

Psalm 63:1-4

- ¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.
³ Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.
⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

Luke 11:1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’² He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Lord, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.’

⁵ And he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread;⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.”⁷And he answers from within, “Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.”⁸I tell you, 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.

⁹ ‘So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will our heavenly Lord give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

Intergenerational -- PRAYING WITH LEGOS – *everyone in church has a lego*
Try this with your family (if you have any legos)

1. Hold your lego brick.

Pray for yourself. Think of something you want to thank God for, or maybe something you might want God to help you with.

2. Put together with person next to you – pray for that person quietly.

Ask God to be with them.

3. Put together your two with next people down the aisle... **think of someone who has made you sad or mad this.**

Pray for that person. Ask God to help you forgive them.

4. Put together with everyone in your aisle. **Think of someone you know who is hurting or having hard time.**

Think of them for a bit – ask God to be with them.

5. People at end of aisles – put together with another aisle. Think of another country in the world – pray for that country.

Ask God to bless the people of that country.

6. Put together with more aisles. **Think of another church somewhere or group of people of faith (maybe our sister church; friend's church; cousin's church).**

Ask God to be with that church right now.

7. Put together ALL the legos of whole church. Pray for our church (for God to give us vision and passion and love)

****Look at that: imagine all our prayers coming together – uniting and going to God, going out into the world....***

In monastic communities they live according to, what is called, a “Rule of Life.” These are the elements that form the rhythm to their day. It is not just a schedule. Their day does not begin by asking, “what needs to be done?”, but rather by asking, what are the most important elements that should be part of our life – what elements will orient us around Christ, around the things of God? And then taking those elements and creating a life around them. These might include work, prayer, food, and hopefully even fun. Each monastic community has a slightly different “Rule”, depending on what elements they believe are needed to help continue to form them as people of faith; to keep shaping them according to who they believe God is, and who are we to be in light of who God is.

Here is an example of a Daily ‘Rule of Life’ from the *Northumbria* community in England

- 8-9a breakfast 9:30a Morning Office (prayer) 10-12 Manual Labor
- 12:15-1p Quiet Time 1-2p lunch
- 2-4 Pottering
 - This is some sort of creative activity: hike, art, etc.
- 4-6 Work (whatever work they are assigned to do) 6-7:15p Evening meal
- 7:15p Evening office (prayer) 7:45-9 relaxation
- 9:30p *Compline* (evening prayer) 10p Quiet

When we look over that rule, we see the main elements that they have shaped their life around are: Prayer 3x/day; work (bodily work); eating; individual creativity; relaxation; times for quiet & rest. These are the pieces they have formed their life around.

Followers of Jesus have been forming a “Rule of Life” since the beginning. In Acts chapter 2 we hear of a first rule of life, where the first believers shared all in common, they broke bread together daily, and committed themselves to the apostles teaching. In many of our Bibles, this section heading is entitled, “Life among the first believers.” We might call that the first ‘Rule of Life.’ There is an early Christian document that was rediscovered in the 1870s called *Didache*, it is a manual for new Christian converts, the first Catechism, believed to be from the mid second-century. It included some specific suggestions about spiritual disciplines/a rule of life: including fasting two days a week (specifically on Wed & Friday) and praying the *Lord’s Prayer* three times a day. From these first years after Jesus’ death & resurrection, Christians have thought – there are particular things that will help mold and form us as followers of Christ, and there are particular things that will mold and form us away from the ways of Christ (the Kingdom of God).

Within this lies an unstated belief that, whoever we are and whatever life stage we are at, we are still becoming – we are still being formed and shaped as people. Whether we are in what Richard Rohr calls the first half of life or the second half of life, or somewhere else, we are being shaped. We are being molded. And we have some say in who we are and who we are becoming, of how we are being shaped.

A “rule of life” asks, are the elements in our life consistent with who we think God is? Are the rhythms of our daily and weekly lives orienting us around the ways of God – are they in

tune with who we believe God to be? With what we believe Jesus taught us? Or is life just happening to us? Are we just doing what others in our culture are doing to be good American people?

