



-- Read Luke 11:5-13

-- Pray

-- **One of the best interpretive keys to Jesus' parables is to pay careful attention to the words that introduce them and that conclude them.**

-- Notice how this parable is introduced.

-- Its introduction comes way back in v. 1 – *“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

-- In this parable, Jesus is continuing—indeed, concluding—lesson that is history's greatest ever lesson on prayer.

-- Then, in verse 2, Jesus begins the lesson on prayer saying, *“When you pray say ‘Our Father’...”*

-- Notice how it concludes (v. 11-13).

-- As Jesus is prone to do, He saves the best for last.

-- As with most good teachers, Jesus conclusion comes back around to reemphasize His introduction in His conclusion. That is, the first and last points of our Lord's ultimate lesson on prayer are essentially the same.

-- Thus, based upon our Lord's structure here, we ought to understand that today's lesson is the most important point.

-- First point: *“Pray intimately as a child to his loving father.”*

-- Final point

-- v. 13 – *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

-- Notice the common element of the introduction and conclusion: Praying to God as our Father.

-- Both the introduction and conclusion to this parable highlight the same magnificent truth, which is this...

-- **Big Idea: True Christian prayer is a family affair.**

- In other words, we are so very blessed to pray and prayer works such wonders simply because God is our Father forever, Our Father in Heaven responds to His children with an unfailing love.

The overall structure of today's text:

An Illustration – The Parable of the Friend at Midnight (v. 5-8)

The Application – “Ask, Seek, Knock” (v.9-10)

The Key Implication – “How Much More” (v. 11-13)

a.) The Illustration – v. 5-8 – The Parable of a Friend at Midnight

-- This was a very bold request.

- v. 5 – It was midnight, which really was the middle of the night.
- v. 7 – *“The door is already locked...”*
 - All day long in that culture and time, most doors to homes would have been open, inviting others to fellowship.
 - However, after dusk, the door was closed indicating that the time of privacy had come and visitors had better just come back tomorrow.
- v. 7 – *“...my children are with me in bed.”*
 - Illustration – The one room, one bed homes of Haiti.
 - The man in the parable apparently lived in a one-room, one-bed house like that. His whole seems to be sleeping not only in the same room but also in the same bed.
 - Therefore, as his friend came banging on the door at midnight, he would have surely awakened the whole family.
 - This wasn't an ordinary request. It was very brazen and inconvenient request.

-- This request was based upon a genuine need.

- In the east, especially the ancient near east, hospitality is a sacred virtue and primary responsibility.
 - Illustration – Being invited to the pastor's widow in Haiti. Recall the hospitality expected of her regarding guests of the funeral and the visitation.
- v. 6 – Because of the hospitality expectations of that day and place, the man request bread would have been dishonored if he had not been able to provide a meal for his visitor.
- His bold request, therefore, is inspired by necessity, not pure self-indulgence.

-- This request was made in a bothersome way.

- v. 5 – While hospitality may have been a genuine need, it certainly was not a middle-of-the-night emergency.
- v. 7 – *“Don't bother me.”*
- v. 8 – *“boldness”* = “shamelessness, impudence, importunity”

-- Why is Jesus teaching us to pray shamelessly?

- This is an abhorrent idea in most religious thinking.
- This contradicts common sense, doesn't it?
 - How many of us would make requests of our bosses this way?
 - How about the mayor, governor, or even the president?
 - How can this bothersome boldness be the manner in which Jesus teaches us to pray to God?
- **This kind of praying only makes sense in family terms.**
 - Praying like this simply doesn't fit if we view God as our employer or our governor or a computer.
 - It only makes sense when we understand that God is our Father.
 - This way to pray only works when we come to God like children approaching their fathers at home.
 - As the first and last verses of Jesus' lesson on prayer make clear: True Christian prayer is a family affair.
- **Children ask with great boldness.**
 - Children have an entirely different kind of access to their fathers than anyone else.
 - Illustration – [Compare my girls asking for water at 3:00 a.m. to an adult in the congregation doing the same thing.]
 - **Illustration – Picture of JFK's son beneath his desk**
 - Who else could have that kind of relationship with the president? Do you think Obama or Bush or any president for that matter would ever let you play underneath his desk?
 - Who on earth could have gone to JFK in the middle of the night and asked to be tucked in? That little guy in the photo.
 - No one can make requests of a man like his children can.
- **Children ask with great trust.**
 - The boldness of a child's requests is based upon his complete trust in the love and care of his father.
 - Tossing Mary Rose in the air.
 - When unspoiled by ungodly parenting, this trust is delightful.
 - With adoption in Christ comes a change in our status.
 - We are no longer strangers alienated from God.
 - We are made God's children forever.
 - Because God is our Father, we come to God as His children, not employees or constituents or prisoners, or worse.
 - One is grace-based. The other is works-based.
 - One is a relationship. The other is mere religion.
 - One is wrapped up in love, the other in legalism.

-- Too often, we have empty prayer lives because we approach God from wrong perspectives.

b.) The Application – v. 9-10 – Ask, Seek, Knock

-- v. 9-10 – The pattern of our lives should be constant, confident prayer to our Father in Heaven.

