

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER
A Needy Friend, A Loving Father and An Open Door
Luke 11: 1-13

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I used to watch a woodworking show on PBS called “The New Yankee Workshop.” Norm Abrams was the host. If it was made from wood, Norm could build it. Tables. Chairs. Cabinets. I’d watch that show and think, “Man, wouldn’t it be awesome to spend time with Norm and have him teach me how to be a woodworker?”

I also used to watch a show on PBS called “The Joy of Painting.” In 30 minutes, Bob Ross would take a blank canvas turn it into a picturesque cabin surrounded by a bunch of happy little trees. I’d watch that show and think, “Wouldn’t it be awesome if Bob could personally walk me through a painting of my own?”

I also used to watch a show on PBS called “Austin City Limits.” Various musicians would come on and perform their songs. One of my all-time favorite singers has made 18 appearances – Willie Nelson. I watched Willie play his old, beat-up guitar and thought to myself, “Wouldn’t it be awesome if Willie could spend some time with me, molding the raw talent I clearly have for singing country music?”

Here's my point: when you grow up without cable television, you watch a lot of PBS. Just kidding. The point is that, at least for me, when I see someone who has mastered a skill, something in me wishes they were able to teach me how to do it. I’d love to build things like Norm Abrams. I’d love to paint like Bob Ross. I’d love to sing and play guitar like Willie Nelson.

Can you imagine being able to spend time with Jesus and have Him teach you how to pray? Can you imagine hearing the Son of God talk with His Father and then turn to you and say, “I’ll teach you how to do that if you want.”

Good news. You don’t have to imagine what that would be like. You CAN spend time with Him and have Him teach you how to pray like He prayed. You CAN learn to pray like Jesus. And that’s what this series is all about. We are going to the Gospels and learning how to pray by spending time with Jesus.

Last week, we looked at His teaching on the model prayer in Matthew 6 and learned a pattern for how we can pray – upward, downward, inward, and outward.

This morning, we are heading back to class for lesson number two where Jesus not only teaches us how to pray but how to cultivate a heart that will keep on praying. So, look with me at our next lesson in the School of Prayer.

Luke 11:1–13

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” 2 And he said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” 5 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, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 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’? 8 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. 9 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. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 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 begins with Jesus in prayer. That’s a common theme in the book of Luke. Over and over again, you find Jesus praying. You also find Jesus living in the power of the Holy Spirit. There’s a sort of rhythm to His life. Jesus prays and Jesus lives in the power of the Holy Spirit, accomplishing the kinds of things that only God can do.

And it seems His disciples noticed that pattern. Prayer and the power of God go together. So, in verse 1, they come to Him and ask, “Jesus, would you teach us to do that? Teach us how to pray like you.” So, like He did in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus leads them through the model prayer. We talked about that last week.

Prayer isn’t a grocery list of felt needs and physical ailments, even though it’s certainly good to pray for those things. Prayer looks upward in reverence to who God is - wanting His name to be hallowed or glorified. Prayer moves downward in a worship response to God – praising Him, thanking Him, trusting Him, and aligning your life with His Kingdom agenda and submitting to His will (rather than convincing Him to align His power with your agenda and will). Prayer moves inward to ask for God’s gracious supply for our needs according to His will. Prayer moves outward into the rest of our lives by looking to God for the grace and strength to avoid the traps of temptation and sin as we go about our lives.

Jesus says that’s how we are to pray. Not that every single prayer will include every one of those elements, but that those things will be regularly present in our lives of prayer.

Think about what is going on here. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray in the Sermon on the Mount. He uses this same model prayer. Here we are later down the road, and they ask Him to teach them pray and He gives them the same prayer.

But then He adds on verses 5-13. It’s about continuing to pray. It’s like He is saying, “You don’t just need to know how to pray. You need to know how to keep on praying.” That’s the central idea in verses 5-13.

Luke 11:9-10

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. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Jesus commands His disciples to ask, seek, and knock. In the original language of the New Testament, those commands are in the present tense. That means they are commands to do

something as a continual action. In other words, Jesus is saying, “Ask in prayer, and keep on asking. Seek God in prayer and keep on seeking. Knock on the door and keep on knocking.”

This is a call to persistent prayer. Prayer isn't a one-time or sporadic event. Prayer is like breathing. It isn't an elective part of life. It is part of what it means to be alive. When you leave the service today, hold your breath until next Sunday and see how it goes for you. If that's too hard, hold your breath from one meal to the next and breathe for 10 seconds before you eat and don't breathe again until your next meal.

