

Praying in Jesus' name

By Arne Kappelgaard

Genesis 32,25-32 and Joh. 16,23b-29

Jesus says: "Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you"

How should we understand that?

Well, first of all Jesus encourages us to pray!

To pray is to communicate with him, talk with him, and have fellowship with him.

To pray in Jesus' name is not a clever way to get your will, of course not, but to be united with Christ and filled with his spirit so that we pray in harmony with his will.

We can pray about anything – "whatever", and surely he listens to our needs. But, good economy, residence permit, friendly neighbours and other good things will not give complete joy for long. A good conscience, the unconditional love of God, forgiveness and peace, all that belongs to full unity with Christ gives the full joy.

Psalm 37:4 says:

"Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart."

Our hearts are changed by it to search for joy where full joy is found.

To pray means to find a way into the peace of God,
but it certainly also can mean fighting with God!

When Jesus in Gethsemane was praying, he was fighting hard. He prayed about not going to die so terrible a death for us although he knew that it was not what God wanted. So, can we come with whatever we want even if we know that it is not the will of God!

But, let us remember that Jesus added: if it is your will!

In Hebrews we read that his prayer was heard! An angel came to comfort him, and he got strength to face the situation as he was called to do. That was answered prayer!

Another example is Jacob.

He is fighting with a man without name. Jacob knows afterwards that it is the angel of God.

He was afraid to meet his brother next day, for Jacob cheated his brother 21 years ago and ran away for his life. Jacob was a rich man now, by cheating all the time, so he had also many enemies.

Now he had to go home.

Nevertheless, suddenly the last night before meeting the brother he must fight with someone else.
With God – and with himself.

Have you ever been fighting with God?

You want him – and you don't want him.

You love him – and you love to be free from him, do your own will.

You trust him – and you are afraid what he will do.

Jacob was fighting with himself as much as with God.

When the angel said: "Let me go, for the day has broken" it is not because the angel is weak and gives up. I think it is because he wants Jacob to give up forcing God once more to do what Jacob wants.

Only when Jacob had been broken, he was humble enough to pray in the right way, not twisting God but asking for mercy, asking for blessing.

He has to face who he is: Jacob, and the name means twister, cheater. Yes, that is how I am.

Humbled to be honest about himself he can receive the blessing, receive grace.

He has made a great victory now: he has asked for grace. This is really a great victory over himself after having fought with both God and men.

Jacob had to fight like this with himself to get the peace of God. Jesus had to fight to let God transform his will. And, we as disciples are invited to pray ourselves into unity and harmony with Jesus, for this is the way to fullness of joy.

Amen