

Luke 11:1-13

We are going to Luke 11 today, as we continue at a break-neck speed through Luke's Gospel. To frame our passage today, we'll read verse 1 of chapter 11 so we can know what this passage is about:

Luke 11 Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

So the request being made of Jesus here is, "Teach us to pray."

John the Baptist had apparently taught his followers a pattern for prayer, and now a follower of Jesus asks Jesus to teach them to pray.

And this is prompted by hearing Jesus praying.

So Jesus is a man of prayer. And when Jesus prayed, a disciple said, "Teach us to do that."

So this whole passage is Jesus' masterclass in prayer. Which we all need.

Because for most of us, prayer is a struggle. We worry that we're just being too repetitive and not getting anywhere. We don't know what to pray about. We feel that we are not going to put enough time into it and it isn't going to count. I rarely meet anyone, even in ministry, who says, "I'm really satisfied with my prayer life, I feel like I'm doing a good job in this."

But prayer is a vital component of the Christian life. Often we will hear people say, "I tried Christianity and it didn't work for me." But the question to ask is, "What do you mean you 'tried Christianity?' Are you saying that you had a daily devotional time with Bible reading and prayer?" Because usually the answer is "no." God promises that if you seek Him you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart.

We can't say we're fully living the Christian life and trying Christianity at all if we aren't seeking the Lord in prayer.

We should have no expectation that we will grow as Christians without a prayer life.

We should never think that we would have peace if we don't pray.

We should never expect to sense the presence of God without prayer.

We should never expect faith that grows, joy that grows without prayer.

When God decides to work noticeably in the life of a Christian, He often first works by moving the Christian to pray.

Prayer is a distinguishing mark of faith. You really have to believe God exists and listens to spend any time at all asking Him to act.

This is why prayer is absolutely mocked by the world today as useless and a waste of time, because it absolutely would be if God didn't exist and didn't answer and didn't shape us through prayer.

And it seems that the pendulum among Christians swings to extremes. On one extreme, we can have a faith that only emphasizes heaven and the afterlife and a relationship with God but doesn't seek to do good here on earth. It tries to obey the greatest commandment, "love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength," but doesn't think much about the second, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Or the pendulum can swing the other way. And we can be so earthly minded: so into improving circumstances here, that we almost laugh at the idea that cultivating a relationship with God is useful. So we try to obey the second commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," but are suspicious of the first, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength," as that can seem like a superstitious waste of time.

But the obedient Christian life is not either or, but both and - being incredibly heavenly minded, in scripture and prayer, caring about private sins and private morality, believing and observing right doctrine, and loving and serving your neighbor, bringing the gospel to your neighbor, meeting material needs, pursuing justice and mercy. We are called both to love God and love neighbor.

So like this disciple, we need to be taught by the Lord to pray.

So in response to this question, "Teach us to pray," Jesus teaches them the Lord's prayer.

Now it's important to note that the Lord's prayer here in Luke is much shorter than the version in Matthew. And there's a reason for that - for one, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew was taught at a different time, as part of the sermon on the mount, and Luke's was later as Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to be crucified.

Jesus was an itinerant minister, so he taught many things in many places. And each time the teaching doesn't contradict the previous time that subject was discussed, but it varies and has different emphases and different things are included and left out each time.

And the fact that there are two versions of this prayer and that Jesus doesn't say the exact same thing in both places tells us that Jesus is giving us a pattern for prayer, not a strict requirement that we use these exact words.

In fact, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus introduces this prayer by saying, "Pray then like this" (Matthew 6:9), and in Luke's Gospel he says (11:2) "When you pray, say..." So the Lord's prayer is a prayer that is to be both prayed verbatim, praying these words Jesus gave us, and it is to serve as a template for other prayers.

It is words we pray, and a pattern we follow.

So it isn't an incantation with magical words, because the exact words can vary and it's still how Jesus taught us to pray. If we do repeat these exact words, which is again good to do, we don't repeat them in a superstitious or faithless way, thinking these words are magical. But we apply heart to the words and pray them with meaning.

There's an interesting phenomenon in our lives - (1) We can be very opposed to reading a prescription prayer, because we want our prayers to be natural and heart-felt and sincere. But then (2) We often don't know how to pray or what to pray for.

But in the Lord's Prayer, in the Psalms, and all throughout scripture there are prayers and songs that we are given by God. He's given us prayers to pray. And we can apply heart to them. All that God asks He provides, and when He asks us to pray, he gives us words to pray, patterns for prayer, and a heart to pray them. So pray spontaneous, extemporaneous prayers throughout the day, talk to God like He's your Father with no pressure to follow a script. And go to the scriptures for words to pray when you don't know what to say or how to even begin.

