

The Gospel According to Luke
Luke 11:5-13
Reading: Matthew 7:7-11

Sermon #49
September 15, 2019

Approaching Prayer

With Persistence

Last week, our Lord taught us the principles of the content of prayer. Our prayers should consist of praying to our heavenly Father for His decreed end. We should pray for His name to be vindicated and glorified and His eternal kingdom to come. Jesus went on to explain that we should also ask God with faith, depending on Him for our every need; from the bread we eat, to the sins that need to be forgiven. Jesus shows us we are to pray for the things that God promises to accomplish and believe he will fulfill his promises. In order to know the plans and promises of God one must study God's Word. This enables us to pray correctly, we are to pray for God to accomplish His will.

This week our Lord shows us what our approach should be to prayer. In other words, Jesus shows us a proper prayer attitude. Last week the key word was dependence and this week it is persistence. After giving us the model of prayer, Jesus tells a parable to illustrate how to pray. Notice in this parable, in verse 8, the word "boldness" or imprudence or persistence depending on your translation, but the actual direct translation is "shamelessness". The concept of shamelessness means to continue without regard to what others think or what is considered proper in society. The parable continues in verse 9 with ask, seek and knock; these are all words indicating persistence or determination. We are to keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking until our godly requests are answered.

The big problem I see with my prayer life is that I am, at times, praying very selfish prayers. However, the more I meditate on the Word of God and the more I pray the better I become at taking the focus off of me and placing my heart's desires on God and his kingdom, and this changes my prayers to those which glorify God and seek His will instead of mine. As I come to understand God's will - I need to be persistent in my prayers believing God's will – and believing God's kingdom is now in motion and will come to its fulness with the return of Christ. Let me ask, "How is your prayer life? Is it focused and persistent in seeking God and his will in your life or is it about distractions happening in your life?"

Let us explore together how Jesus so masterfully teaches us to pray. So, to prepare our hearts and minds to hear God, we begin in prayer.

PRAY

Today I am using the *Christian Standard Bible* translation because I think it is the best translation to convey the meaning of this passage. Now hear the Word of God. Jesus had finished instructing the disciples in the model of prayer and now continues in verse 5, "*Jesus also said to them: 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him." ⁷ Then he will answer from inside ⁷ and say, "Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything."⁸ I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.'"*

Jesus continues in verse 9, "*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. ¹⁰ For*

everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ 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?" (Luke 11:5-13 CSB) Amen. Many of you know I like trivia, so here is this morning's trivia. It is trivia that has a meaning. After my opening prayer and after the reading of God's Word and after most times of prayer, we end by saying "Amen". Who can tell me what "Amen" means?

Amen is Hebrew and appears in both the Old and New Testament. It is used the first time in the Book of Numbers and throughout the Bible and the Word of God end with this word. Jesus reveals to John in his revelation of what is to come, and ends by saying "He who testifies about these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'" John replies to Lord Jesus, saying, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone. Amen." (Revelation 22:21-22) Why does John end the Bible using "Amen" twice? Because of its meaning. Amen is a declaration, meaning; it is true or I believe this to be true or God and his Word are true. When you pray and end with "Amen" do you really believe in your heart it is true? When you read the Word of God and end by saying "Amen" you are pronouncing it to be true, just as John did.

With Trust

Lord, I now ask you grant us perseverance in prayer as we trust You as our Father, the Creator. Help us know in our heart of hearts you possess the only eternal truth. I declare to you Lord God – Amen!

The narrative shows a man has finished the last of his food for dinner and is settled down for the evening. A friend of his shows up after journeying for some distance and the host has nothing to offer his friend. In those days, there was no late night shopping centers, so he had no place to go buy bread. Even though he hates to go to his neighbor's house and disturb him - he hates worse the fact that he cannot offer his guest something to eat. It is now midnight and he decides he has no choice but to go to his neighbor's house and get some bread to offer to his guest. In ancient Palestine it was very offensive not to be hospitable, for hospitality was considered one of a person's highest responsibilities. It was the custom of hospitality that drove the man to wake up his neighbor at midnight to ask for food.

