

## When You Pray Luke 11:1-13

How important is prayer? The story is told of a group of men who went to visit the great 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher, Charles Spurgeon on a Sunday morning and they wanted to know the secret of why his preaching ministry was so powerful and effective . . .

What we have in Luke 11:1-13 is building of the boiler room. It is the fundamentals of prayer and yet it is more than the fundamentals of prayer, it is the very heart of prayer. Jesus has set His face to the cross and in the time He has left He is teaching His disciples what it means to be a disciple. Prayer is an essential and fundamental part of the disciple's life.

This prayer is often called the Lords' Prayer but it is more appropriately called the Model Prayer. Don't let the name The Model Prayer fool you. It is not a trite prayer. When we trace out Jesus' lesson on prayer, what we find is that the disciples practiced what Jesus taught in Luke 11:1-13 in Acts 1:12-16<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the Model Prayer is often used as a lucky charm or incantation kind of prayer before the big game as if it earns divine favor. It does not do that. The Model Prayer is a pattern of prayer. It is the fundamentals of prayer.

You never stop using your fundamentals. A good football or basketball team always practices their fundamentals. The team that does the fundamentals well usually wins and the team that does not loses. If you cannot block and tackle then you will lose. I do not care how fast you can run or how far you can throw the ball it is all for naught because you if cannot block or tackle, the game is lost before it starts.

How fundamental is prayer to the disciple's life? One pastor said, "*Prayer is the breath of the Christian life . . . This is prayer that is guided by the Holy Spirit and shaped by [God's] word.*"<sup>2</sup> If you do not breathe, your Christian life will lack the oxygen of heaven. Life will suffocate you.

So, the issue for us is not: "*If you pray . . .*" The issue is, "*When you pray . . .*" We are going to look at four things about prayer this morning: The *priority* of prayer, the *pattern* of prayer, the *persistence* of prayer, and the *promise* of prayer.

### I. The Priority of Prayer (vv. 1-2b)

Look at v. 1, "*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place . . .*" If the Son of God made prayer a priority then we should too. Prayer was the heart of Jesus' life and ministry. He didn't just pray before he ate or as he walked around or before He had a meeting with the disciples. He did those things but Jesus took time to spend extended time with the Father in prayer. Prayer infused all of Jesus' life and ministry.

Jesus' life was a long prayer walk to the cross. He is taking us with Him. Our lives are to be one long prayer walk of taking up our cross every day and following Jesus.

Yet, Jesus also made time to get still and get alone with God. His disciples had seen Him do amazing things and they knew the power of His ministry came from the time He spent with God in prayer. The power flowed from His relationship with God and that was developed and nurtured in the time He spent asking God to work.

What we see in v. 1 is that after Jesus had finished praying His disciples wanted to learn to pray. This was one of those moments where faith was caught and taught. John the Baptist had taught His disciples how to pray and now in the same manner they were asking Jesus to teach them to pray.

They had heard Jesus teach on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:7-15 is essentially the same prayer that we find in Luke 11:2-4. Jesus often taught the same things in different places. But, like I said, Luke 11:1-13 was one of those teachable moments where Jesus had finished praying and the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray.

We are just like them. We are trucking along in life and then something happens and we realize we need to pray. We hear someone pray and we think, "*I want to pray like that.*" Perhaps something hard happens in your life and you realize you have been prayerless as of late so you pray, "*Lord I need to pray. Help me!*"

So, Jesus said to His disciples, "*When you pray.*" They were going to need to pray and we need to pray. These words are for us—*when you pray.*

His disciples most certainly were going to need to pray and prayer was going to need to be a priority as soon as He ascended to Heaven. Right now, He was with them and He met all their needs. They could talk to Him, touch Him, and see Him but a time was coming where He would be gone. Then they would not see Him face-to-face and they would need to pray by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit. That time was quickly approaching.

<sup>1</sup> Acts is considered Part 2 of Luke's Gospel. It chronicles the birth and growth of the church after Jesus' ascension.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, I can't remember what sermon I heard him say this in but it has stuck with me ever since I heard him say it. I quote it often but I can't remember what sermon from which it came.

In Acts 1:12-16, the disciples put into practice what they learned in Luke 11. It had probably been only months since Jesus taught them how to pray and now He had been crucified, raised, and ascended to heaven. The disciples and the women had just watched Jesus ascend into heaven and had walked back to the upper room where only a month or so before Jesus had transformed the Passover into the New Covenant meal.

