone, you want to be with them. We come to God as we are and strive to be honest with him. We can be REAL with him. God knows WHAT WE NEED better than we do. The miracle of prayer isn't getting WHAT WE SEEK but meeting the GOD WHO SEEKS US.

GOD ANSWERS IN HIS TIME ...God has the right to answer prayer in his time or it would be a disaster. In prayer, we abandon entitlement; we come to God with an open hearts, receiving any signs of grace he offers. A servant girl hears Peter's banging. Startled, she leaves him outside and runs to tell the others who mock her. Can this get any worse? They pray for a sign; she tells them that God has heard them, that Peter is outside; and they call her crazy. Face it: had God granted all our prayers, our lives would be MORE CONFUSED than they already are!