

Ex. 16:11-31; John 6:22-40; Luke 11:1-13

LORD, Teach Us to Pray – Part 4

In all of Scripture, there is only one recorded request of the disciples asking Jesus to teach them something, which is found here in **Luke 11:1**, and you will notice that they did not ask Jesus to teach them how to walk on water, or how to turn water into wine, or even how to quiet the raging storms. No! They asked Him to teach them something far more important than all of these – something far more vital to our every day lives – they ask their rabbi Jesus to teach them how to pray (**Luke 11:1**).

In the first half of the prayer we see what is to be the most important concerns of our praying to God and that is the adoring and praising of God Himself. In the first half (1) we address God as our “Father,” like Jesus, “our *Abba*,” (2) we show our concern for His name, that it would be set apart as holy in our lives and in the lives of every creature who walks the earth, and (3) we yearn for the coming of God's Kingdom here on earth as it is already perfectly enacted in Heaven.

As you grow as a Christian in your life with God – as you begin to enjoy Him more and more and bask in His love for you more and more – you may begin to notice that you get so carried away with praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to God so that you may even forget to pray for the daily needs God has laid on your heart. Now, I wouldn't want to even suggest that you cut back on your adoring of God in His Triune beauty, but Jesus transitions at this point in His teaching on prayer from a focus on God's person and those concerns which surround His being TO now focusing on God as giver/benefactor of His grace and mercy towards us as His children. And as we will see, this transition that takes place here in the prayer is for a very important reason.

Transition in the Prayer (Between v. 2 and vv. 3-4)

You will notice at **v. 3** that a primary change in personal pronouns takes place - [(**v. 2** – second person singular - “you”) to (**vv. 3-4** – first person plural - “our”)]. This points to two major groupings of concerns, two halves of the prayer – (1) the first section is prayers for God, for His name, for His rule, etc. and (2) the second section is prayers to God for our human needs. While the whole prayer is itself theocentric (centered on God – it is a prayer after all), there is clearly a dramatic shift that takes place at this point in the prayer. **N.B.**, This is parallel to Jesus' division of the first and second great commandments (cf. **Matt. 22:36-40; Mk. 12:29-31; Lk. 10:27**) – **v. 2** corresponds to love the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and **vv. 3-4** corresponds to love your neighbor as yourself.

A couple of things could be pointed out here. First, note that the prayer gives us some practical ways to flesh out how we can obey the two great commandments. For example, one way of displaying our love for God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength is (1) by addressing Him as “our *Abba*,” (2) by longing and beseeching Him that His name would be sanctified as holy, through us and throughout the whole creation, and (3) by entreating Him that His sovereign reign and rule as King

would come so that His Heavenly-will would be done here on earth.

Further, a way of displaying our neighbor-love is (1) to pray that God would give us our daily bread, (2) to forgive us our sins, and (3) to prevent us from being led into temptation. Note that the second section (vv. 3-4) is in the *plural* (us . . . our) showing that when we pray, we pray within the whole community of the people of God. We pray *as a family*. The one is benefited only by that which benefits all. This corresponds to a major emphasis of the new covenant community that when one of us rejoices, we all rejoice and when one of us weeps, we all weep (cf. Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Heb. 13:3). When we pray we never think of ourselves as a lone ranger taking up the task in solitude but always as a family in communion with everyone, especially those of our local church body, for whom Jesus died (cf. Rom. 14:15; Gal. 6:10).

Second, notice how Jesus wants us to reflect on how God has put our lives together. There is always a right and proper ordering of “your life before God” (*corem deo*) that you must always – every moment of every day – take into consideration. Jesus said

Matthew 6:33 (NASB95)

³³ “But seek **first** His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these [other] things will be added to you (cf. Lk. 12:31).

Your life is put together correctly - what in psychology we might properly call “integrated” - so that you will flourish as a human being only when you put God and His person first (first things) and then see that all your needs (secondary things) flow from Him as gifts shared out of His love for you.

James 1:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

It is only as your life is rightly ordered before God that you will then be enabled to confidently and boldly put your day-to-day needs before God.

Include discussion of John 15:8-17 (John 14:15) if you have time!

Give Us Each Day Our Daily Bread (11:3; Matt. 6:11; WSC 104 – Fourth Petition)

To get the most out of Jesus' teaching on the fourth petition, we need to go back in time to that which Jesus' words point us – to a time shortly after what will become the climatic moment of redemption in the Old Testament – to the time shortly after the Exodus. Israel had just experienced the greatest display of redemption that had been seen since the Fall of Adam (Ex. 12:33-42). In fact, all of Israel's history will center itself upon the Exodus out of Egypt. Israel cried out to her God and in covenantal

faithfulness God “remembered” His former promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and God mightily delivered His people from their oppressors (**Ex. 2:24-25; 3:6-9**). They were brought out of the land of Goshen and were baptized into the Red Sea (**cf. Ex. 14; 1 Cor. 10:1-4**). Here they saw the power of God revealed through this judgment ordeal upon the Egyptians, through which the children of Israel were delivered. There, before the dead Egyptians, on the seashore, the Israelites sang out in praise to God and celebrated the Great Warrior’s victory on their behalf (**Ex. 15:1-21; cf. Rev. 15:1-4**).

It was now time for them to move southward into the Sinaitic Wilderness (**Ex. 15:22ff.**). After a three-day journey, they arrived in Marah, which means “bitter” because the waters there were too bitter to drink (**Ex. 15:22-23**). In response, the children of Israel begin to grumble and murmur before Moses (**15:24**). Therefore, the name “Marah” or “bitter” not only reveals the nature of the waters, but sadly it also revealed the hearts of God’s people who complained before Moses (**15:24**).

