

PRAY BOLDLY
LUKE 11:5-13

We have seen how prayer is a central theme in Luke's gospel — he talks about prayer and shows Jesus in prayer more than any other gospel writer:

- ✓ Jesus prayed at His baptism (3:21)
- ✓ While the crowds pressed in on Him, He would often slip away to pray (5:16)
- ✓ Before choosing the Twelve disciples, He spent an entire night in prayer (6:12)
- ✓ He instructed on prayer — even teaching to pray radically (for enemies and persecutors, 6:28), not to be discouraged in prayer (18:1ff), and to pray to avoid temptation (21:36ff; 22:40, 46)
- ✓ He took the disciples with Him to pray (9:28-29)
- ✓ He prayed specifically for Simon Peter and the perseverance of his faith (22:32)
- ✓ He prayed before the trial of the cross (22:41ff)
- ✓ And His praying led to questions from the disciples about prayer more than once (9:18; 11:1)

Luke is a book of prayer, demonstrating Jesus as a man of prayer. Throughout the book, Luke is revealing the Son of Man as dependent on prayer and **showing us how to pray**. And all this discussion of prayer exposes our own weakness in prayer, faltering in prayer, and lack of persistence in prayer (just like the disciples who fell asleep in prayer at the most critical hour of Jesus' ministry).

So this morning we are going to listen in one more time as Jesus responds to the disciples' request that He teach them how to pray (11:1). He has already taught us about the content of prayer (vv. 2-4). In this passage, Jesus now teaches about the attitude of the petitioner — *how* should we pray, and what should our inner disposition be as we approach God in prayer? In two stories, Jesus has a simple answer —

YOU HAVE ACCESS TO GOD THE FATHER. PRAY BOLDLY.

In order to encourage (exhort/command) His disciples to pray with boldness, He **tells two stories** (parables) and draws two conclusions:

- 1. A Story to Compel Boldness in Praying (vv. 5-8)**
- 2. A Command to Compel Boldness in Praying (vv. 9-10)**
- 3. A Story to Reveal Compassion for Petitioners (vv. 11-12)**
- 4. A Promise to Compel Trust in Petitioners (v. 13)**

1. A Story to Compel Boldness in Praying (vv. 5-8)

- **The parable is common** and simple — it's about friendship, hospitality, and needs
 - ✓ Jesus offers a parable — **suppose one of you has a friend**. It's a story, but it is personal and Jesus is involving them in the story, appealing to them to personalize the story (it is also an invitation to us).
 - ✓ Notice that the story focuses on the idea of friendship and hospitality (and responsibility). **Friend** is mentioned 4x. Friendship has duties and one friend seeks another friend's help to fulfill those duties.
 - ✓ We might think it unusual to show up at someone's house with a request for food at **midnight**:
 - While not typical, it was not unusual to travel at night to avoid the heat of the day.
 - It was typical that someone might show up unannounced because of limited communication.
 - When someone showed up and had a need, hospitality conventions meant one had to respond.
 - The lack of bread (**I have nothing**, v. 6) in his house for the traveler would also have been typical — there were limited shops (none open at midnight) and most people baked their own bread each day — and generally only enough for that day. You wouldn't expect him to have bread at night.
 - ✓ So friend 1 goes to friend 2 to borrow **three loaves** (he will bring back three loaves another day).
 - We don't know the size of the loaves — the word is used both for "biscuit" (9:13) and larger loaf that might feed someone for an entire day (11:3).
 - Probably he asks for three to make sure that he has enough to satisfy the hungry traveler.
 - So when friend 1 arrives at the door of friend 2 he is imposing on him both with the request for bread as well as the timing of the request.
 - ✓ The response of friend 2 is reasonable —
 - **"Do not bother me"** — "Stop bothering me..." — suggesting repeated knocks and perhaps friend 2 ignored the first few knocks and requests. Friend 2 isn't being rude — he's simply reminding friend 1 that it's an awkward request. "Please don't make me get up because..."
 - **"Door has already been shut"** — i.e., it has been bolted closed; it was probably a simple one-room house and the parents and children were on mats on the floor and to get to the door and open it will require having children move out of the way, so they will be awakened ("don't wake a sleeping baby!"). Ironically, he must also follow the same rules of hospitality and provide...
 - **"I cannot get up and give you anything"** — Friend 1 might have asked what we might ask in a similar situation — "You can't? Or you won't?" He won't. It's a tremendous imposition.
 - If it wasn't such an awkward situation, it would be humorous (but in the moment it's not funny).
- **Jesus interprets the parable** for us (v. 8).
 - ✓ Friendship isn't enough to make friend 2 act. **He will not get up...** That's already been made clear.
 - ✓ But he does get up and provide for friend 1 — why? **Because of his persistence...**

