

## The Way of Jesus: A Journey Through Luke Part 13: Quantum Prayer

Countryside Community Church  
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January 10, 2015

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

### I. No “Little Prayers”

A pastor named William McNamara once shared a fantasy about how he would like to respond to someone who asks, “Pastor, say a little prayer for us before we begin.” This is what he’d like to say: “I will not! There are no *little* prayers! Prayer enters the lion’s den, brings us before the holy where it is uncertain whether we will come back alive or sane, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living Lord.”

As a minister myself, I sympathize with Rev. McNamara’s fantasy. Yet I also think it must be acknowledged that when we pray for another’s health, for instance, the effects of these prayers may be elusive, making them seem quite “little,” or at least ineffectual.

Jesus taught his disciples that prayer is like a person calling to his friend over and over again in the middle of the night to get out of bed and lend him a few loaves of bread. “I tell you,” says Jesus, “even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.” (Luke 11:5-8)

There may be no “little prayers,” but apparently they need to be made repeatedly if they are to have much effect.

Years ago, a friend of mine who regularly speaks about religion around the world rejected all forms of intercessory prayer after his wife became the recipient of hundreds if not thousands of daily prayers following a terminal cancer diagnosis. The reason for his objection was not that the prayers did not work. Indeed, he became convinced that the prayers were actually responsible for extending his wife’s life for several years beyond the original prediction. Yet it was for this very reason that he rejected prayer. “How is it fair,” he asked, “that my wife’s life should be extended when someone with the same condition, but without the prayer network, would die earlier?”

It’s a fair question. If God is both good and omnipotent, why would God need to be persuaded by even a single prayer to heal someone? Shouldn’t God just heal them without being asked, if God has the ability?

These objections, as logical and heartfelt as they are, are based on an assumption that prayer is about *persuading God to act*, as if God, like the man in Jesus’ parable, is comfortably tucked in somewhere up in heaven and can’t be bothered unless given

strong reason for coming down and helping us. Yet the point of Jesus' parable was not about persuasion but *persistence*.

## II. Quantum Prayer

Prayer is a lot easier to understand and, I would maintain, accept, if we ask what it is about *persistence* that makes it work, rather than persuasion. In this regard, modern science may be instructive.

Quantum physics has taught us that we are 99.9999% empty space; that what we are really seeing when we look out at the material world is massive concentrations of energy, bonded together in ways we haven't even begun to understand. One day, I predict that prayer will seem a lot less "whoop whoop" than it does now; that we will see prayer as more organically related to the natural world – and therefore comprehensible within a scientific framework – than many presently realize.

In the realm of quantum physics we already have been able to measure a subtle effect known as quantum entanglement – the phenomenon where certain objects interact and become related to each other in such a way that even when separated by large distances they continue to share certain characteristics in common, even when those characteristics change. Einstein called it "Spooky Action At A Distance." When I think of praying for someone, I imagine it as a form of quantum entanglement. When we pray for each other, we become entangled with them, and them with us. Perhaps we all become entangled in God as well.

My hunch is that one day we will understand intercessory prayer as a mechanism by which we subtly move energy, or change its characteristics. Because these changes are small and imperceptible to our present instruments of measurement and observation, rather than large and forceful, intercessory prayer is by definition "little prayer." And because it is "little," its effectiveness depends on *persistence*, not persuasion. It depends on *our* determination to heal, not God's.

I'm not suggesting that everyone can be healed if only enough people pray for them. Just as the human body responds differently to different forms of medicine depending on a number of complex factors, so it is with prayer. Different forms of prayer move energy differently, and the body responds differently depending on its current state.

## III. Praying for Arianna

Where all this theoretical rubber hits to road for me is in the situation of my eldest daughter, Arianna, who was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor known as an *astrocytoma* in August of 2008, when she was 17 years old. Arianna underwent two brain surgeries to resect as much of the tumor as possible. During that time, Arianna and our family experienced what it is like to have thousands of people praying for us every day.

Even though I had been a minister for the better part of Arianna's life, I had been skeptical about its effectiveness. I was skeptical until our family experienced exactly what other families have consistently told me about over the course of my ministry: We experienced what it is like *to be held*. Held by an energy that clearly was not our own. Held in such a way that we could continue moving forward long after we exhausted whatever inner resources we had to do so ourselves.

While Arianna's tumor did not magically disappear as a result of prayer, the experience made us true believers in the power of "little prayers." We don't believe that people's prayers "persuaded" God to act on Arianna's behalf. Rather, those who cared about Arianna were persuaded to pray for her, and by praying persistently for her, they directed energies her way that God had been "persuaded" to make available to Creation since the very beginning.

While it is possible that those energies played a role in the success of Arianna's surgeries, and in keeping the tumor that remained dormant for the next seven years, what we are most certain of is that people's prayers got us through a terrifying and excruciatingly draining situation by upholding us when we could not hold ourselves up any longer. And they filled us with a very real and tangible sense that we weren't alone on our journey, but were being helped powerfully by those around us and by God.

I wrote about Arianna's tumor in my book, *Gifts of the Dark Wood*. Then, just weeks before its publication, Arianna received the news that the tumor that remained in her brain had begun to grow again. Thus, in mid-February our family will journey to the Cleveland Clinic, where Arianna will undergo laser ablation therapy in an effort to remove the majority of the tumor that has grown back.