God has given us hearts to pray with and words to pray, and we don't have to choose, we can use both.

So, because we're in Luke, we'll just work through the shorter version of the Lord's prayer that Jesus taught here and what it means for our prayer life, and then we'll get to the story Jesus told afterwards to give us more insight on what it means to be a man or woman of prayer.

Luke 11: 2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name.'"

Father.

Already this is a paradigm-shifting prayer for the people who heard it. Jesus told them to

pray to God as the **Father**.

This gives some guidance for our prayers (we wonder do we pray to the Father, to Jesus, or to the Holy Spirit. All are allowable, but the default prayer is prayer to the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit.) So we pray to the Father.

But this also gives us a sense of who the God is that we are addressing. He is our Father. And Fathers respond to their children.

More on that later, because Jesus elaborates on what it means that we are praying to our Father at the end of this section.

But He goes on to say that we pray, “Hallowed be your name”

Hallowed be your name

Hallowed means “thought of as holy” or “reverenced.”

And a person’s name was closely associated with who they were, more so than in our day. If you say, “I’m going to make a name for myself” in this field or that, you are seeking to be recognized for your brilliance in that area. You are wanting who you are to be known.

The first order of business in this prayer is expressing a desire for God’s name to be hallowed, or held in honor. This is a prayer that the God of the Bible and all that He is and has done would be held in high honor by those who pray.

This means we are not just praying to a generic God, but God who has a name and reputation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Who has acted in history, who has expressed His will in the commandments, who has called for specific obedience to that will, and who has worked to redeem His people from their failures.

He’s not just any god, but God with a name and a story and a reputation. He’s the God of the Bible, which is another reason a good prayer life and a good Bible reading life have to go hand-in-hand, because all of the Bible tells us who this God is that we’re speaking to.

So we pray to the Father, the God with a name and a reputation, and our desire in that prayer is that, first and foremost, His name would be lifted up. We want Him to be known and reverenced and glorified.

This pattern for prayer is, first and foremost, God-centered.

When we pray according to Jesus’ model, our prayer is for God to be seen as holy and awesome in our lives and in the world. We are praying for God to cause his word to

believed, his wrath to be feared, his whole self to be glorified, his love to be trusted.

We are praying that God would truly be praised in our lives and in the lives of others. We are coming to Him for an answer to the prayer that the name and fame of Jesus would be known.

This means that answers to our prayers will involve the name of God being known and revered.

We pray for our region to change, but an answer to that prayer will not just mean the economy improves and laws are more just and education gets better - it can include all of those things - but all of those things for the name and renown of Jesus.

We pray big prayers for God to do big things in our region in our day, SO THAT you can't tell the story of the Rochester region 50 years from now without sharing the name and renown of Jesus.

So we pray Father, hallowed be your name.

Notice we haven't asked for any stuff yet – most of this prayer is not praying for material needs. That happens in this prayer. But this model is an incredibly God-centered prayer, seeking His name and renown on earth.

And first in us.

Prayers certainly pull on the heart strings of God, they accomplish much. But one of the things they accomplish is they shape us. We can't pray, "Hallowed be your name" without feeling like hypocrites if we aren't living for the glory of God. So this prayer is to shape us into radically God-centered and God-glorifying people.

Let's be really God-centered in our prayers. Let's live like we've got a huge God that is holy and to be revered and the most important factor in our lives, in our homes, and in our ministries. Let's live God-exalting lives!

This kind of thing is increasingly absent in church. We try so hard to make church the place that attracts people, draws in paying customers, says what the world is demanding we say. But the first order of business is supposed to be exalting the Father.

We pray for His gifts, for sure, and we want everyone's life to be changed as they're drawn to know Him. But that doesn't happen at the expense of His glory.

That doesn't happen as God is ignored and made a small part of our lives and church services. That doesn't happen as we make the life of the church and even our prayer lives all about me. That happens as God is exalted. Which offends some as a waste of time and energy. But also draws some to see Him as the hallowed one.

Praying like this is a test of whether our prayers are centered on God, or centered on me, whether we have hearts for God, or just want to use prayer like someone might use Yoga, to relax and center yourself.

Jesus teaches that our prayers are to be centered on God, not on the therapeutic affects of prayer on my heart.

Your kingdom come.

This was a prayer of early Christians. They used to pray, “Maranatha” and “Come Lord Jesus!”

I think 2020 has exposed the need to pray like this. We see how the kingdoms of the world are shaking, we see poor governing at every level, we see problems in the seats of power where laws and policies are enacted that have so many unintended consequences that often do more harm than good. We see problems with law-making, law-enforcement, everybody knows the system is broken.

