



Sermon Manuscript: Luke 11:1-13

The Lord Teaches Us to Pray

10th Sunday after Pentecost – July 24, 2022

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

He said to them, “When you pray, say: “‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’”

Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’

“Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!” [NIV]

When we were in school, we learned that the word “ain’t” isn’t really a proper word. It’s an improper contraction of “is/are” and “not.” It’s a combination of the proper contractions “isn’t” and “aren’t.” We learned that we weren’t supposed to use “ain’t.” The English books we used in school taught us a correct model for the uses of these words and for all the other ways we are to speak correct English. Yet many of us still use the word “ain’t” or other improper forms of English. Prayer is a form of speech as well. It is speaking to God. In our text for today, Jesus is our teacher. THE LORD TEACHES US TO PRAY. He teaches us to follow his model. He teaches us to impose on his help. And he teaches us to trust in his goodness.

1. Follow His Model

The first lesson Jesus teaches us about prayer is that the important thing in our prayers is the content and not the form. One way to understand this is to compare the words Jesus gives for the Lord’s Prayer here with the version he gives us in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew: *“This, then, is how you should pray: “‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.*

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ [Matthew 6:9-13] The version we have here in Luke is shorter. The version we ourselves use regularly is also different in that we include the Doxology that is a song of praise that was added by Christians based on passages elsewhere in the Bible. The difference in form given by Jesus teaches us that although we can follow a specific form in prayer, we don’t need to. What’s important is what we include in the prayer – the content. That content is really up to us who are the ones who are praying.

The emphasis is on the content when we take a closer look at the things Jesus teaches us to pray for in his prayer. He begins by having us address God as our heavenly Father. There’ll be more on that later in the sermon. Then he gives us the three petitions about God’s name, kingdom and will. All of these petitions ask God to give spiritual blessings to all people. He teaches us to pray that God’s name would be regarded as holy when he is honored and worshiped. He teaches us to pray for more people’s hearts to be ruled by faith in Jesus as their Savior so that they would come into his kingdom. And in Matthew, he teaches us to ask that God’s will to save all people would be done in the world.

The fourth petition asks for physical needs. It asks for the basics in daily bread. God knows our needs and will provide them as well as the contentment to be thankful and at peace.

In the final three petitions, Jesus teaches to pray for our own spiritual needs. We ask for forgiveness for our sins and strength to overcome temptation. The seventh petition is again added from Matthew and there we ask God’s help to overcome and endure evil. One thing to note about all these petitions is the emphasis away from asking for things for ourselves and asking for lots of physical things. Jesus teaches us to pray for others and for spiritual needs and blessings.

We have to confess that our prayers often “ain’t” according to the Lord’s pattern. One way that happens is when we make the form of the prayer more important than the content. How often haven’t we started praying the Lord’s Prayer and suddenly found ourselves at the “Amen” only to realize we don’t remember anything we said? When we pray, or worship, by rote recitation, we forget that prayer really is speaking to God from our heart. It’s like saying to your spouse or parents, “I love you,” without actually thinking about what we’re saying. It’s like driving and texting at the same time!

We also “ain’t” praying according to Jesus’ model when the content of our prayers doesn’t fit what Jesus teaches us. This is the case when the who of our prayers is always “me.” This is the case when the what of our prayers is always “things.” This is the case when the how often is always seldom. And this is the case when the “whom I’m addressing” is a God far away.

This leads us to the second lesson as the Lord teaches us to pray. His model calls God, Father. The Aramaic was “Abba” and means about the equivalent of our word, “Dad.” Jesus teaches us to pray with the assurance that we can go to God with anything. When we pray we are to impose on his help.

2. Impose on His Help

This shouldn't seem so strange. We impose on those who are near us all the time. Think of the kinds of things we ask others to do. We ask them to put up with our moods and bad temper. We ask others to do favors, small and large, for us. We would never ask strangers to do these things for us. In fact, it would take tremendous boldness. Maybe you've had to ask a stranger for something like this to your great embarrassment. We might ask a good friend for such things. But mostly it is our relatives that have to put up with our impositions.

