

This morning, we are in the 21st week of a sermon series that I have entitled “Meeting Jesus.” I have been making my way this year through Luke’s account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we will be in Luke 11:1-13, looking at an interaction that Jesus had with his disciples about prayer.

Luke 11:1–13 - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”² He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.³ Give us each day our daily bread.⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And **lead us not into temptation.**”⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread;⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and **give you anything.**’⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the **door will be opened.**¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Now there is a lot that can be said about prayer, and I could preach a whole sermon series on this passage (which I did a couple of years ago if you want to go deeper). But for the sake of brevity, let me give some brief introductory comments and then highlight three tensions we see when it comes to praying like Jesus.

Luke 11:1 - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

Evidently there was something about how Jesus prayed that piqued their curiosity and led them to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. **I’m not sure what prayer means to you.** Bow your head and close your eyes and try to stay awake? Everybody praying loudly at the same time? Crying out for help in times of need?

Repeating familiar lines? A waste of time? A mystery? In its simplest form, it is simply a conversation with God. Listen to what Jesus said in the parallel passage in Matthew:

Matthew 6:5-8 - “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Do not pray to impress others. Jesus criticizes the religious people who pray so that others might see them as holy and spiritual. Jesus calls them **hypocrites**, the Greek word for actors. He tells his disciples not to pray in a way that is play-acting, going through the motions, making an external show of piety but is not truly from your heart. Prayer is not to be done for an audience of people. Prayer is communication with God.

So what is your private prayer life like? Who are you when no one is looking? That is what God sees. **Not that you can't pray in public, but your public prayers should be like someone eavesdropping on a conversation between you and God.** As Robert Murry McCheyne said, “What a man is alone on his knees before God, that he is – and no more.”

Jesus also tells his disciples that prayer is not babbling. It is not a technique or magic formula. Prayer is not a transactional relationship like interacting with an ATM, where you enter the magic words and God is obligated to give you something in return. **It is not a magic incantation that achieves results, some sort of Law of Attraction whereby you get the universe to send things your way.** It's not rubbing Aladdin's lamp to get the genie to grant you three wishes. Jesus tells them that they will not be heard because of their many words or vain repetitions. In fact, **that is the irony of the Lord's prayer, that it has been turned into something where people think it's in the power of the words.** It's not about babbling many words as if it were some magical incantation.

The reality is that is nothing in this world more important or powerful than prayer, so let's come to the Lord afresh, asking Him to teach us to pray.

In Jesus' outline of how to pray, I see three important tensions:

1) Intimacy (trust in Him as Father) & reverence

Luke 11:1–2 - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”² He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.”

Or, as Matthew put it:

Matthew 6:9-10 - “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Notice that in this one opening line, **God is called both Father and King**. He is the King of the universe, but He is also our Father. He is our Father, but He is also a king. And Jesus goes on to give an illustration about asking our father for something:

Luke 11:11-13 - “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

The implication is also, I believe, that if we ask for a snake or a scorpion, the Father will not give it to us, because He is a good Father and wants to give us good gifts.

Jesus teaches us that prayer includes both intimacy and reverence, for our **God is both Father and King**. On the one hand, God is the King of heaven, and we must approach Him with reverence. He is not our heavenly buddy. We are not talking to an equal. We are talking to someone who loves us but who is above us and knows what is best for us and has the power to take our life in a second. We can not demand, we can not claim things he has not promised.

But He is also our Father. We are so used to calling God Father that we may not realize how revolutionary that is. There was a German theologian named Joachim Jeremias who researched the use of Father in Judaism, and found that there were no examples of someone addressing God as Father in either the Old Testament

writings or the rabbinic writings until the 10th century. Father was never used as a direct form of personal address to God. In fact, Muslims do not call God Father either, but Lord. However, in every prayer but one of Jesus', he addresses God as Father.

Why does this matter? We can relate to Him as His beloved child.

John 1:12 - Yet to all who did receive [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Ephesians 1:4–5 - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

And now, we can come to Him with intimacy:

Romans 8:15–16 - The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

We are adopted as His beloved children. The words that the Father spoke over the Son at his baptism in **Luke 3:22** – You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased – He speaks over us now. You are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.

Do not lose reverence for God in prayer, for He is the King. But recognize that if you are in Jesus, then you are His adopted, beloved child, and you can approach Him boldly with that level of intimacy.

2) God-centered but bold about your needs

Luke 11:2-3 - He said to them, “When you pray, say: “‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread.’”