- This is the only place this word appears and it has been translated several different ways.
 - The root has the sense of “without shame” or “shameless,” which some interp. as “persistent.”
 - The NASB, LSB, and NKJV have “persistence” but ESV translates it “impudence,” the NIV has “shameless audacity,” and CSB17 has “shameless boldness.”
 - The idea of shameless boldness seems best — friend 1 is not ashamed of the request (he has a genuine need and responsibility) and he is unafraid to boldly ask.
 - Davis says, “His shamelessness appears as rudeness, or nerve, gall, or chutzpah.” And it is that boldness that leads friend 2 to answer his request and meet his need.
- The story is a parable — and Jesus wants us to focus on the one making the request. It is not about the one who provides (don’t equate friend 2 with God and suppose that God is a reluctant provider).
 - ✓ We are meant to think, “if an ungodly man will respond to the need of a friend, how much more will our heavenly Father respond to our needs?”
 - ✓ Even more we are meant to contemplate the way we ask for our needs: are we bold in asking God?
 - ✓ Are we prone to be hesitant to ask God for help?
 - Maybe we think, “He’s really busy and has a lot on His plate...”
 - Or, “This is not really that important; I don’t want Him to laugh at my request.”
 - Or, “I really don’t need help with this; I can handle it...”
 - ✓ We have been invited (commanded, v. 2) to go to the Father for help. Go with boldness. Ask.
 - “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16)
 - “O You who hear prayer, To You all men come.” (Ps. 65:2) — He is a prayer-hearing God.
 - ✓ “The lesson is clear. We must not play at prayer, but must show persistence if we do not receive the answer immediately. It is not that God is unwilling and must be pressed into answering. The whole context makes it clear that he is eager to give. But if we do not want what we are asking for enough to be persistent, we do not want it very much. It is not such tepid prayer that is answered.” [Morris]
 - ✓ There is one point to this story — be bold. Ask audaciously. Pray persistently. Show up shamelessly.
 - ✓ Our boldness should relate to all our requests, but perhaps we should think particularly of the context of Jesus’ teaching (vv. 2-4) — our daily needs (food, shelter, job, etc.), forgiveness for our repentance, and strength and transformation for our temptations. *He wants us to come for help.*

2. A Command to Compel Boldness in Praying (vv. 9-10) — He is the God who always hears and answers

- To reinforce the point of the parable, Jesus teaches directly (*so I say to you...*) about bold praying in vv. 9-10. He uses three words to indicate **how we are to ask** (and they intensify and get stronger). All the words are imperatives — commands and invitations and all present tenses (keep on...):
 - ✓ **Ask** is the basic command to pray (the most general word for prayer in the NT).

- ✓ **Seek** is not just seeking what we want, but seeking Him and His will (Dt. 4:29; Ps. 27:8; 105:4).
- ✓ **Knock** pictures coming into His presence in fellowship — we want *Him*, not just the answer (Rev. 3:20).
- ✓ While there are nuances to these words, there is also a sense in these three words are saying the same things: keep asking Your Father for your needs boldly. Parents often say to their children (even adult children): “I’m your father — I love you, talk to me, let me help you...” How much more true that is of our relationship with our Father. He is the infinitely reliable Father.
- The **Father** doesn’t want to only hear our requests; He loves to answer and provide. **How He provides:**
 - ✓ **It will be given** — while Jesus doesn’t specify *who* will give, we understand it to be the Father (vv. 2, 13). God is the source of the provision; He does not withhold from His children (Ps. 103:13).
 - ✓ **You will find** — A favorite game of children is hide-n-seek. When our girls were little, they would love to play and when I was hiding I was known to move from my original hiding spot to another place they had just searched before allowing myself to eventually be discovered. That’s not the nature of God. He doesn’t sneakily hide Himself from us so He is undiscoverable. He loves to be found. So when there are delays to our answers (even long ones), it simply means “It’s not time yet,” or “I have something better for you.” “At the right time, you will find your answer.”
 - ✓ **It will be opened** — The “door” to your request might seem closed (no answer) but it will not remain closed; it will open and there will be fellowship with Him (even without your answer). If I have Him, I don’t need to have the answer I want; He is enough for me (an important lesson to learn).
 - ✓ And then to reinforce what He has just said, Jesus says it again in virtually identical terms (v. 10).
 - ✓ The one major difference is that He adds **everyone** — no one is excluded from this promise. Whoever asks, seeks, and knocks, the Father will answer.
 - I said that no one is excluded — we should qualify that to say, “No one who is God’s child...”
 - If God is not your Father, then you will be excluded; the Lord does not hear/heed requests from those who don’t love Him (Ps. 66:18).
 - So if you want Him to hear your prayers, then ask Him first for salvation through Christ — repent of your sins and believe that Christ died for those sons so you can become His child.
- In summary, when you have a need, go to God with that need. Ask. Seek Him. Knock for fellowship.
 - ✓ Whatever your need is, whenever you have a need, ask Him. Go boldly (you are a son).
 - ✓ We have a propensity not to pray and when we do pray we have a propensity to give up praying. We seek our safety and provision in food and drink and entertainment and distraction and in hard work and in laziness. Jesus reminds us to find our refuge, safety, and provision in prayer. Pray, and be persistent and bold in that praying.