When we think about deepening our relationship with God; deepening our commitment to peace; to justice; about deepening our relationship with particular family members or friends; about being who we think the Spirit of God is nudging us to be – we know that, for most of us, these things will not just happen on their own. They take time. They take intentionality. They take some focus. What the monastic communities have come to believe is that these things can happen when they are part of our life routine, when they are part of our life patterns & rhythms. But they will not just happen on their own.

A “rule of life” says that all of our life has meaning and importance. That there is not sacred time and secular time, but all time is holy. It says that there are not holy uses of money and regular uses of money – all of our money is sacred. That there are not soul activities and bodily activities – all that we do shapes our mind, body, and spirit.

In our country and culture we often think of “faith” as a way of thinking. A rule of life reminds us that faith is a way of life. What we do shapes our life. All that we do shapes our life. Sometimes it happens quickly and dramatically, but more often it shapes our life like dripping water changes a stone.

This is something that most of us know already, most of you are extremely intentional about how you live your life – about the ways you spend your time – about the ways you raise your children (or raised your children); you are intentional about reflection, about time for advocacy, about how you transport your body from place-to-place, about the food you eat, about

how you spend your money, about time for reflection. I believe that this concept of “rule for life” can help give us language for being intentional about our lives, and can perhaps give some meaning to what sometimes feels mundane.

Here are some examples of Rules of Life:

Dorothy Day: She was an activist for peace and for the homeless – she created the “catholic worker movement.” All of her work was undergirded by a deep spirituality, which she called “practicing the presence of God” which, for her meant: daily Eucharist (communion), daily Bible reading, and keeping a journal (which she saw as another way of praying).

Martin Luther King, Jr., put together a simple rule to which all protesters had to subscribe. He knew that working for justice in a non-violent manner took preparation and discipline. This rule included the following: meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus; walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love; pray daily that God will use you in a manner that all people might be free; refrain from violence of fist, tongue, or heart; strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health.

Service Adventure – Starting in August, our own Isabelle Bowman is going to spend a year doing voluntary service with a Mennonite Program called Service Adventure. This program functions around a Rule of Life – key elements that they have formed the program around:

- Service (the main activity of each day – serving in a placement each day)
- Worship (weekly sharing in a worship night as a community)
- Learning (weekly they have a Learning Component – a value that they should always be learning something new as young adults)
- Simplicity (their basic needs are met, but other than this they get \$40/month)
- Community (with an emphasis on community they focus on life together, they only have 10 days away from their unit, and together they have to decide things like, ‘what do we do with cell phones – how do they build community or take away from community?)

This of course leads us to the concrete question, what is our “Rule of Life”? What are the main elements that make up our day, our week, our month? And are they the pieces that we want to be there, or have they just happened? Have they just found their way into our life? Are they

1. What do you notice about your patterns/elements? (Anything taking up lots of time; anyone/thing absent...)

2. What elements & practices in your life might be shaping you toward *who you want to be (as follower of Christ)*? Orienting you toward Christ? Toward God?

3. What elements & practices in your life might be shaping away from *who you want to be (as follower of Christ)*? Orienting you toward other priorities? Orienting you away from the things of God?

4. What elements or practices (if any) might be missing in shaping you toward *who you want to be (as follower of Christ)*?

5. What elements or practices (if any) might you need to eliminate to shape you toward *who you want to be (as follower of Christ)*?

I want to invite us – even to challenge us: to consider this week, The rule we live by in order to become the people we want to be: time for God, time for work, time for relationships, time for ourselves. To consider spending time finishing & examining this sheet (or some more casual way of doing this) on your own; someone else; friend; family member – a conversation perhaps...

And so, May the Spirit of God empower us to examine how we might orient our lives in ways, both grand and mundane, that healing and hope might flow through us and to the world. Amen.