Or, as Matthew put it:

Matthew 6:9-10 - “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’”

Notice the tension: we are to be God-centered – it is primarily about His name being treated with respect and holiness, His kingdom being established on earth and His will being done. But we are also encouraged to ask boldly for what we need, as Jesus will explain in His follow-up story:

Luke 11:5-10 - Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and **give you anything**.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your **shameless audacity** he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. ⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

What a great phrase – shameless audacity. If someone came to your home in the middle of the night asking for something, you would either not answer the door or begrudgingly do it. But if your 5-year-old child woke you up, a good parent would give them their full attention. And we are God’s beloved children, encouraged by Jesus to come to Him with shameless audacity, asking for what we need.

But Jesus tells us to begin our praying by praising His name. Why? Why not start with confession, or supplication, or intercession for others, or praying against temptation? Why start with praise, with asking that God’s name, God’s reputation, God’s character, be hallowed, be honored. I think this is because when we begin with a focus on God’s character and name and His honor, it puts everything else in its proper context and perspective.

Think about it: **often we are coming to God because we are in need**. We are in pain and want healing. A loved one is struggling and in need of help. We are worried about something and are hoping God will intervene. **But what do you believe about this God to whom you are praying?** What has He done in the past, and what has He promised or not promised to do in the future for you? Are you treating God as a heavenly ATM, or as a means to an end that you really want? Or do you come to Him as your heavenly Father, the King of heaven? And what has He already given you that might help you to put your requests in proper perspective? Answer those questions, and you will be properly oriented to asking Him for things.

JI Packer, in his book *Praying the Lord's Prayer*, writes this: "The vitality of prayer lies largely in the vision of God that prompts it. Drab thoughts of God make prayer dull... A book was once published with the title *Great Prayers of the Bible*: the mark of great prayers, in the Bible or elsewhere, is that they express a **great awareness of a great God.**"

A great awareness of a great God. **If prayer is lifeless, perhaps it is because your vision of God is too small.** You are not aware of who He is and what He has done and what He has promised to do. So how do we hallow His name? How do we praise Him? Recall and thank Him for who He is, what He has done, what He has promised. Rejoice in who God is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do. Present, past and future.

Praise Him for who He is: **Thank you that you are holy and perfect. Thank you that you are loving. Thank you that you are all-powerful. Thank you that you are full of grace and mercy.**

Thank you that you are good and always faithful. Thank you that you are just and righteous.

Thank you that you never change. You are sovereign over everything. You are trustworthy. You know the end from the beginning. Or, if you prefer, the names of God:

Abba – Father

Alpha & Omega – Beginning and the end

El Shaddai – God Almighty

Elohim – Creator God

Immanuel – God with us

Yahweh – The self-existent one

Yahweh-Jireh – The Lord our provider

Yahweh-Rapha – The Lord our healer

Yahweh-Rohi – The Lord our shepherd

Yahweh-Shalom – The Lord is peace

Yahweh-Tsidkenu – The Lord our righteousness

Jesus – The Lord saves

Praise Him for what He has done. **Thank you that you died for my sins. You ransomed me from the devil. You forgave me and reconciled me to God. You adopted me as your beloved child. You have promised me an inheritance in Christ. You gave me your Holy Spirit. You conquered sin and death.**

Praise Him for what He has promised. Thank you that you are always working all things for good. You will come take me to be with you. You will never leave nor forsake me. You welcome me when I am in need. You will supply all my needs. You will give me wisdom when I need it.

Hallowed be your name! We praise you for who you are, for what you have done, and for what you have promised. And we pray that your kingdom would come and your will would be done.

As I said earlier, the great irony of the Lord's prayer is that Jesus tells us that prayer should not be just babbling words, but somehow the Lord's Prayer has been turned into just that. How many times have you been guilty of saying the words without really knowing what your saying, as if the prayer were some magical formula to get what you want from God? The clearest evidence of this is the phrase we will be looking at this morning: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Think about those words. Do you even understand how explosive, how paradigm-shifting, the words of that prayer are? Is that REALLY what you want when you say those words? Or are you just reciting words because you think that's what God wants to hear? I mean, what do you understand the essence of that phrase to be? Is it not saying that what I want, my desires, my dreams, are secondary to God's? Am I not saying that I am willing to give up control of my life and let God be in control, no matter what might happen to me?

