

July 27, 2025
The 7th Sunday after Pentecost
Lectionary 17, Year C
Luke 11:1-13
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Norwood, MA
Pastor Amanda L. Warner

Where is Blueberry?

My mother came home from hip rehab on Friday, the 18th, and until yesterday when Morgan and her family came home, I lived at my sister's and Mom's house, helping my mom. Julia has also been living there, taking care of the pets, Kona the dog, and the cats, Peaches and Blueberry.

Morgan, Mark, Preston, and Parker were supposed to get home early on Saturday morning, so the plan was for Julia to feed the pets their dinner and then go back to our house. I would put the pets to bed. Since Morgan and family were going to be home so early, around 7:00 a.m. it didn't feel like there was much of a point for Julia to spend Friday night at their house.

Everything was going according to plan until it was time to put the cats to bed. They sleep in the basement, where their food, water, litter box, and cat tree are, and around the time that I was ready to put them in the basement for the night I realized that I hadn't seen Blueberry all day.

Now, not seeing much of the cats during the day is not that unusual. They tend to keep a low profile while Kona is roaming around, but I had put her in her crate for the night, and usually after that the cats come for a visit. We had seen Peaches, but not Blueberry.

I called Julia to ask her when she had last seen Blueberry. She told me she had seen her in the morning, when she had given the cats their breakfast, but she hadn't seen her since then. As I said it's not that unusual not to see much of the cats during the day, so she hadn't thought anything of it.

I put Peaches in the basement and then went looking for Blueberry. First, I looked all over the basement, thinking that she might be curled up sleeping somewhere down there. No Blueberry. Then I looked around the first floor of the house. No Blueberry. Then I looked upstairs in the bedrooms. No Blueberry.

We had taken my mom to the doctor that morning and we had propped the screen door of the front door open to get her out of the house. Mom suggested that Blueberry might have gotten out of the house while the door was propped open. The cats are indoor cats, so that was a terrifying prospect, but I went outside and looked on the front porch and around the bushes at the front of the house. But it was dark, and Blueberry is a black cat, and I knew I couldn't really do a thorough search at night. Finally, I gave up and got ready for bed.

I did think that she must be somewhere in the house. Somewhere I hadn't thought to look. A little cat hiding place that I didn't know about. I imagined her curled up, napping, not hearing me call her name.

But I didn't feel totally confident about it. And I couldn't imagine having the Jean-Pierres come home and having to tell them that we lost their cat. I prayed as I went to bed that Blueberry was fine, that she would come strolling into the room where I was sleeping sometime during the night, I would have been thrilled if she woke me up, or that I would find her the next morning, in the basement with Peaches, waiting for her breakfast. It took a long time, but I finally went to sleep, only to wake up again in about an hour, worrying about the cat. For a brief, shining, joyful moment, I thought maybe I had been woken up by Blueberry walking into the room, but no, that was not the case. I had been woken up by worry about the cat. Where was Blueberry?

I got up and looked around the bedrooms again, the most likely place for Blueberry to have found a hiding place I didn't know about. But I didn't find her.

And then I had to have a grapple with my theology of prayer. Had I asked for God's presence and power to be at work in this situation? Yes, I had. Had I

prayed for Blueberry to be found safe and sound? Yes, I had. Does today's gospel reading remind us that those who ask receive, those who search find? Yes, it does. So, I had to ask myself, do I believe it? Do I believe that God is at work in this situation? Yes. So, I prayed again, for Blueberry to be found, safe and sound and I prayed that I would be able to sleep, to trust God in this time of worry.

Finally, I did go back to sleep but I'm not going to say I slept well. My alarm went off a few hours later, and you know how it feels when you wake up unsettled, but not sure why and then it all rushes back in on you. That was what my wake up was like—I woke up thinking, what is wrong, something's wrong, and then I remembered, Blueberry is missing!

I talked myself into believing that I would find her, in the basement with Peaches, sitting at the bottom of the steps, waiting for me to give her breakfast, waiting for her people to come home. So, I got up and went downstairs, praying, "Please God, please God, please God, let Blueberry be there, let Blueberry be safe." I took a deep breath. I opened the basement door.