From behind the door, the reply comes, saying, **“Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.”** Also, in the ancient world, homes were often one to two room construction and families often slept in the same bed. For the father to rise and get bread for his needy neighbor at midnight would mean waking up his family. But the man at the door keeps knocking and requesting. We should draw a connection from last week's text where Jesus tells us to ask our heavenly Father for our daily bread and this man asking his friend for bread. The man at the door asks, **“Friend, lend me three loaves of bread.”** He is not asking to feed his guest a banquet, a loaf of bread back then was about the size of the palm of one's hand or a large stone and this is why Matthew includes Jesus saying, **“which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?”** (Matthew 7:9) Jesus makes a comparison between the loaf and a stone.

Jesus continues by telling us why the man in the house yields to the neighbor at the door who is asking for bread. Continuing in verse 8, **“I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his**

friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs." So, it was not their friendship as neighbors that made the man get up, remember he did not want to wake his family but the knocking at the door may have woken them up and certainly will if it continues. The man in the house got up because of the persistent knocking and pleading. The man at the door was shameless and bold. The man at the door was relentless and refused to leave without bread for his guest.

The Greek word is *anaideia* (an·ah·ee·die·ah), which means a little more than just being persistent. It means to press and press for a response to the degree that, you are shamelessly presumptuous. In other words, you have lost all sense of being proper or considerate and you are asking has overpowered all sense of honor and proper cultural concerns. It is like a starving person pleading and pleading for a morsel to eat. He will not go away empty handed and this is the reason the man within "will get up and give him as much as he needs."

With Expectation

As Jesus tells the parable, we may, because of our culture wondered about the relationship between these two men. In America, people drive up to their house, electronically open the garage door, drive in and close the door. Unless they make the effort, they do not have to even know who their neighbors are. When Jesus is telling this parable, everyone in a village knew each other and often were at least distantly related. This behavior was the opposite taught by Paul who said if you are a true follower of Jesus, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3) The man at the door has placed his guest not only above himself, but above his neighbor. On the other hand, Jesus explains to us that there is One who is a perfect friend to His people and place all above himself.

Unlike the man inside his house behind the door God is different, look at verse 9 with me, “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. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Jesus is saying that our attitude in prayer must be that of persistence. We too must be impudent and unrelenting and we must ask and keep asking. We must seek and keep seeking. We must knock and keep knocking. God is not like the man asleep with his children. First of all, for God there is no midnight and with God there is no reluctance in answering. He is the perfect friend. God never answers with, “Don’t bother me! The door is already locked!” The point Jesus makes is that if a man will rise at midnight and give his friend three loaves, how much more will God give to those who ask Him?

The man in the parable will not have anything to give unless his friend is benevolent towards him. Very differently, we will have nothing unless we receive it from our Heavenly Father who freely gives. God desires that we are persistent in seeking him and his will. To illustrate this there is another parable in Luke chapter 18. “Now *Jesus* told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up. ² ‘There was a judge in a certain town who didn’t fear God or respect people. ³ And a widow in that town kept coming to him, saying, “Give me justice against my adversary.”

⁴ ‘For a while he was unwilling, but later he said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or respect people, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice, so that she doesn’t wear me out by her persistent coming.”

⁶ Then the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping

them? ⁸ I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:1-8) Jesus says that even a pagan judge will be moved to vindicate a widow because of her persistent requests. How much more will God the perfect judge answer our prayers? Pursue God in prayer.

Do you really feel like that? You are lost without God; do you understand you have nothing of value unless he gives it? Do you feel you cannot move forward unless God gives you what you need? Do you feel like that? You know this story is almost the flipside of the petition, “Give us Lord our daily bread,” right? It is almost saying, “Lord, we are not going to have any daily bread unless You give it to us. Further Lord, I am not going to have any daily bread to give to somebody else unless You give it to me.” So, Jesus is saying, here is the first thing I want you to know about prayer – in prayer is you need to plead to God for without him you are hopeless. You need to plead and plead and plead. You need to appeal because you are needier than you think and your circumstances are more dire than you have contemplated and you need what only God can supply. So, do not approach prayer like the Father’s Day present conversation I have had with my children – Dad, “what do you need?” I often respond “I really do not really need anything.” My children know that is not true. We are to come to God and plead and appeal, because you are needy beyond what we or the world can supply.