And we are to pray for God’s kingdom, God’s full reign, to come. It has already come in Jesus, because He is the king who came, but it has not yet fully come because He hasn’t returned. All of the brokenness in the world is supposed to create in us a longing for a better world, one where there’s justice, one where the King is righteous and powerful, the laws are just, hearts are changed so that obedience isn’t compelled with force but comes from within.

We look at our own hearts failings when it came to honoring God’s name, we look at the messed up and unjust state of affairs in the world, and we know it can be solved by nothing less than Jesus coming to reign in the flesh.

We long for his return.

And whether we can pray this way is a good test for us in the good times. Can we pray this? Can we mean it from the heart?

Sometimes things get really comfortable, and we want Jesus to come back, but not until we buy the next house. Not until we’ve tasted marriage. Not until we’ve fully lived our lives. We’re in a comfortable place where the return of Jesus doesn’t hold much promise for us because things seem so good.

If we can’t really pray for Jesus to return, we’re probably not getting dirty enough in our ministry to other people.

If you cannot pray for Jesus to come to bring an end to this war we’re in, maybe you’re not on the front lines. Because as you watch sin wreck lives, and taste the frustration of

hearts you are powerless to change and wrongs you are powerless to right, you will long for Christ to return to fix it.

When you're praying, "Your kingdom come," you are praying for God's healing of everything, and to do that you must be around some people and situations who need healing.

3 Give us each day our daily bread,

The first petition for ourselves is a prayer for our necessities.

He says that we pray, "Give us each day our daily bread", or literally, "keep giving us our bread for the day."

He's harkening back to Manna - remember God's people were wandering in the wilderness with no food to eat, so God gave them manna, which shows up on the ground every morning. And they weren't allowed to keep it overnight or it would rot, they could only gather up enough for that day, and then eat all they gathered.

They had to live in continual dependence on God. And Jesus wants the same for us - to never reach a point where we feel so self-sufficient that we don't need to pray.

So he wants us continually dependent on God for our sustenance.

As much as we work, as much as we build a career, as much as we achieve to be able to feed our families, Jesus wants us first and foremost to see even those acts as acts of dependence on God.

And while planning and saving and preparing can all be good, they can also be bad if we begin to feel we don't need God to sustain. He wants us to feel our need for Him, to daily depend on Him, and to celebrate all of the ways He provides and meets needs.

When we feel any need at all, any desire at all that we can pray for for the glory of God's name, He wants us to bring that to Him and depend on Him.

4 and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

In Aramaic language, which Jesus spoke, sin is often pictured as a debt to God.

And so we are to pray that God would forgive our debts, forgive us our sins.

Confession of sin and asking for forgiveness is a regular and essential part of our prayer lives. This keeps us from living unexamined lives, it keeps us from becoming arrogant in our approach to others because we have to live in regular, daily awareness of our own sin and weakness.

Jesus died to free us from the penalty of our sin, and wants us to know the freedom we have from it. But He never desires that we live a life where sin doesn't matter, where we feel we can live however we desire. He wants us to pray for forgiveness for the debts we just keep racking up.

And notice what our forgiveness from God is connected to: we forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

This will shape our hearts - over and over Jesus connects our request to God that He forgive us with the forgiveness that we grant others. He does this in the story of the man who had debts forgiven but refused to forgive the debts others owed him, and we hear that story and we think, "What a wicked guy!"

But over and over Jesus gives us opportunities to see that I am that guy. That I am the one who loves to go to God to be forgiven but who still holds on to the bitterness, and desire for vengeance, and refuses to forgive others.

By putting this right in our template for prayer, Jesus is forcing the issue that Christians must be gracious and forgiving people. And if they are not, they are demonstrating that they either don't have or don't understand forgiveness before God.

Now the language here doesn't mean we forgive others and thereby warrant God's forgiveness.

But it does mean there is no such thing as a forgiven person who isn't a forgiving person.

One piece of evidence that God has forgiven our sins is that we forgive others.

So we pray for forgiveness, and should, in those same prayers, be able to recount areas we have forgiven others.

This is one more way the Gospel is world-changing and affects the here and now. We live in cancel culture, where sins cannot be forgiven. So we get increasingly afraid to talk to someone across the aisle because I might say something wrong, and then they will blast me and label me and never forgive me, so I'll just avoid them.

And on social media we avoid people, we talk past each other, we go quickly to teams and not discussions, because we know we all live out in a forgiveness-free zone.

But if we would believe the Gospel, that God has forgiven me tremendous debt, then I

would be quick to forgive others. And if that spread, we could have hard conversations, trip over our words, say things we regret, but know that there's forgiveness for those who ask for it.

A culture where God's name is hallowed and His Gospel is believed becomes a culture where we can learn and grow. A culture that lives in fear of an honest mis-step never will be, it will only tribalize.