Once again, we expect that thousands will be offering prayers on her behalf. If you are one of these, we thank you in advance for your kindness. Whether you pray for Arianna in the coming weeks, or direct your prayers to someone else who could use your support, I offer the following guidance to help you direct your prayers most effectively. By offering this guidance, I do not claim to know exactly how prayer works, but what follows is based on my best understanding, on the assumption that prayer moves energy very subtly, at a quantum level, entangling us with one another and with God.

#### **IV. Guidelines for Intercessory Prayer**

1. *Find your place of deepest peace.* The first person you want to focus on is you, not the person you are praying for. This is because you need to channel energy that is both within you, and beyond you, on behalf of another person. So you need to be most open to your inner self and the Holy Spirit.

You also want to focus on yourself because it is just as possible to move negative energy as positive energy. Likely, you move negative energy around when you harbor focused, angry thoughts toward another person. Not strong energy, mind you, but enough that

over a long period of time it can do damage. (I believe this is one of the reasons why Jesus was so insistent on directing the power of love even toward our enemies, lest we inflict harm on God's creation unawares.) You are also the receiver of negative energy from others, by the way, so you want to shield yourself from that when you are seeking to pray for another person, lest this energy be transferred through your prayer. There are many ways to accomplish all this. If you've already found a way to do it, you can skip ahead to #4 below. Otherwise, you may want to try the steps listed in #2 and #3.

2. Picture yourself inside an impregnable glass sphere where you are perfectly safe from the outside world. You may decide to use a different image than a glass sphere. What it is doesn't matter nearly as much as what you are trying to accomplish through the visualization: Namely, you want to find that part of your consciousness that is truly feeling safe – and truly *is* safe – from outside forces. To find this place, I often picture arrows or rocks bouncing off the glass. I know I've found it when I can feel tension suddenly release and grow still. The best indication that I am where I need to be is that a sense of gladness or joy quietly develops within me. It may not be profound, but it's there.

3. Now you are ready to take your awareness to the next level of depth and openness to Spirit. What I do is picture a room that I know is completely safe not only from forces on the *outside*, but from those on the *inside*. It is a room created by God expressly for the purpose of my soul being completely free to raise its voice without fear or worry of any kind. In this room, I have no fear of judgment for whatever my soul says or desires – no judgment from others, from myself, or even from God. Here, I can overhear a voice that is not reacting to anything or anyone, that is free of ego and the need for approval. The voice I overhear in this place is not afraid of anything – even death (my own or another's). It simply is what it is, and exists for purposes that are not entirely known to me, yet feel most intimately like they are me. It is the voice of my True Self.

If I have truly found this place inside me, I always experience a sense of deep peace and contentment. Joy is often present as well. I also have a sense of deep surrender. Curiously, I feel completely surrendered to God, even as I know that God has created this place so that I can hear what my soul most deeply wants without worrying about what God may or may not think.

Once I'm in this place of perfect protection and freedom, I sometimes discover that my soul has other agendas that are more pressing than praying for another person. I follow where my soul leads me. When I find myself ready to pray for another person, I do it in the way outlined in #4.

4. When I am praying for Arianna, I want to direct my best, calmest energies toward the exact spot within her brain that needs strengthening. I do not seek to kill her tumor but to add life-energy to the healthy tissue of her brain that can best fight the tumor. Since I am Arianna's father, there is a very high chance that I will pass along anxious

energy, even after engaging the techniques I've outlined above, if I'm not extremely careful. The best way I've found to do this is to picture my own brain, first.

I open my own brain to God's life-bearing energy, picturing an aperture opening above the spot in my brain that is analogous to the spot where Arianna's tumor is (i.e., the center, front area of the left side of her brain, an inch or two below the surface in an area known as the *cingulate gyrus*.) I imagine God's life-energy flowing into my brain cells in this area, fortifying them with vitality, even growing new cells and neurons where needed.

After several minutes, I often start feeling both physical and emotional sensations. Physically, that area of my brain may start to feel tingly, or warm, or "energetic," or even "fuller." Emotionally, I will frequently experience a sense of euphoria, of grace, of joy, or of wonder.

5. Once I begin to sense that my own brain is responding to God, I start picturing Arianna in my mind. I envision the same energy that is swirling around in my brain doing the same in hers. I normally flit in and out of awareness of Arianna, concentrating on her, then on me and my brain, then back again on her.

At a quantum level, what I think is going on is that I am entangling my brain cells with hers, at a moment when my brain is receiving and responding to God's life-energy, thus allowing her own brain cells to receive and respond to it as well. Whether or not what I envision accurately describes what is actually going on is not ultimately important. What is most important is that when I envision Arianna, I am in a state where I am perfectly calm and feeling good – even a bit joyous – and am envisioning where the energy needs to be sent most accurately.

6. After several minutes (sometimes much longer), I gently pull away from my thoughts about Arianna and simply direct them to God. I thank God for the privilege of praying for Arianna, and for anything else I am grateful for at the time. Then, I either close my prayer or move on to other things I feel moved to pray about.

I don't expect that my prayers will miraculously remove Arianna's tumor. Nor do I expect that a single prayer like this will have large effects on her brain cells. But I do believe that, over time, this subtle casting of energy may strengthen the healthy cells and neurons in her brain, allowing them to resist and fight the cancer with greatest effect.

Of course, I cannot know for sure that my prayers have had any effect on Arianna. But of one thing I can be sure: They have an effect on *me*. So at a minimum, I have personally benefitted from all my prayers for Arianna. And if anything more than the minimum is happening, then I have accomplished something truly beneficial for my daughter. We have become more deeply entangled with each other and our God. Whatever effect this entanglement has is ultimately in God's hands, but I trust it brings significant blessing and benefit no matter what happens ultimately to the cancer.