With Determination

When my young grandchildren are around, they are always hungry and asking for something to eat and they can be very persistent. Jesus uses this common experience as he continues in verse 11 and 12, “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for

an egg, will give him a scorpion?” If earthly fathers are able to provide the basic need of food when their children ask, how much more will our heavenly Father grant all the needs of life. We sometimes have a problem with our concept of God as our eternal Father because of who our earthly fathers are and how they failed. Abusive earthly fathers can hurt our ability to understand our heavenly Father whose loves, disciplines and provides for his children in the right way. If this is your background; I say again go to God in prayer and persistently plead for him to change your heart and mind so you may see him as the Father who created you and loves you beyond all measure.

It is for this very reason Jesus ends with verse 13, “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?” Jesus adds a twist at the end of this story. So far, the story has been about a friend meeting the need of his visitor who arrives late at night and a son asking for food from his earthly father. In this he is telling us to seek, to pray persistently, because if your earthly father, who is a sinner gives good gifts, far more your heavenly Father will give you the greatest gift, a gift to fulfill your greatest need – your heavenly Father gives himself – he gives his children the Holy Spirit. We need to realize compared to your earthly father, your heavenly Father exceeds anything - even what a good earthly father can give, let alone an earthly father who has disappointed or failed to be the father he should be. God gives gifts – first he gave his Son that we might be reconciled back to him as his children. Now as his children, there simply is no greater gift God our Father can give us than himself in the form of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will come and indwell us and take up residence in us and when we submit and die to self, he will lead us in eternal truth, strengthen our faith and prepare us for spiritual life and battle.

With Assurance

Jesus has taught us what our prayer life should consist of. First, we are to honor God; we are to hallow His name and have no doubt God's Kingdom is coming. Second, we are to trust God to meet our physical and more importantly our spiritual needs. Third, we need to be persistent in asking God to prepare and strengthen us for the trial of this life so we cannot only endure them but experience God's peace in the midst of them. Today, we learn that asking for these things persistently will result in God answering. So, we are to understand this model and our need to persistently pray and this will lead to us seek God's will and when we pray in the will of God and ask him to provide for us – without a doubt he will.

Jesus does not teach that we can ask God for any random thing and He will grant it. Who would we consider ourselves to be if we thought we could direct God. We are to ask for his promises to come, just as Jesus came and will come again. We are to ask for God to reveal his will for our lives and to meet our needs to fulfill his will and as we seek him in this way, we will know his peace. The question before each of us is do we desire God's will or our own? Do we desire to honor God, serve God and demonstrate the glory of his name before this corrupt world enough to be persistent in prayer?

We need be praying for our spiritual growth every day. For as we grow spiritually it will enable us to live for his glory. We must pray for the salvation of our friends and family every day. Joyce prayed for my salvation for 13 years – praise God she was persistent. Never stop praying. Always ask and keep on asking. Seek and keep seeking. Knock and keep knocking. Never give up!

I love reading of the great lives of God's people. George Muller was born in Germany and educated in Wittenberg, the birth place of the Reformation launched

by Martin Luther and spend his adult life serving the Lord in England.

Muller prayed for one of his friends for over sixty years. Muller would write in one of his books titled, *Never Give Up Until the Answer Comes*, about his friend. He fully believed God would grant his unrelenting prayers. He wrote concerning his friend, “He’s not converted yet but he will be.” Muller believed and fully expected God to answer his prayer. The man was, in fact, saved but it did not happen until after Muller’s death. You see Muller believed God would answer, in God’s timing, and never gave up – he was persistent to the end of his mortal life.

We must also see from this passage that we are more needy than we have ever imagined. God’s desire is that we appeal to him as needy children. God desires that we trust him and know with certainty he will answer our prayers and we are to pray persistently until His does.

Are you praying persistently or have you given up? Trust God enough and want your requests enough to keep at it – day in and day out and he will be faithful for our heavenly Father is forever faithful. To all that Jesus taught us this day, I say, “amen and amen!”

Let us break into small groups and pray, share one thing you need to be persistent for in prayer, and pray for our needs and the needs of those we love who need Jesus as their Savior.