Listen to how Richard Alleine in 1755 interpreted this prayer:

I am not longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things; let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Thou are mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to submit our will to His

Once again – the Lord's prayer is not meant to be a magic formula or technique. It is a model that Jesus has given us for how to pray. Coming to God with both intimacy and reverence as our Father in heaven. Praising Him for who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do, and praying that He would receive

the glory and honor He deserves, in our life, in the church, and in this world. **And now – before we ask for anything – it is willingly yielding ourselves to Him, submitting our will to His will, our seat on the throne of our life to His.** So, let's just make that perfectly clear before we go any further. This prayer is dynamite, set to blow up your kingdom, wrestle any semblance of control you had out of your hands, and subdue your dreams and desires to His dreams and desires. **Think before you dare mindlessly pray this prayer.**

The purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to submit our will to His. It is to come into God's presence in order to align ourselves with His priorities, with His heart, with His will. **As we will see, this does not mean that I can not ask for things.** But the priority here is to submit, to yield, our will to His. Saying "your will be done" is not a prayer of resignation, as if you've just resigned yourself to the fact that God will do whatever he wants. **No – "your will be done" is an audacious prayer of submission, signing up for God's plan for our lives.** He wants us to be saved, and to be like Jesus, and to love like Him.

Romans 12:2 - Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

But we are also encouraged to ask for daily bread, and to come boldly to God for our needs. **We are beloved children asking our good and loving and all-wise Father in heaven** for what we need. Remember that we start with intimacy and reverence. He is our Father in heaven. Jesus tells us that not to address God as a boss or king, but as our Father, our perfect and good Father who loves us perfectly.

According to Jesus in these short verses, we can ask for anything of our Father, from His kingdom to come to our daily bread. Large things and small things, spiritual things and material things. Our daily bread is not just about literal bread, but is an expression of asking God for our daily and hourly needs, because they matter to God our Father. He loves us, and like any loving Father, He loves to give good gifts to His children.

James 1:16–17 - Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

He is the all-knowing and wise Father. And we, lest we forget, are children. Remember that children often ask for things that are not good for them. Children

are short-sighted and self-centered. Parents see a bigger picture and have a longer view.

1 Corinthians 13:11–12 - When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

This is one reason why, even though God loves us, He does not give us everything we have asked for. In our shortsightedness we ask for things that are not in our best interest or for the best interest of others or the world. Or maybe we ask for things that we are not yet ready for. Or sometimes our prayers are answered but we lack the eyes to see it, **as God is giving us the deeper thing that we are really asking for, or in a longer time frame.**

It leaves you wondering why your prayers, which often seem so reasonable and in line with God's heart, go seemingly unanswered. But as PT Forsyth said, "We shall come one day to a heaven where we shall gratefully know that God's great refusals were sometimes the true answers to our truest prayers."

Ask, seek, knock. Do not be shy! **Ask boldly** for what it is you want or think you need. But **ask humbly**, knowing that you are a child, with a short-sighted, self-centered perspective, asking a heavenly Father who sees and knows everything and has a plan that involves more than just your life. As we submit our will and our control to His will and kingdom, we also submit our petitions to His wise and loving decision.

3) Grace-needy but sin-avoidant

Luke 11:4 – "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Matthew 6:13 – "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Part of prayer is confession, coming clean about our sins and failures. As we come into the presence of a holy God, we recognize that we need His forgiveness, for our sins have broken fellowship with the Holy One.

1 John 1:8–9 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

That is the amazing promise, that when we confess, He will forgive. And as we confess, we recognize that we also need His help to forgive others as He has forgiven us. **But we must not presume upon His grace, sinning as we please because God is a forgiving God.**

John 8:11 - “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

No, we must pray for His help resisting the evil one, the devil, Satan, for he wants to destroy us.

1 Peter 5:8–9 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

This is no joke. Jesus ends this prayer by telling us to ask Him for protection against temptation and deliverance from the evil one because nothing can destroy your earthly life and shipwreck your eternal destination like falling into the hands of Satan. He lies, slanders, deceives, tempts in order to separate us from God.

John 10:10 – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Paul tells us:

1 Corinthians 10:12–13 - So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

There is always a way out. He will deliver you if you will let Him. Paul gives us the most thorough instruction in Ephesians 6:

Ephesians 6:10–13 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Notice that Paul doesn't tell us to "win the victory" but to stand. **Jesus already won the victory!** Jesus defeated the devil when he died and rose again! He has given us His Holy Spirit. So be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

Let us come to the Father in prayer with both intimacy and reverence. May we be God-centered yet bold about our needs. And may we come humbly, recognizing our need for grace and our need to extend grace to others, while seeking His help to destroy sin in our lives. Let's pray.