Let's pick up in v. 12 . . . The word *devoting*, in v. 14 points to the priority of prayer. *Devoting* means they were to clinging to God in prayer. It was like Jacob wrestling with God in Genesis. 32. He would not let go of God until He blessed Him.

We are to cling to God in prayer. Prayer is to be as important as breathing for us. It is fundamental. It is to be a priority.

Is prayer a priority in your life right now? What does it look like for prayer to be a priority in your life? Look back at the context in Luke 10:41-42 where Jesus rebukes Martha, "*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*"

What was the *good portion*? It was sitting at Jesus feet. Look at your prayer life, are you Mary or Martha? Is there a time in your day where you press pause on life and sit at the Lord's feet? Also, I am not talking about prayer where you read off your checklist and then quickly move on to other things.

I am talking about a time where you get on your knees in the presence of the Savior? It is good to pray as you go through the day; it is good to go on prayer walks (I like prayer walks); it is good to pray with the church; it is good to pray before meals; it is good to pray with friends; but do you do what Jesus did, set aside time to be with God where it is just you and the Father? Do you have a certain place where you can pour out your heart to Him? Where you get in the oxygen tent with God and breath the air of heaven in prayer?

Prayer is indeed the breath of the disciple's life. How is your oxygen level right now? Is prayer a priority in your life?

## II. The Pattern of Prayer (vv. 2b-4)

Next, Jesus teaches His disciples the pattern of prayer. Jesus was not giving a formula or an incantation to recite before the big game. This prayer is simply a model of how to pray.

The danger is to dissect the prayer and breakdown its parts and make it an exercise in academics. We can say, "*Okay I see five things about prayer here. There are two vertical and three horizontal things about prayer.*" The temptation is to cut the heart out of this prayer by making it an academic exercise.

Never the less, we must examine the prayer so let's look at it, pause as we work through it, and smell the fragrance of the air of heaven. The oxygen of prayer will breathe life into our tired lives.

First, notice what Jesus says in v. 2b, "*Father.*" Pause right there. Now let's inhale and smell the air of heaven in this word. We have lots of imagery in the Bible that describes our relationship to God: King, Shepherd, Lord, Commander, but none is so precious and takes the preeminence as that of being a child of God.

Why? Because of all the personal relationships we have none is more tender, intimate, and more powerful as the father-child relationship. This is why when a father is a bad father it marks the child so severely but this is not what we are talking about with God. He is our Heavenly Father.

Think about it this way. Imagine you are in bed asleep and your 4-year-old daughter comes into your bedroom and says, "*Daddy, will you get me a drink of water?*" What do you do? You get up and help your precious baby get a drink of water. Now . . . as precious as your spouse is, if he or she nudges you at 2 am and says, "*Honey, will you get me a drink of water?*" What do you say? "*Really? I don't think so.*" Then you roll over and go back to sleep.

Here is another way to think about prayer. Think about the President of the United States. Who gets to see him? Who can come to his office? Only the most accomplished politicians, world leaders, Tom Brady, and Bill Belichick. No one gets to see the President unless he is someone special. Now image that same 4-year-old girl is the daughter of the President and she wants a drink of water at 2 am. Guess who gets in at 2 am when not even world leaders can get in—it is the child of the President.

Jesus teaches us to pray by coming to God, the King of the Universe, the Creator of All Things, Almighty God the Maker of Heaven and Earth as—Father. He will listen to your prayers at 2 am or anytime you call on His name. It does not matter what you have done, not done, accomplished or still lack because those things do not earn you the right to be heard. It has to do with the fact that you are His child. Jesus paid for your adoption into His family at the cost of His own precious blood.

Dr. J. I. Packer says, "*Adoption is the highest privilege of the gospel. The traitor is forgiven, brought in for supper and given the family name.*" If you belong to Christ, then you have been adopted by the King so come to God as your Father.

*"Hallowed be your name."* Pause right here. By addressing God as *Father*, we smell the *preciousness of the prayer* BUT by asking God to *hallow* His name we smell the *power of the prayer*. The word *"hallowed"* means *"to make holy."* The Greek word *hallowed* is an *imperative, causative verb that asks God to act to make His name holy*.

