

April 28, 2019
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Luke 11:1-13.

1. When was the last time you read Jeremiah's Lamentation and what was your response?
2. Why did the disciples ask Jesus for instruction about praying?
3. How does the beginning of the model prayer ("Hallowed be Your name") impact the rest of the prayer?
4. Why is it so important for us to forgive those who sin against us?
5. What lesson about our praying to God is taught in the impudent friend's request?
6. Compare God's generosity to the generosity of earthly fathers.

HOW TO PRAY Luke 11:1-13

The other day I was reading through Jeremiah's *Lamentations* when I was forced to stop and ask some very sobering questions, especially because of what I read in chapter three. Most of you realize that *Lamentations* is where we find the prophet's incredible confession of faith in God: "*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies*

never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (*Lamentations 3:21-23*).

There have been so many times when reading that confession has caused me shame. I seem to forget and **call to mind** that God's steadfast love never ceases. Oh, that I could have the changeless, enduring confidence that God knows every detail of my life, cares about what circumstances are doing to me, longs to hear me unburden my heart to Him, and promises to respond. I don't. Apparently, I am only like Jeremiah in that God gives me His word and I cry a lot. I honestly do not live every day with this apparent incredible faith that God hears my prayers and is ready and willing to jump right on my requests as soon as I whine a little.

Actually, Jeremiah didn't have that kind of confidence either. I used the word "apparent" in the previous two sentences on purpose. If we do not read all of *Lamentations 3*, we will not know how sympathetic Jeremiah would be with our doubts and fears. In fact, as I read through chapter 3 the other day, I concluded that Jeremiah's heartache over the destruction of Jerusalem was so intense that it must have caused him to become schizophrenic. What do I mean? Read the ponderings of His heart.

Positive: "*The LORD is my portion,*" says my soul, "*therefore I will hope in him*" (*Lamentations 3:24*).

Negative: "*He has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer*" (*Lamentations 3:6-8*).

Positive: "*I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life*" (*Lamentations 3:55-58*).

Negative: "*You have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through*" (*Lamentations 3:44*).

So which one do you believe, Jeremiah? Is God listening or is He not? Can you be sympathetic with Jeremiah? In his circumstances, God had just kept the promise He had been making for over 250 years. He had sent the Babylonians crashing into Jerusalem as they sacked the nation of God's people, burning their homes, their cities,

and their precious temple of the true God. Jeremiah sat with his peers in the smoldering ashes, realizing that everything in life that mattered was gone. Everything except God. Could Jeremiah cry out to God and expect God to care?

Jesus says, “Yes!” Indeed, He offers a resounding “yes” when a disciple wondered how a follower of Jesus ought to pray. We who trust Jesus to save our souls ought to pray to our Heavenly Father with full confidence that He hears, knows what is best for us, and will answer our requests according to His will.

Instruction About Prayer (vv.1-4).

Jesus’s instruction about prayer came in response to a question posed by a disciple (v.1). The disciple asked while Jesus was praying, or at least in the context of Jesus praying. *Now Jesus was praying in a certain place (v.1a)*. This picture is more common in Luke’s Gospel than in Matthew’s, Mark’s, or John’s accounts. Luke mentions nearly a dozen incidents where Jesus prayed. Jesus was clearly a man given to prayer. We could fairly conclude from Luke’s record, that Jesus prayed His way from Nazareth to the cross in Jerusalem.

What does that teach us? Jesus was wholly God, on earth as God the Son. But Jesus was also wholly human, on earth to win salvation for us humans. As a man, He needed wisdom and spiritual strength. As God the Son, He needed communion with the Father. Luke used Jesus’ example of prayer to show us that prayer is essential in the life of God’s child because it is so effective in bringing us into conformity with the Heavenly Father’s will.

In that context of Jesus praying, a disciple asked the question. *And when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples”(v.1b)*. Picture a bunch of disciples hanging around while Jesus prayed. In light of other similar situations, we might assume they were sleeping. The question turned on the obvious fact that John the Baptist had taught his followers to pray. It was necessary for God’s messenger to do that because the religious leaders and teachers of the day taught their followers to pray with vain repetition and arrogance. Therefore, it appears that all the disciples (this one just being a spokesman) desired to know how to pray to God in heaven effectively.

What did Jesus teach? The instruction is found in verses two through four. Jesus’s response is not profound at all. Here you will find no deep secret formulas, no cryptic sayings, just three simple principles to acknowledge as we talk to the Heavenly Father. Jesus taught these simple principles on at least two occasions with very little difference between the two recorded lessons. In Matthew’s account (which seems to be in the context of the Sermon on the Mount), we read that Jesus taught, *Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:9-15)*.

