

July 24 – Luke 11:1-13

1. Read through the Gospel. What do you see as the main theme/s?
2. Put yourself in the scene. What does it feel like?
3. What instruction is given?

What are the implications of addressing God as “Father” when we pray?

If Jesus died once and for all to pay for our sins, why do you think he tells us to ask for forgiveness daily?

What is the relationship between forgiving others and being forgiven by God?

The words translated “indebted to us” (or “sins against us” in NIV) mean to owe someone something. Can you think of someone whose sin against you, you have held as a debt over their head, so to speak? According to this passage, how important is it for you to release that debt?

Looking back over this model prayer, what does it teach us about what God wants us to desire? How do these desires compare with the desires you’ve been bringing to God lately?

What is one thing that will change about your prayer life in response to this passage?

How should we pray according to Luke 11:5-8?

What is something you have wanted to ask God for, but it seems too bold, too audacious, or shameless?

What do you think Jesus is teaching about prayer in Luke 11:9-10?

What is the good gift that God wants to give us in Luke 11:13? Why do you think Jesus specified that particular gift?

This is Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. It is shorter than Matthew's, but it will teach us all we need to know about how to pray and what to pray for.

It begins by calling God Father. That was the characteristic Christian address to God. The very first word tells us that in prayer we are not coming to someone out of whom gifts have to be unwillingly extracted, but to a Father who delights to supply his children's needs.

In Hebrew the name means much more than merely the name by which a person is called. The name means the whole character of the person as it is revealed and known to us. Ps.9:10 says, "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee." That means far more than knowing that God's name is Jehovah. It means that those who know the whole character and mind and heart of God will gladly put their trust in him.

We must note particularly the order of the Lord's Prayer. Before anything is asked for ourselves, God and his glory, and the reverence due to him, come first. Only when we give God his place will other things take their proper place.

The prayer covers all life.

(a) It covers present need. It tells us to pray for our daily bread; but it is bread for the day for which we pray. This goes back to the old story of the manna in the wilderness (Exo.16:11-21). Only enough for the needs of the day might be gathered. We are not to worry about the unknown future, but to live a day at a time.

(b) It covers past sin. When we pray we cannot do other than pray for forgiveness, for the best of us is a sinful man coming before the purity of God.

(c) It covers future trials. Temptation means any testing situation. It includes far more than the mere seduction to sin; it covers every situation which is a challenge to and a test of a person's manhood and integrity and fidelity. We cannot escape it, but we can meet it with God.

Someone has said that the Lord's Prayer has two great uses in our private prayers. If we use it at the beginning of our devotions it awakens all kinds of holy desires which lead us on into the right pathways of prayer. If we use it at the end of our devotions it sums up all we ought to pray for in the presence of God.

Travellers often journeyed late in the evening to avoid the heat of the midday sun. In Jesus' story just such a traveller had arrived towards midnight at this friend's house. In the east hospitality is a sacred duty; it was not enough to set before a man a bare sufficiency; the guest had to be confronted with an ample abundance. In the villages bread was baked at home. Only enough for the day's needs was baked because, if it was kept and became stale, no one would wish to eat it.

The late arrival of the traveller confronted the householder with an embarrassing situation, because his larder was empty and he could not fulfil the sacred obligations of hospitality. Late as it was, he went out to borrow from a friend. The friend's door was shut. In the east no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative. In the morning the door was opened and remained open all day, for there was little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed. But the seeking householder was not deterred. He knocked, and kept on knocking.

The poorer Palestinian house consisted of one room with only one little window. The floor was simply of beaten earth covered with dried reeds and rushes. The room was divided into two parts, not by a partition but by a low platform. Two-thirds of it were on ground level. The other third was slightly raised. On the raised part the charcoal stove burned all night, and round it the whole family slept, not on raised beds but on sleeping mats. Families were large and they slept close together for warmth. For one to rise was inevitably to disturb the whole family. Further, in the villages it was the custom to bring the livestock, the hens and the cocks and the goats, into the house at night.

Is there any wonder that the man who was in bed did not want to rise? But the determined borrower knocked on with shameless persistence--that is what the Greek word means--until at last the householder, knowing that by this time the whole family was disturbed anyway, arose and gave him what he needed.

"That story," said Jesus, "will tell you about prayer." The lesson of this parable is not that we must persist in prayer; it is not that we must batter at God's door until we finally compel him for very weariness to give us what we want, until we coerce an unwilling God to answer.

A parable literally means something laid alongside. If we lay something beside another thing to teach a lesson, that lesson may be drawn from the fact that the things are like each other or from the fact that the things are a contrast to each other. The point here is based, not on likeness, but on contrast. What Jesus says is, "If a churlish and unwilling householder can in the end be coerced by a friend's shameless persistence into giving him what he needs, how much more will God who is a loving Father supply all his children's needs?" "If you," he says, "who are evil, know that you are bound to supply your children's needs, how much more will God?"

This does not absolve us from intensity in prayer. After all, we can guarantee the reality and sincerity of our desire only by the passion with which we pray. But it does mean this, that we are not wringing gifts from an unwilling God, but going to one who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and whose heart towards us is the heart of generous love. If we do not receive what we pray for, it is not because God grudgingly refuses to give it but because he has some better thing for us. There is no such thing as unanswered prayer. The answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected; but even when it is a refusal it is the answer of the love and the wisdom of God.