It is a prayer of pleading and dependence. You and I cannot make God's name holy only He can do that. So, we ask God to make his name *holy in our lives, our relationships, our marriages, our families, our classrooms, dorm rooms, and on our campuses*.

What would happen if you began to ask God to make his name holy in these areas of your life? How would this prayer change you? When you begin to ask God to make His name holy it will not only change you but it will change the world!!

*"Your kingdom come."* Press pause, breathe in the air of heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* This is a gigantic prayer that prays for the advancement of the kingdom of God so that earth becomes more like heaven.

John Newton gets it right in verse 2 of his hymn *"Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare,"*

*Thou art coming to a King,  
large petitions with thee bring,  
for his grace and pow'r are such,  
none can ever ask too much.*<sup>3</sup>

Jesus wants us to ask for God's will to be done on the earth as it is always done in heaven. It is to bring everyone under the rule of God. It is to ask for sinners to be converted by the gospel and see the rule of Christ to shape their lives. Are you bringing large petitions to God? Large petitions mean you understand you serve a powerful God.

*"Give us each day our daily bread."* Now smell the air of heaven in our daily bread. Have you ever smelled fresh bread? I am not talking about Jimmy John's fresh smells. I am talking about homemade fresh bread. This is the aroma of the prayer.

The prayer shifts from this big prayer to the trenches of our daily lives. The air of heaven is not so high that we cannot breathe it. The air of heaven is also found in the daily grind of our daily lives. It is the sweet air of heaven that makes life on this earth livable and we breath that air when we pray.

We are reminded that God's will is done in thousands of small, mostly unnoticed things in the world. He feeds the sparrow and He feeds His children. He clothes the flowers and He clothes His people.

The phrase *our daily bread* means the stuff of life both big and small for us. Just to ask God for our daily needs no matter how big or how small. Take every anxiety to Him and let your worries fill your prayer list. He is the Giver and the giver gets the glory so ask Him to meet your needs (not your wants). God is our Father who is helping us to meet our needs not fluff our pillows.

*"Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us."* Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray two very important things. First, His disciples acknowledge their own sinfulness and need of forgiveness and grace. Second, disciples anticipate they will sin against others. One of the evidences that you understand the gospel is that you seek forgiveness when you sin and you forgive others who sin against you. When God is at work in the disciple's life, confession and repentance are the normal breathing exercises of our prayer lives.

*"And lead us not into temptation."* This prayer began with Jesus' disciples calling on the Father to make His name holy and concludes with the desire to be holy like God is holy. Holiness is the heartbeat of the disciple. The disciple feels the weight of His own sin and seeks to overcome it by the Spirit of God taking the word of God and giving him or her a grace-driven effort to live a holy life for the glory of God.

The more you grow as a disciple the more you want to grow in holiness but you will also grow in your understanding of just how wicked your heart is. You will look back on your life and see how much you have grown but as you study God's word the more you see just how much more sinful your heart is.

I know the older I get the more sinful I see my heart is and the more I marvel at His grace, and rest in the righteousness of our Savior, and I am stunned by the splendor of His glory because He loves me in spite of my sin.

Breathing the air of heaven in prayer will cause you to pray—*"Lord lead me not into temptation"* because you will not want to dishonor your beautiful and precious Savior.

### III. The Persistence in Prayer (vv. 5-10)

Next, Jesus taught His disciples that they need to pray and never give up. To help us understand He gives us this short parable involving a friend who needed *"some daily bread"* at the wee hours of the morning. The man has a need so he goes to his

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<sup>3</sup> John Newton, *Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare*, [https://hymnary.org/text/come\\_my\\_soul\\_thy\\_suit\\_prepare](https://hymnary.org/text/come_my_soul_thy_suit_prepare).

friend who is in bed with his family and he tells him to go away because they are asleep but because he is his friend and he persists, he gets up and helps him. The parable is a contrast where we see that if our human friends will do this for one another how much more will God do this for us because He is a good Father.

Look at the Greek word *impudence* in v. 8. This is the only time it is translated *impudence*. It is most often translated *shameless*. Jesus is teaching us to pray *shameless, persistent prayers*.

Think of your own prayers. Have you ever been praying and felt like you were praying for the same thing over and over? Good. Keep it up. You are feeling the shamelessness of persistent praying so don't stop praying.