3. A Story to Reveal Compassion for Petitioners (vv. 11-12)

- Do you ever wonder if you can trust God to provide? Do you ever wonder if He cares for you? Jesus addresses those kinds of questions by reminding us of God's nature and character — His compassion.
 - ✓ Jesus begins similarly to v. 5 by saying, **Now suppose...** He is giving a hypothetical story, but as in **v. 5**, He wants His hearers to engage in the story and use it for self-examination.
 - ✓ The parable is common and simple — a hungry **son** asks his **father** for **fish** (basic food staple).
 - ✓ Would that father give him a **snake**?
 - The suggestion is that instead of meeting a need, would a father do something harmful?
 - The idea is ludicrous — “No — of course not.” When the child has a legitimate need (fish for a meal), a father who is attentive to his role as a father would not give the child something that would harm him. There *are* fathers who mistreat their children, but all (including unbelievers) would say that they have abdicated their role as a father in harming their children.
- Jesus uses a slightly different analogy to repeat the principle in **v. 12** —
 - ✓ If the hungry child asked for an **egg**, the father wouldn't **give him a scorpion**, would he?
 - ✓ A father isn't mean, vindictive, and deceitful to harm a needy child.
 - ✓ No one would do that — people are not cruel and God is (infinitely) less so.
 - ✓ God is *incapable* of cruelty. He is the infinite Father; wherever there is goodness in an earthly father, it comes from the image of the heavenly Father.
- Christ uses these brief parables to reinforce the truth about the nature and character of God as Father.
 - ✓ God is infinitely compassionate on His children (**Ps. 103:13**) — even when we sin (**v. 12**), and even when we demonstrate our human weakness and frailty (**v. 14**).
 - ✓ His loyal love is eternal — from everlasting to everlasting (**v. 17**).
 - ✓ God rules over all with compassionate sovereignty (**v. 19**).
 - ✓ John Flavel summarized it well — “Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more tender of you than you are, or can be, of yourself.” Dane Ortlund added: “Your gentlest treatment of yourself is less gentle than the way your heavenly Father handles you. His tenderness toward you outstrips what you are even capable of toward yourself.”
 - ✓ He is your compassionate Father — go to Him with boldness...

4. A Promise to Compel Trust in Petitioners (v. 13)

- Jesus reinforces the obvious point — **if you then...** If we can be compassionate, then how much more...
 - ✓ Some wonder about or object to the language **if you...being evil**. What did Jesus mean?
 - The verb means “to be” or “exist.” Jesus is pointing to the nature of the individual — all men have a sin nature and are inherently unrighteous. He is not saying that a human father is as evil

as he could be, but simply that no man possesses inherent righteousness.

- Notice also that He is making a comparison between lesser and greater people: even unregenerate men know how to do kind things for their children. If they do kind things, then the kindness that comes from the **heavenly Father** is infinitely and unfathomably greater.
- He is emphasizing the complete, total, utter reliability of God as Father. He can be trusted to be compassionate and caring in His responses to our needs. He cannot and will not harm.
- ✓ It is a reminder that God does not withhold good from those who walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11).
- ✓ And Jesus emphasizes the trustworthiness of God by calling Him **heavenly Father**. He says *heavenly* to distinguish from earthly. It is not just a reference to His location but His transcendence. He is sovereign Master over all things and does all things rightly. He will accomplish His purposes and all His purposes are right.
- ✓ Because of our finiteness we might wonder about the answer or timing, but those questions must always be secondary to the bedrock truth that our Father is **heavenly** and right and good.
- Because He is the Father in Heaven, He will **give...to those who ask Him**.
 - ✓ We can come and ask Him and He will give what we need. It will always be best.
 - ✓ And as a promise that He will give us what is best, Jesus says He will **give the Holy Spirit**.
 - ✓ What does that mean? It means He gives *Himself* (remember the seek and knock requests?).
 - ✓ To give the Holy Spirit is to give *the Spirit of God* and *the Spirit of Christ*. We come asking for a meal or money for a car payment or forgiveness of sin — and He gives us Himself.
 - And giving us the Spirit He also gives the wisdom of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12ff), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22ff), the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12), and the Word of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).
 - And with the Spirit then also comes the transforming work of the Spirit in our needs; He sanctifies and transforms us, which is an even greater gift than the provision of our requests.
 - And we have the fellowship of the Godhead walking with us in our needs (Heb. 13:5b-6).
 - ✓ When we receive the Spirit the Father gives us something far greater than what we have asked.
 - ✓ And if He will give the greater (Himself), He will give the lesser (our request and need).