First, Jesus taught that when we pray we need to acknowledge the Father’s person. *And he said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name’ (v.2a)*. Matthew added the location of the Father *in heaven (v.9)*. That does not limit God’s omnipresence. He is everywhere at once. And yet we can say His abode is in heaven thoroughly separated from the sin of the fallen creation. To that end His name is hallowed. The word means to make holy or to recognize as holy. Here it applies to the Father’s name. In the Bible, the use of the term name in this way encompasses the entire work, person, character of God. Everything you can possibly imagine about God is wholly separated from sin and failure.

Furthermore, this astonishingly holy, sinless God is Father. It is true that because He is in heaven, we rightly address Him as “our heavenly Father.” But notice Jesus’s instruction to address Him in the very intimate title “Father” – just Father. A father is expected to care, to be concerned, to want to help, to be ready to talk, ready to listen. Sadly, many people have a very jaded view of their earthly fathers because of sin, which also impacts their view of our Father who is sinless.

In every recorded prayer of Jesus, we read that He addressed the Heavenly Father as “Father.” It reveals His assurance of the intimate relationship, that He anticipated His Father’s answer, care, love. But there is one glaring exception to this rule that proves the whole point

of intimacy. While bearing the curse of His people's sins, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Jesus could not call out to our Father while He was bearing our sins. That is because sin offends our Father and separates us from Him, breaking the intimacy He desires to have with us.

In practical terms, that teaches us that until we have confessed our sins and been born again, we have no audience with the Heavenly Father. It also means that if we tolerate sin in our lives as His children, we risk losing an audience with our Father. The Psalmist understood, *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened (Psalm 66:18)*. Praying to our Father whose name is holy reminds us of who He is, how mighty He is, how right He is, and how able He is to do whatever we ask. But such an address should also remind us that, as His children, we are to strive to emulate His "hallowedness."

Second, Jesus taught us that when we pray, we must acknowledge the Father's purpose (v.2b). Pray, *Your kingdom come (v.2b)*. God's kingdom is His rule and, therefore, His will to be accomplished in His ruling. Our prayer is for our Father's will to come to pass, to be accomplished. Matthew added the descriptive words from Jesus, *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (v.10)*.

This is a prayer that God will bring about His will in my heart and life first. If we are serious about prayer, we are not focused on our will first. And yet, the reality is that most prayer from God's children is a request for "my will to be done." And too often we ask God to do "my will" because we have learned that we are incapable of bringing about what we desire or what we think is best. So much of the time this kind of request involves changing other people or changing circumstances.

In fact, the purpose of prayer is not to push all the right buttons to force God to spit out a blessing. Rather, the purpose of prayer is to conform me to God's will. God has established that in eternity. We are praying to find out what it is and for grace to conform to it.

Third, Jesus taught that when we pray, we must acknowledge the Father's provision (vv.3-4). In the simple instruction, Jesus clearly referred to asking for material or physical needs. *Give us each*

day our daily bread (v.3). Daily bread is pretty basic. We should honestly agree that this is a legitimate need. Do we trust our holy, loving Heavenly Father to provide what we need?

The problem is that we Americans have been reared in such a materialistic world that we have a hard time discerning between needs and wants. Just because you want something does not mean that your want constitutes a need. *Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content (1 Timothy 6:6-8)*. Remember that Paul is the same child of God who had to learn to be content with a thorn in his flesh even after he prayed three times for God to remove it (whatever it was).

Asking the Father to meet our needs also applies to our spiritual needs. We are to ask Him to *forgive us our sins*. In Matthew, Jesus called these debts (v.12). That is a fair association because sin puts us in debt to those we sin against – God being our chief Creditor who must be paid. Our prayer is for God to pick up and carry away our sins against Him so that there is no record of our offenses. Holy God answers this prayer based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was sufficient to cover the debt.

But what about our sins against each other? That question must be answered in light of the closing statement in this instruction. Jesus taught us to pray asking God to forgive our sins, based on the fact that *we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us (v.4a)*. Jesus pointed out the seriousness of this reciprocal forgiveness in Matthew's Gospel. He also taught, *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15)*.

Refusal to forgive indicates that you are not familiar with God's forgiveness of your sins, that is, you are unsaved even though you may be very religious. In light of Jesus's teaching, we must conclude that we really don't have any choice but to forgive as God has forgiven us. Have you refused to forgive? Or maybe you just haven't gotten around to it yet, even though the offense was ten years ago.

Forgiveness looks like this: I sin against a brother by lying, or slandering, or losing my temper, or stealing, or any other of the

respectable sins we typically do. Either he brings it to my attention, or the Holy Spirit brings it to my attention. Upon the realization that I am indebted to him, I seek him out. I tell the offended brother exactly what I did in sinning against him and tell him that I am sorry. At this point, it is a picture of me going to the hurt brother and telling him that the burden I put on his back is not his to carry. It belongs to me. When my brother forgives me, he takes the burden off his back and hands it over to me. That is the completion of the transaction. I never put it back on him, and he never acts like he still has the burden. Forgiveness doesn't forget past hurts – it chooses not to bring up the past hurts.