Just because God may not answer our prayers immediately does not mean we should give up on our prayers. Write your prayers so you will remember what to pray and remind yourself to keep praying and not give up. Perhaps one of the reasons we do not see spiritual breakthroughs in our lives is because we give up too easily on what we are asking God to do.

Look at vv. 9-10. The Greek words for *knocking and seeking* are in present tense and can be translated *keep on knocking, keep on seeking—never stop*. Jesus wants His disciples to pray and to keep on praying continually.

Let's let Acts 1:14 help us one more time. Look at the word *devoted* in v. 14. It is the Greek the word is *proskartereō*. It is a compound Greek word to give emphasis not only to the *priority of prayer* but also the *persistent nature of prayer*.

Luke took the root word *kartereo* and added the prefix *pros* in order to emphasize the importance of persistent prayer. With the prefix *pros*, he injected steroids into the word. It was like writing it in ALL CAPS.

The 120 disciples in the upper room had learned to keep knocking and to keep on seeking God in prayer. They prayed continually for 10 more days in the upper room and then the Holy Spirit fell on them.

When you look in Acts 1:12 we learn that gospel-prayer is changing the culture because men and women were praying together. However, notice whose names are mentioned first. It is the men. The men were leading this prayer meeting.

Thank God for the women-- they were the last at the cross and the first to the tomb. The gospel had turned the culture upside down and now men and women were praying together instead of separately but I want you to notice that the men were leading this prayer meeting. Just a side note, they were not praying to Mary, Jesus' mother. Mary was praying to Jesus right along with them.

I know we have people of all kinds of families here this morning. *I know we have some single ladies and divorced men and single men and both men and women in the college ranks but I must speak directly to the men here*. I also know this text in Acts is descriptive of Pentecost. It was this one-time special dispensation of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the church. Pentecost is not reproduced today, it is not prescriptive. Today the Spirit is poured out today at conversion so when a person is born again the Holy Spirit blows into their hearts. However, there is prescriptive truth for us is that the men leading the church in persistent prayer.

So, let me ask, brothers, how are you leading your church and your family to pray? Brothers, it is your responsibility as the spiritual leader of your house to lead in your church and your family in prayer. If you do not know how to pray then humble yourself and ask someone to help you learn how to pray. Be like the disciples and ask an older man, *"Teach me to pray."*

Ladies do this with the younger women. Be a Titus 2 woman and teach the younger women how to follow Jesus in their prayer lives. Don't wait to be asked, go up to them and ask them to meet with you.

Finally, let's pray together. I love our members' meetings because we address the needs of the church in the context of prayer. Our last members' meeting was more like a prayer meeting than anything. Men and women praying together in the Spirit.

#### **IV. The Promise of Prayer (vv. 11-13)**

The second parable is also a parable of contrast that teaches us about the promise of prayer and that promise is that the Heavenly Father is good. If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts how much more with our Father in Heaven give us what is best for us. In particular, Luke mentions the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was preparing His disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Those 120 gathered in the upper room to pray. They sought God and lead them to fill Judas' office with Matthias. Then they kept on praying for 10 more days and Acts 2:1-4 says, *"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

It is no accident that Model Prayer concluded by pointing to Acts 2:1-4 and the giving of the Holy Spirit to the people of God. More than anything, until Jesus returns we need the Holy Spirit of God to take the word of God and apply it to the people of God so that we will know how to take up our cross daily and follow our Savior.

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We need to smell the air of heaven through the promised Holy Spirit. We need to know that our prayers are blood bought gifts that go up before the Lord as a sweet-smelling aroma. This is why we pray in Jesus' name. He purchased our prayers and as He has breathed life into us by the Spirit, He breathes life into our prayers and makes them acceptable to God the Father by the Spirit.

Have you ever seen an athlete compete in a sporting event and his oxygen level get depleted and he has to come out of the game and get oxygen or have you ever seen a patient who has low oxygen levels having to stay in an oxygen tent? This is what time alone with God in prayer is like for us. Yes, pray throughout the day, go on prayer walks, journal your prayers and pray at all times and find dedicated time to get in the oxygen tent and be alone with God in prayer.

We need to practice what Jesus practiced. We need to find that *certain place to pray and get alone with God and pour our hearts to Him.*