Jesus teaches us something amazing here. We have been given the gift of being able to address the almighty Creator of the universe as boldly as we do our own beloved family. In fact he is even closer. Jesus teaches us to address God as "Abba." That's the literal word here and for the people of Jesus' day it was the equivalent of one of us calling our father "Daddy" or "Dad." And not only can we go boldly, we can also ask God for the smallest things, like a loaf of bread. Jesus shows us that we can come to God with our prayers any time, like a man coming to his friend in the middle of the night. Jesus teaches us basically to bother God with all our needs at any time in our prayers.

The reason for this is that we are truly part of God's family through Jesus who washed us clean of our sin and made us people who have been adopted as God's sons and daughters. We can come to God with this boldness even if our relationship with God has been strained in the past like the Prodigal Son. God sent Jesus to forgive us. This opens the line for our prayers to be heard. Jesus' holiness gives us "five bars" of signal to speak to God our deepest needs and most intimate hurts.

So there "ain't" no such thing as bothering God. When it comes to our prayers we can be afraid to ask or we avoid bothering God. We try to do everything ourselves and forget the loving Father Jesus points us to. We don't think of prayer as the prelude and conclusion for every occurrence in our lives. We don't do as Paul instructs us: *Pray continually.* [**1 Thessalonians 5:17**] We sin when we would only bother God as a last resort or for what we don't think we can handle ourselves.

God shows us that he wants to be bothered by us. There are many passages where he shows us this. *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.* [**Psalm 50:15**] *I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.* [**John 16:23b-24**] *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* [**Matthew 6:31-32**] *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* [**Hebrews 13:5-6**] *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."* [**Jeremiah 29:11-12**]

With all these promises and encouragements from God, we can take them all and count on them. In fact he wants us to challenge him to keep his word. That's what Jesus is teaching us here about boldness and persistence.

We can challenge God's promises because of the fact that he is good. Jesus' third lesson today is that we are to learn to pray with trust in his goodness.

3. With Trust in His Goodness

God is the best father there is. Human fathers can be good to their children. They can acknowledge and answer the legitimate requests of their children. They don't deceive the children that they love. They are motivated by love and concern for their children and so work to give them the best they can.

God is better than any human father by far. He knows what we need before we even ask. Because he is holy, he can't possibly deceive us. And he is motivated by the perfect love and concern of a heavenly Father who is filled with gracious love for us.

Jesus shows us that God gives us the best gifts of all. He begins with the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is from the Spirit that all spiritual blessings flow – from faith to forgiveness to eternal life. Through the Spirit we receive faith in Jesus as our Savior. And from Christ comes complete forgiveness and eternal life. We receive all these things as adopted children who deserve none of them. But God gives them all to us for love's sake. What a wonderful and amazing Father we have! What a loving Savior we have!

So we have to ask ourselves, "Ain't God been good to us?" We can come to God and challenge his promises to love and provide for us because Jesus is our Savior. We can know that all of his answers to our prayers will always be the best for us. When we pray for blessings on those things that are God-pleasing we can be sure of his help. We can pray for things such as our marriage, children, faithfulness in managing blessings like money and goods, help in times of need like illness and disaster. When we do, God will answer and help us. We can know his love is at work. When the answer is "yes" we can rejoice that we are praying in accord with God's will. When the answer is "no" we can see that God holds something back for our eternal good. When the answer is "wait" we realize that God's timetable has more wisdom than ours. We can know with confidence that he will indeed always answer our prayers because he loves us. And we can know that he is and will be good to us. We know this because he has made us his own through Jesus. And we can know this because we can look back at how he has answered our prayers in the past.

You can use "ain't" if you want, but don't forget Jesus' prayer-speech lesson. When we pray according to Jesus' model, there "ain't" nothing we can't pray about and there "ain't" no doubt about God's giving an answer. Amen.