Pray to our Father who provides for our material needs, our spiritual needs, and provides for our protection. Pray, *and lead us not into temptation (v.4b)*. James reminded us that God never, ever tempts anyone (James 1:13). Why ask our Father not to do what He promised He would not do? We live in a very fallen, sinful world in a very fallen, sinful flesh that likes the sinful world. This is a prayer for our Father to hang on to us so that we will not wander away.

This is also a request that our Father will not put us into testings and trials that we cannot endure without His grace. It is simply praying a promise God gave in 1 Corinthians. *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13)*.

Illustration of the Instruction (vv.5-8).

Jesus illustrated how His instruction about prayer works with a very common story (vv.5-7). A friend made a request to a friend. *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, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'" (vv.5-6)*.

The story is set in an environment where hospitality was very important. Not to provide for a guest who came to stay with you was reprehensible. Therefore, a friend went to a friend for help when a guest showed up unexpectedly. All he needed was a measly three

loaves of bread. But instead of getting the requested bread, what he received was a disheartening response. *"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'" (v.7)*. The so-called friend did not wish to be bothered, and so he clearly and plainly refused his friend's request.

What did Jesus desire for us to learn from this lesson (v.8)? He said, *"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" (v.8)*. Wait! Is the guy who refused to get out of bed a picture of God? No. God is not like that man in bed. Our Father never sleeps and He is never "put out by our requests." Rather this is a picture of us in our twisted views of God. The lesson is that when it seems like God doesn't hear – keep praying. When it seems like God doesn't care – keep praying. When it seems like God's timing is completely wrong – keep praying. Keep praying until God answers with a "Yes," or a definite "No," or maybe something like, "Trust me a little longer during which time your faith might grow."

Also, still looking at this picture, we might wonder if God desires for us to pray with impudence? The Greek word used in our text, *anaideia* is translated *importunity* (KJV) or *persistence* (NIV). Both translations are a bit weak. The word most accurately means *importunity*, which comes with a bit of an edge on it. It means to be impertinent, shamelessly presumptuous. It is persistence to the point of annoyance.

Does that mean that God wants us to present our requests to Him with shameless presumption? Yes. One of our former elders used to speak of such hypothetical people as, "That guy has more nerve than a hundred Indians." Have that kind of nerve, that kind of resolve when you pray. However, that does not mean that we can show disrespect to our Hallowed Father.

But on the other side of the coin, we should not be shy or timid when we make our requests known to God. Don't drop hints to God like you do with other people. Come right out and say what you think. Be open, authentic, transparent because God knows your need and your heart better than you do. Don't try to impress God with well stated requests. Often when I hear public prayers I feel like someone

is trying to impress people, not talk to God. It is okay to pray like, “I’m sorry, Dear Father, but I am not trusting You right now. I am doubting You. I doubt your promises. I need some help here! I’m feeling like I’m sliding into the abyss!”

Application of the Instruction (vv.9-13).

Having given the example of prayer and having illustrated the extent of prayer, Jesus gave us the invitation to ask (vv.9-10). He told us to ask, seek, and knock. *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 (v.9).* The command is stated in the present tense which would be translated keep on asking, seeking, and knocking. Serious prayer looks like someone who asks with importunity, who keeps on looking in the weeds for that desired flower, who is not satisfied with silence on the other side of the door.

Along with the invitation, the Lord gave us the promised results. *For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened (v.10).* We receive not because of our persistence. Our Father answers our prayer because He is gracious.

In order to help us know how gracious His answers to our prayers are, Jesus compared the generosity of earthly fathers to our Heavenly Father’s generosity (vv.11-13). Human fathers are caring or at least they are supposed to be. *What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? (vv.11-12).* The problem in real life is that sin causes human fathers to be wicked so that they often do not respond well. The picture here is of an earthly father who is caring because he is loving.

In comparison to us earthly dads, our Heavenly Father cares perfectly. Jesus taught, *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! (v.13).* I like to think I was a loving father because I spoiled my sons just enough by giving them good gifts. My heavenly Father knows what truly constitutes a good gift. He knows what is good for me. He knows when it is good for

me. He knows why it is good for me. He desires for me to learn these same truths in the process of asking and receiving.

The Psalmist understood and wrote, *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11).* Our problem is that we do not naturally know what is good for us, and we too often wimp out instead of wrestling in prayer to learn what is good. And what is very good for us is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. “But wait!” you say. “I wanted a new car.” You need the Holy Spirit to help you realize the real part material things are to play in life. The Holy Spirit is the source, the beginning of all good things. That is why when the Father gives us what is best, He gives us the Holy Spirit which happens at salvation. What could be better than sins forgiven and the promise of eternal life? — That is salvation.

The great lesson of prayer is in it and through it we learn how sovereignly wise our Father is and how finitely, spiritually dense we really are. Prayer is the process by which we sift through all our desires, bringing every one of them into conformity to the Father’s will.