“To those who ask for a gift, He gives the giver; to those who ask for an effect, He gives the cause; to those who ask for a product He gives the source; to those seeking comfort He gives the comforter (Acts 9:31); to those seeking power He gives the source of power (Acts 1:8); to those seeking help He gives the helper (John 14:26); to those seeking truth He gives the Spirit of truth (John 16:13); to those seeking “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23) He gives the producer of all those things. The indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14) is the source of every good thing in the Christian’s life (Eph. 3:20).” [MacArthur]

- You and I have needs. And because of Christ, we have access to the Father, which enables us to ask boldly, and we have the Spirit, which is the assurance that He will give all that we need.

CONCLUSION: Prayer —

We come to You in prayer as our Father. You are our Father because You have loved us, You have sent Your Son to die for our sins, You have adopted us as Your children, You look at us like You look at Your beloved Son, Jesus, with His righteousness, You have granted to us all the blessings of Heaven — especially fellowship with You in Your Triunity, and You invite us to come to You with our needs.

We have failed to understand the riches of what You have granted to us. We pray for ordinary needs and as a downpayment of the promise of fulfillment, You give us Yourself. We ask for needs and You give generously; we seek needs and You reveal Yourself; we knock on the door of Heaven and You invite us in to have fellowship with You. We have ask for small and ordinary things and You have given us the greatest thing — intimacy and fellowship with You. We have been concerned for food and shelter and You have graced us with Yourself and all that comes in being in Your family.

And because of our fellowship, You don't just invite, but You instruct and command us to come to You and pray with boldness, with confidence, and with lack of shame for who we are and for our requests. Once we did have shame, but because of Christ we no longer are ashamed; we thank You that You accept us as You do Him and there is no more shame in our coming to You with needs than there was in Christ praying to You.

So we ask forgiveness for weak praying. There are many reasons we don't pray. Sometimes we are ashamed of our sin and afraid to presume on Your fellowship and love, forgetting that You are our Father who delights in our prayers. Other times we have thought that You are more concerned with other burdens and that ours are inconsequential, as if the infinite God has limits on His compassion and ability to attend to needs ("who are we to ask something so trivial from You?"). Still other times we assume that we have ability to provide for ourselves, forgetting our finiteness and dependence. And maybe worst of all, perhaps we haven't really believed You would answer; sometimes we have believed You were unable to change our circumstances and other times we have thought You didn't care about us. In all these ways and more we have neglected to come to You and to ask boldly for the unending needs we have. We confess our actions as sinful, we repent and seek transformation, and ask that You would be gracious and forgive us.

Now Lord, we come and ask for our needs. We ask with confidence that You care and will answer. And we ask not just for the particular needs, but we pray ask even more for You — we want fellowship with You. And as we think about and ask for our needs, we think about the categories that Christ have given us:

- ✓ *We pray for our daily bread and daily needs.* We ask for the food we will eat today, for jobs that will provide for our food, for transportation to get us to our jobs, and faithfulness to work diligently. And make us mindful not only of our needs, but also the needs of our brothers. Help us to see the

needs of others and be faithful to intercede to You for them. Might we evidence selflessness and sacrifice in being faithful pray-ers for others.

- ✓ *We pray for the forgiveness of our sins.* Even this day we have had wayward thoughts that have dishonored You and drawn our attention from You, we have been anxious, we have coveted, we have grumbled and been discontent, we have spoken with a lack of grace. And we have not only cultivated sin in our hearts, but we have also acted in sinful ways. Would you forgive us and restore the joy of our salvation and fellowship with You to us?
- ✓ *We pray that You would keep us from temptation and sin,* so that we don't need to confess as often. Help us to see sin and its temptations for what it is. Keep us from being blinded by the delusions of our enemy and the world; keep us attentive and watchful for every kind of temptation; give us vigilance to guard our hearts. And make us attentive to You in prayer so that temptations will not be attractive to us.

And in all these things we long to enjoy Your fellowship and pray with boldness and confidence to You. Might we grow more faithful in praying always, and as we always pray might our fellowship with You be deepened and our prayers emboldened.

You are a good and gracious Father. Thank You for hearing our prayers. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

BENEDICTION: Ephesians 3:20-21