Prayer is like breathing in the Christian life. It's part of what it means to be alive. So, Jesus says we should pray and keep on praying. *That's the central command of our text.*

And what Jesus does before and after that command two factors that will motivate us to pray and keep on praying:

Factor #1 - Become like the friend in need.

Factor #2 – Believe God is our Perfect Father.

Two factors that stir us to persistent prayer. And when you put them together, you get our big idea for today:

Big Idea: We will pray and keep on praying when we believe that God is our perfect Father who desires to meet our every need.

If you want to be a person of genuine passionate and persistent prayer, Jesus says there are at least two factors that need to be in place. You need to become a person like the friend in need. And you need to believe God is a perfect Father. So, let's spend the rest of our time this morning looking at those two factors of persistent prayer.

FACTOR #1 – BECOME LIKE THE FRIEND IN NEED

Luke 11:5-8

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’; 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’? 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.

The people who first heard this parable would have understood it much more clearly than most of us. Middle Eastern cultures are honor cultures where things like hospitality are tied to the honor of your family name and community. So, if your friend was traveling and needed a place to stay, you would be a disgrace to not show him hospitality.

But the host in our story has a bigger problem than being woken up by an unexpected guest. He has no food to offer his friend who is weary from traveling and providing a meal would be part of showing hospitality to his guest. So, what's he to do?

He invites his company into the house and tells him to settle in. Then he slips out the back door to get some food. But Walmart closes at midnight. He's desperate. So, he racks his brain thinking of someone who can help. A name comes to mind. It's a friend of his that is sure he has enough food to spare. So, he seeks out his friend's house and starts knocking at the door.

In the culture where Jesus was teaching, many people lived in one-room houses. The floor was made from compacted dirt, but one-third of the room had a small platform where everyone in the house would roll out their mats to sleep on at night. A lot of people would bring their chickens and goats into the house to sleep at night...sort of like they do in Kentucky.

So, a guy who finally got all of the kids and the chickens and the goats to sleep wouldn't want to have that situation disturbed. I mean, everybody hates the guy that wakes the rooster up at midnight, right?

At first, he tells his buddy to go away. But when he realizes that he isn't going to stop knocking and asking for food. It's clear that it would be easier to get up and give him some food than to get the kids and the chickens and the goats back to sleep. So, he helps the guy out. Not because of their friendship but because of the guy's shameless persistence. He's so desperate that he won't stop knocking.

And Jesus says, we have to become like the man knocking at the door or we'll never be people of passionate prayer. And what's that guy like? He's desperate.

Look again at verses 5-6:

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';

Do you see his desperation? He says, "Friend, I'm in need and (notice this phrase) I have nothing..." I have nothing. I have no options. I have no other place to go. I have nothing – except you and what you can give me. Everything I have and everything I need is on the other side of this door. Until you get to that place with God, you'll never be a person of persistent prayer.

Do you want to know why the American church isn't marked by passionate and persistent prayer? We aren't desperate for God. We think we have other options.

We have money. We have freedom. We have education. We have science. We have technology. We have jobs. We have food. We have healthcare. We have social security. We have a strong military. We have entertainment. We have a fierce sense of individuality. We have options. And our all of our so-called options keep us from living in the place of the man who relentlessly seeks out his friend and knocks at the door and refuses to go away. We don't have to resort to shameless persistence. We have other options.

Even when we pray as a nation, we largely pray for God to get us back to the place we were when we lived like we didn't need God – "help the economy to improve, help the natural disasters to be averted, help me regain my normal life – the life I lived when I lived like I wasn't desperate for you."

And we will never be marked by persistent prayer until we get to the place where we truly say, "I have nothing but You, God, and what You can give." And there are only two ways that we get to that place.

First, we can come to our senses and cultivate a spirit of desperation by acknowledging our deep need for God. We can humbly and honestly see who and what we truly are on our own, people who have nothing – no hope, no power, no inherent goodness of our own.

Nothing produces a sense of how much we need God like a high view of God. Moses encounters God at the burning bush and sees himself as completely unable to fulfill God's will for his life. Isaiah

sees God for who He is and then sees himself as the desperate man he was. This is one reason why we start our prayers by looking upward to who God is. Everything else flows from a high view of the One, True God.