And while it may be a long time before our world looks like that, it doesn't have to be a long time before our church looks like that. If we are forgiven people, we are forgiving people.

People who have received God's grace are gracious.

People who gather on Sundays and week after week ask for God's forgiveness must go out to grant forgiveness, otherwise their worship is utter hypocrisy.

This prayer shapes us.

And lead us not into temptation."

We need to be trusting in God for any kind of moral victory at all. Deliver us from evil! Deliver us from temptation. We are dependent on you for daily bread, but also for daily victory over sin.

This prayer shapes us into people who are actively resisting temptation. We know it is out there, we need God's help with it, we are praying against it. People who pray this way live differently.

So Jesus gives this template for prayer and even words to pray, but then moves on and tells a story about the nature of a good prayer life, and the nature of God who answers prayer:

5 And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

So the story here is it's midnight, and your friend comes over. (You may have that friend, the Kramer type, who just barges in at midnight.) This friend, at midnight, when your whole family is asleep, asks for what you have in the fridge because his buddy just stopped by.

And now you set this in the first century when just about everybody was poor, they had a one room house with a large bed that the whole family slept in. So to get up and get out of bed will wake up all the kids.

So you whisper - "Don't bother me, we're all asleep, I can't get up right now."

And the friend just keeps asking.

So finally, not because he is your friend but because he's not going to take no for an answer, you get up and give him whatever you need.

Which is a strange story to describe how we're supposed to pray. Jesus is saying, "Be like that friend."

He says to essentially "bother" God. Barge in, even at midnight. Even if you think he wants you to go away. Because eventually because of your boldness and stubbornness He responds.

And in case we think, "He can't be saying that!," Jesus tells a similar story in Luke 18 where a widow just keeps bothering a judge, and finally, because she won't give up, he gives her what she wants.

Now these parables generally have one meaning. They don't mean God is asleep and actually is bothered by us. They don't mean God tells us to go away. But they do mean that God responds to consistent, aggressive, repeated prayer.

Jesus says that in verse 9:

9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

He says, literally, "Keep asking," and "keep seeking" and "keep knocking." That's what a good prayer life is like - it keeps going. It keeps requesting.

If you're anxious, you cast that care on God. And if you're anxious again 5 minutes later about the same thing, do it again. Keep praying for your kids, keep praying for the friend to know Christ, keep praying that you'd trust God with the future, keep praying for justice - keep going, boldly, brashly, at midnight, barging in on God. *Bother Him* if that's what it feels like.

And He will answer.

Now just in case we think Jesus is saying that God is bothered by us and annoyed by us and doesn't want to bless us, he brings it right back to remembering that God is Father - verses 5 through 10 tell us what our prayers are to be like, verses 11 through 13 tell us what God is like:

11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!"

We may pray like an annoying friend, but God answers like a good Father.

Only, always, acting for our good.

And often we'll pray and feel like God isn't answering, or He answers with something that we think isn't good. We pray for the promotion, and we lose our job. And we think, "I asked for an improvement here and things got worse."

Jesus says to remember God is Father. And a good Father is never going to give his child a snake when he asks for fish to eat, or a scorpion when he asks for an egg.

Even an evil Father is not going to throw a scorpion at his kid who is asking for food.

And Jesus says, "We have a good Father. So when we ask, we can expect only good. If an evil father gives good gifts, how much better can we expect from the heavenly Father?"

Which means that when the answers to our prayers seem like they're not coming or it's going the opposite way that I wanted, we can remember that God only gives good gifts.

And look at the good gift God loves to give in response to our prayers in verse 13: The Holy Spirit. He gives Himself.

I thought I needed a better job, and I asked for it. But God wanted me to know Him better in the difficulty. I thought I needed a spouse for satisfaction, and that God was giving me a scorpion by saying no, but He wanted me to know him and see that He is the one that completes me.

We can count on God richly and generously giving us His Spirit when we ask Him.

God is better than even the best of earthly Fathers, and we can expect only responses that come from a Father like that when we seek Him.

Because remember the Gospel - remember what God did to provide. To provide for our deepest need, God didn't only need to be inconvenienced in the middle of the night, He had to go much

further. He had to send His son to die, to provide His body as our bread, his blood for our forgiveness.

And He did all of that.

As people who have received the Gospel, we are recipients of the unbelievable generosity of our Father:

1 John 3:1 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God

As people who have received the Gospel, we are recipients of the unbelievable generosity of our Father: He sent His son to die that we might have life.

I’d encourage you, if you have not yet received that generosity, to receive it today.

And Christians who feel far from Him, who need Him, who are looking for an answer - He has proven His Father’s heart to you. Just keep asking, seeking, and knocking.