- These verbs are present continuous verbs.
- “Ask” here means, “Ask and keep on asking.”
- “Seek” here means, “Seek and keep on seeking.”
- “Knock” here means, “Knock and keep on knocking.”
- “Ask and keep on asking.” – Make specific requests in prayer.
- Don’t pray with the kind of meandering requests that telemarketers make on the phone.
- Make the direct kinds of requests that a child asks his father.
- God knows your need before you even speak it. So, as long as your prayer stems from an honest heart and a genuine need, make your request with boldness.
- “Seek and keep on seeking.”
- Devotion to prayer extends beyond consecrated moments on bended knee.
- You aren’t seeking if you look around for only a moment.
- Seeking God in prayer involves participating in the answer—or even being the answer—ourselves.
- “Knock and keep on knocking.”
- Nobody knocks only once. If you did, no one would even know that you are knocking!
- **1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”**

We really begin to live what it means to pray without ceasing when we persistently endeavor to make our every thought and deed a continuation of our prayers. It is in this way that we continually “seek” and keep on seeking after God and His will in prayer.

Let me give you an example. For many months now, I have been praying to God that He will inspire within all of us a steadfast spirit of biblical prayerfulness. Moreover, as we have been meeting together this morning, I have again been praying that God will awaken this fellowship to an active understanding of the great blessings of prayerfulness. Yet, even now, while I stand here and *preach* to you this same point about which I have *prayed*, am I not now also praying? Is not this sermon the continuation of my prayer? Am I not desiring and aiming at the same thing? Aren’t we continuing to pray whenever we use the best means available to us in any given situation in order to be used of God to bring about the

answer to our prayers? I hope you see my point here. It is simply this: We are still praying whenever we are actively seeking to bring about the good for which we have prayed.

-- v. 10 – Does this mean that we will receive anything we ask?

-- Negative Examples – Books like “The Secret” and the Satanic hoax of name-it, claim-it theology.

-- In whatever ways God commands us, however, we can pray with absolute confidence that He will answer every sincere prayer aimed at obeying His Word.

-- If I sincerely pray according Ephesians 4:32 – “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you,*” I can be sure God will be pleased to answer my prayer.

-- Similarly, if I earnestly pray in accordance with anything God’s Word directly commands me to do,

-- There are, however, good reasons why God very often does not give us what we think we want.

1. We may be attempting to substitute prayers for obedience.

-- Ex. – Teacher to student: “I not going to do it for you.”

-- Ex. – Praying that another person will forgive you when you are unwilling to do the hard work of repentance.

2. We are poor judges of what is good for us and for others.

Would Moses have prayed for a dead end at the Red Sea? Would Joseph have prayed to be thrown in a pit? Would Sarah or Hannah or Elizabeth have prayed for the barrenness that resulted in the blessed children God gave them? Would Gideon have prayed for a small army? Would David have prayed for a fight with a giant? Would Nehemiah have prayed for a broken down wall? Would Peter have prayed for a treacherous storm at sea? Would Paul have prayed to be blinded? Would Lazarus have prayed to be buried and dead? Most of all, were any of the disciples praying that Christ would give His life on the cross to atone for their sin? Who on earth could have seen the eternal, almighty glory that would result? Do any of us really think that we know best—that our ideas are better than God’s?

-- Hear this: If prayer were really like “Aladdin’s lamp,” you and I and the whole world would all pray ourselves right into misery or death or worse.

-- In our individualistic culture, most of us convince ourselves that we know what is best in any given situation, and that, given the opportunity, we could write the best script for our own lives.

But while our purposes are formed on this earth, God's are fashioned in eternity. Whereas our every thought is stained with sin, God's are resplendent with His righteousness. Whereas we often think we know what is best, God actually does... always.

-- **Our Father in Heaven always gives us exactly what we would give ourselves if we knew everything He knows and sees everything He sees.**

-- Whenever we do not receive what we have requested, we have most likely requested a snake or a scorpion.

-- Garth Brooks – “Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers.”

-- Unanswered prayer makes much more sense when we understand prayer on family terms.

-- Example – When small children ask for something that is not good for them, good parents respond, “Oh, sweetheart, that's not a good idea, but let me tell you what I would like to give you instead.”

-- We need only the humility to accept it and the faith to see beyond these moments unto eternity with Christ.

So many of us are defeated by anger or disillusionment because of some unanswered prayer, and this is usually the case because we come to Him on the wrong terms. We come to Him on the legalistic terms of an employee who believes that he has earned a raise from his divine boss, or like Aladdin who has found a magic lamp... when all the while God is calling us to come to him with the boldness of a small child who trusts in his Father's unfailing love, and understands that our Father in Heaven always knows and does what is best, even when we don't understand it.

c.) The Key Implication – v. 11-13

-- This is one of Jesus' many “How much more” parables.

-- v. 11-13 – If our earthly fathers, with all their sinfulness, manage to give us what we need when we ask them, how much more will God.

-- Do we imagine that God is in the business of lousy substitutes?

-- Is God like a sham vendor on the streets of New York City?

-- Would God hold out the offer of good gifts and replace them with anything harmful?

-- The point is to take great confidence in a God, our heavenly Father, who cares for us infinitely more than any human father, no matter how kind, ever could.

-- **Summary**

-- Prayer is a non-negotiable necessity in true Christian living.

-- God is ready and waiting to change your life, this church, our community, and even this world through your prayers and mine.

- True Christian prayer is a family affair.
- Therefore let us ask and keep asking... seek and keep seeking... knock and keep knocking... and let us do all of this praying with boldness and trust as children of God, who calls us His children and promises to give us every good thing that we need.