Moses applies a tree to the “bitter” waters and miraculously the waters become “sweet” to drink (**15:24**). Clearly this is a sign of Yahweh’s loving presence with His people in that He is making provision for them in the midst of their bitter struggles.

They set out again and came to Elim where they found an oasis/a piece of paradise of twelve springs and seventy date palm trees (**15:27**). There they camped and satisfied themselves on the abundance they found there within the midst of their journey through the wilderness. Again, we see God lovingly giving them a taste of “sweetness” in the midst of their bitter journey. But this is just a foretaste of greater things to come. God is providing a temporary oasis in the midst of their desert wanderings for their enjoyment and satisfaction to sustain them until they arrive at the greater promise.

But they cannot stay in the “oases” of the wilderness. Their ultimate satisfaction will never be met there. There is something much greater at the end of their journey. There is a “promised” land to which they are heading and this is no time to become overly satisfied now. So they must move out again.

They come to a place in the desert between Elim and Mt. Sinai (**16:1**). They have now traveled for a month and a half after the Exodus from Egypt (**16:1**). Egypt is now behind them. They have been delivered from their oppressors and God is now fitting them for a new land that He has promised them. They are, as it were, between two worlds; two lands. They have been delivered out of the land of oppression and they are being prepared for the land of promise. They are now in the wilderness and they must endure what the wilderness period entails. But God is using this period in the life of Israel to test them and prepare them for their inheritance (**Ex. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; 13:3; cf. Judg. 2:22; 3:1, 4**).

So how do they respond to God’s reshaping them? How do they react to God’s “sanctifying process” through the use of trials in their lives?

They grumble and complain (**Ex. 16:2**)! Sound familiar? They have no meat and no bread to eat. So they complain to Moses (**16:3**). Ultimately, they are complaining against God's providence (**16:8**), but Moses is an easier target. Notice, this is their response to God's sovereign, ordained plan for Israel's lives. God hasn't left them. God is with them, in their trials. But they are not content with their lot at this moment – even with Immanuel at their side. Because they cannot see the ultimate destination at hand – the Promised Land awaiting them – they tragically long for their previous lives of oppression because at least there they had meat and bread to eat.

Exodus 16:3 (NASB95)

³ The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

How many times, after you trusted in Jesus, did your life become difficult - choked with worries and riches and pleasures – that you found yourself looking back to your easier, pain-free, pleasurable life before Christ and you longed to have that simpler life back? The Israelites are so consumed here with the temporal, that it is preventing them from seeing the greatness of the land of promise ahead of them. (We obviously see a parallel of this in the book of Hebrews, where the Christians, who were former Jews, could not see the glorious beauty of the Heavenly land and therefore wanted to go back to the types and shadows of old Israel.) We can also see how we today are so easily distracted by the temporary needs before us because we fail to keep our eyes on the Heavenly goal – on the upward call of God in Christ Jesus our LORD (cf. **Phil. 3:4, 20; Col. 3:1-4**).

God comes to His people and gives them quail and manna to eat. The bread will come daily, every morning except on the Sabbath (**16:4**). Instead, a double portion will fall from Heaven on the sixth day to cover their needs for the Sabbath (**16:5**). Here again, God is providing for His people. They are hungry, but God doesn't let them starve. A good Father would never do that. So He rains meat and bread daily upon them. He provides for their daily need of bread and this He does for 40 years as they wander in the wilderness. Every day, for 40 years, God rains down daily bread upon His people so that they might eat and be satisfied.

But was this what God had planned for His people forevermore? Was this going to be the way Israel lived for the rest of their lives, or was there something greater than this daily portioning of manna?

I am not the first to make the connection between this story and the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, but I believe that reading the fourth petition within the context of this story in Israel's history will open up the meaning of what Jesus is teaching us concerning prayer.

At this point in the prayer, the King now becomes the Servant to supply our needs. Even here in the prayer of the Kingdom we see the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ beautifully displayed. The

King lays down His life to serve His people that they might reign together with Him in glory. Here again the Great King lays down His own life in order to supply your present needs.

Further, notice that in this petition you are going to have to do something (and do it every day of your life) that we as Americans tend to proudly shun in our culture. Even as young children we begin to yearn and strive for independence, to make it on our own without the help of others. The last thing we could ever see ourselves doing is to ask for help from others. But in this petition, Jesus is teaching you that you have to come before the throne of God every day and **to ask** God for His help – for His charity - “Give us” Now, this shouldn't really bother us when we remember that our praying grows out of the Gospel, which is itself at its core a gift of God's grace. Prayer, which is made possible by the gospel and shaped by the gospel, is offered to God by asking God for what He has promised on the basis of His grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone, and for the glory of God alone.

As Luther is supposed to have said somewhere, “We are beggars all – this is true!” Note, in prayer you are asking God “to give” you something that only He can give. This may be what Jesus meant when He said we must become like little children. There are two things little children do well – they have no problem asking their parents for everything and trusting their parents to give them only what is good for them. **And it is not something you earned or something owed to you.** It is a daily gift of His mercy and love out of His unlimited abundance.

Psalm 50:10–11 (NASB95)

¹⁰ “For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ “I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

We have nothing, contribute nothing, bring nothing, give nothing to God! Rather, as Paul so eloquently stated:

Romans 11:36 (NASB95)

³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

What do you think God is wanting to teach you by requiring that you approach Him each and every day to ask of Him for your daily needs?

Amen!

-SDG-