Or we can wait for the unexpected guest to knock at the door of our lives.

- Cancer.
- A prodigal child.
- A dead marriage.
- Loneliness.
- Grief.
- The loss of freedom or health or jobs.

Have you noticed the way prayer becomes a priority when one of those unexpected guests arrives at our door? They don't create our need for God; they expose the need we always have for Him. The man in our story went to bed that night and didn't have anything to feed his own family the next day. The knock at the door didn't create his desperation, it exposed it. There are only two kinds of people in our world, those who are desperate for God and realize it and those who are desperate for God and don't realize it. So, do you truly sense your desperate need for God? Or have you fallen asleep in the American dream?

The first factor of passionate persevering prayer is to become like the friend in need.

FACTOR #2 – BELIEVE GOD IS OUR PERFECT FATHER

Luke 11:11-13

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? 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!"

If prayer is like a door to the throne of God, we need to become the desperate friend in need who knocks at the door because we are convinced that what we need is only found on the other side.

But Jesus says that God isn't like the man on the other side of the door in the first story. He isn't a sleepy, reluctant friend. He is a perfect, loving Father. When you place your faith and trust in Jesus, He radically transforms your relationship with God.

John 1:12

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus is the door to the presence of God our Father. That door is opened wide to any and all who will trust Him as their Lord and Savior. As you trust in Him, the Father's arms are opened wide to receive you with the same love He has for Jesus.

He is eager to give good gifts to His children when they ask. Sinful fathers don't give their kids serpents or scorpions to their kids. We don't give our children things that aren't good for them. And God is infinitely better than us. We can be confident that He will give good gifts and only good gifts to His kids.

Persistent prayer isn't just desperate for God; persistent prayer is confident in God.

HE WILL GIVE US WHAT IS BEST.

And this is critical for understanding what Jesus is promising here. Jesus isn't saying that God is our cosmic butler who does whatever we tell Him to do. He's better than that. He knows what is best and gives us what is best when we come to Him in prayer.

That's one of the reasons God tells us "No" in prayer. He won't settle for what we think is good. He's committed to what He knows is best.

Just think of the Apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12, he gives us his personal testimony. He had some sort of physical affliction and prayed for God to heal him. He prayed over and over again. But what did the Father do?

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God didn't answer Paul's prayer for something good because God wanted to give him what was best. He knew that Paul's weakness would keep him in a place of dependance on the power of God. Paul didn't know it, but he was asking for something good and God wanted to give Him what is best.

That's the heart of confidence in God. It's not just confidence that God has the power to do something great. It's confidence that God's love compels Him to always to what is best.

And what is the best Gift the Father wants to give us? Look at verse 13.

Luke 11:13

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!"

The best gift God can give us is God. And that's exactly what He will do for those who come to Him and keep coming to Him in prayer. He will pour out the power of the Holy Spirit into your life – which is how you experience the very life of Christ in you.

- What's better than getting a new job? Having the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain you with joy in your current job.
- What's better than freedom? Having the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain you with joy in persecution.
- What's better than having your political party in office? Having the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain you with joy when a tyrant is on the throne.
- What's better than healing? Having the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain you with joy in suffering.
- What's better than living a long life of ease and luxury in the American Dream? Having the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain you in the darkness of this age and ultimately transport you to the eternal joy of Heaven.

So, make that your prayer. Ask Him for healing. Ask Him for provision. Ask Him for protection. But above and beyond all of that, ask Him for the power of the Holy Spirit and be confident that He hears your prayers as your loving heavenly Father. Believe that He won't just give you something good when He knows exactly what is best.

Are you a child of God? Are you aware of your need for God? Pray for a spirit of Humble desperation before the Lord, "Apart from you, I can do nothing"

Are you confident of your Father's love? What place of need will you bring to God the Father today? Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit.

Upward (reverence) – God is our Perfect Heavenly for anyone willing to trust in Jesus. He is our Sovereign God who knows what is best and desires to give what is best to you

Downward (response) – If you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, do that right now. If you are a follower of Christ, thank Him for this truth, yield to His will (Father, help me trust you know what is best)

Inward – What are the requests you would bring to your Father and ask Him to work within?

Outward – Pray that the Father would guard your heart from unbelief in the places He hasn't answered your prayers the way you would want. Pray for strength and discipline to pray and keep on praying this week.