Peaches was sitting alone at the bottom of the stairs. Can a cat look worried? If a cat can look worried, Peaches did. I almost burst into tears. Where was Blueberry?

Of course, by that time I figured if she was in the house she would have emerged by then, if for no other reason than that she was hungry.

Morgan, Mark, Preston, and Parker were going to be home in about an hour and I had no idea where their cat was. Imagine them getting home after a long flight, jet lagged, tired, expecting a calm and relaxing homecoming, so excited to see their pets, and then having to tell them that one of their beloved pets was missing.

I went downstairs to the basement to start the search for Blueberry again. I did what felt like a more thorough search through the basement and she definitely wasn't there. Then it occurred to me that there was one place I hadn't looked for

her. There is a mudroom between the basement and the garage and I hadn't checked the mudroom.

I didn't have a lot of hope. I was convinced that Blueberry had gotten out into the wide, wide, and dangerous world, but again I prayed, "Please, God, please God, please God," and I opened the mudroom door. Out walked Blueberry. Peaches ran up to her and they both wound around my feet, grateful, I'm guessing that I had finally figured it out, as I'm sure that Peaches had known where Blueberry was all along.

I gave them breakfast and went to tell Mom the good news. I knew that she had probably worried about Blueberry all night too, and pretty soon after that we heard the garage door open. The Jean-Pierres were home and their pets were present and accounted for. Phew!

In our gospel reading for today, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he gives them the Lord's Prayer, and he teaches them about prayer. In his teaching about prayer, he teaches us to think of God as a friend who responds to persistence. He tells us to knock, to ask, to search, and to expect God to answer. He teaches us that God wants to give us what we need. He teaches us that God wants to give us good things, a fish, not a snake, an egg, not a scorpion.

The story of Blueberry, the missing cat, had a happy ending. But I didn't know that it would, during that long, dark, night of worry. Worry for me, worry for my mom, even worry for Peaches.

And I really had to ask myself during that night, "Do I believe that God is listening when I pray? Do I believe that God is at work in this situation? Do I believe prayer matters? Can I entrust this situation to God and rest?" I thought I had, but then I couldn't sleep and once I did sleep, I woke right up again, worrying, worrying, worrying, and wondering about my faith. Was I truly putting this situation into the care and keeping of God? Should I get up some more and wander around the house looking for the cat? Should I rest and see the situation with clear

eyes in the morning? Should I get up, get dressed and roam the neighborhood in the dark, with my phone flashlight?

I opted for rest, as little as I got. I opted for clear eyes in the morning and to trust in the goodness of God. And it all worked out, though not the way I had asked for it too.

In the menu I made of my prayer, I asked God to have Blueberry waiting for me with Peaches at the bottom of the stairs. And, of course, that's not how it worked out. My worry, my creeping sense of despair was sustained beyond the opening of the basement door, the collapse of my hopes, as I went downstairs sure that Blueberry was loose in the neighborhood.

My prayers were answered, Blueberry was found, just not the way that I had hoped, or in the timing that I had hoped.

And, of course, we all know that sometimes our prayers don't feel like they're answered at all. The lost are not found. We do feel we get a snake instead of a fish or a scorpion, pain, instead of an egg. Sometimes it feels like the doors are closed, locked, barred against us, and no matter how much we knock, it never opens.

And yet, when Jesus was teaching us about prayer, he said this:

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:13)

In other words, he didn't teach us to pray for outcomes. He teaches us to pray for the Holy Spirit, for the presence of God to move in every situation, for the companionship and strength and power of God to be present in our lives, no matter what we're facing, a happy ending or an unhappy ending; the resolution we wanted or strength to deal with what we thought we couldn't cope with.

According to Jesus, the best thing we can hope for, the best thing we can ask for, the best gift God has to give us is not outcomes, but the presence of God in every situation, the Holy Spirit, given to us in abundance by a good and loving God, who is with us, who stands by us in good times and in bad times, and knows how to give good gifts to all of us. Amen.