

How Much More Will the Heavenly Father Give
Luke 11:1-13
August 8, 2021
Rev. Dave Dorst
CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 11:1-13

"(Jesus) said, 'Blessed (rather) are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:28)

Introduction

There's a question that I've seen asked in interviews: "Who is the most famous person in your phone?" Lesser-known celebrities are asked about the A-listers that they know well enough to have their numbers, and then they gush that they have Beyonce or some other person's number that was more famous than them. The only "famous" people I know are "Christian famous," not exactly household names. But I've read about people who somehow get ahold of a celebrity's cell phone and suddenly they have all these other famous people's numbers. Human nature being what it is, we think it's pretty cool to be able to contact people who are normally untouchable. Imagine the elites of society just being a few buttons away. Imagine having professional athletes, actors, and musicians on your speed dial – if you need anything you just call them up and ask their advice. As we turn to our passage, the first 13 verses of Luke 11, we'll be reminded that we have something way better than that. The most powerful Being in the universe, the One who created you and everything around you, the One who knows every secret and every detail of every particle in the galaxy, the strongest force, the true source of goodness and truth – you can call Him anytime day or night, with any problem big or small. You don't even have to stammer around - "I'm Dave, uh, I'm a big fan of your work..." because He knows you and He loves to take your call.

Let's look in-depth at Jesus' instructions to His disciples on how to make that call to our Heavenly Father; how to pray. Jesus gave His followers the greenlight to call on the Father early and often. My main idea this morning is this: **Persevering in prayer shows that we know God and we trust Him to answer and provide.** In the first four verses of Luke 11, we are reminded of the familiar **I. Pattern for Prayer (vv. 1-4)**

¹ 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."

If you want to learn how to do something, you go to an expert, right? The disciples wanted to learn how to pray, so they went to Jesus, God Himself. That's like someone applying for a job getting to talk to the CEO of the company who gives them all the information they need to interview perfectly and land the job. Now, we certainly don't need to be restricted to these words (in Matthew's version, Jesus says, "*Pray like this*"). But what I'm going to drive at today is that we see the Lord's prayer as a model, a structure, or a skeleton. It's scaffolding that we're supposed to build our prayers around. Each phrase of the prayer gives us an area that we can expand upon. There are certainly times, particularly when we are in corporate worship, when we just pray the prayer itself. But private prayer can be, and should be, expanded.

There are 2 halves to this prayer: the Your and the Our parts. **First half of the prayer: Your.** It's so important to start with God; we are such self-centered creatures that we risk spending all our time on ourselves, missing the main point of prayer – coming to God, communing with Him, praising

Him, and getting a greater sense of who He is. This part of the prayer is actually the part that's hardest and the most neglected; often we treat it as the prologue; get through it quickly so that we can get to telling God what we want. But this has the opportunity to be the most formative part. Tim Keller tells the story of a woman who came to him saying that when she would pray and tell God her problems, she was still so anxious and upset by them. But finally she decided to spend 80% of her prayer time in adoration. And she said, "I suddenly realized the reason I worried and got upset and scared was because I didn't realize how great He was, and by the time I thought about His greatness and His wisdom and all He has done for me, when I got to the time of petition, I just said, 'Why am I worried? Here. Take it.'"¹ When we start with God's glory and His character, it casts a shadow over the smaller things in our lives, it gives everything else context.

God is only referred to as Father 14 times in the entire Old Testament, and every time it's in reference to the nation, not to an individual. God was Israel's Father, but the OT saints did not call Him "my Father." Jesus came and changed that!² Jesus says that if you believe in Him, then His Father is your Father! We have the privilege to call Him Father because we are His adopted sons. You have the same legal standing and family relation to God the Father as Jesus the Son does. You are not entering into the throne room by right, you are entering by privilege, on the basis of God's covenant love through Christ.³

Those whose fathers were absent or worse, were abusive, may have a hard time with identifying God as Father. But I would encourage anyone who feels that way to picture what they wish their father had been like, and to ground their understanding of God in that. And anything you come up with in your imagination will still fall far short because God is greater; He is the perfect Father.

When we say "*hallowed be your name*", it's more than just keeping the 3rd commandment ("*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*"). It's more than just His name - I Am or Yahweh or God or Lord or Jesus. It's His whole character, His person, His authority. So when we sing "Your Name Is Holy" or "Glorify Your Name", it's not just His name we're praising, we're saying everything about Him is holy, set-apart, perfect; we glorify Your person, your total being. The Greek word that the ESV translates as "hallowed" has a root word (*hagiadzo*) which can also mean "consecrate, sanctify, dedicate, reverence or purify." Those are all pretty religious, theological sounding words, but you get the point. This is the place in the prayer where you offer adoration, where you tell God how great He is, you list and ponder His amazing qualities. Not because He is a needy God, but because we forget and we live as though He isn't great and powerful. When we praise Him, we remember and we do what we were created to do and will continue to do for all eternity.

"*Your kingdom come*" is a prayer for God's work on earth. God's Kingdom is not a geographic region or a system of government, it is His rule and authority over creation. This is a two-fold request: a prayer for the now that God would work through His people and His church; and a prayer for the not yet - for the end to come, and for God to establish His eternal kingdom. When I pray this prayer, I use this time to pray for our church, for ministries I know of, for God to be working to heal and save. The more the church and individual Christians act out the mission of God to teach and live the Gospel, the more earth becomes like heaven. We need to petition God to save people because we

¹ Tim Keller's sermon "How To Prayer" from May 6, 1990. *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know The Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), p. 415.

³ Ligon Duncan's sermon "True Religion: Prayer & Forgiveness" at www.fpcjackson.org.

can't change an unbeliever's heart, only He can. We can't make revival and true church growth happen, He can. Even as He uses us as His means, we ask Him to accomplish kingdom work.

To pray for the kingdom to come is not to wish that Jesus would get us out of here as quickly as possible, but that His beauty and truth would reign here. And we're praying that God's kingdom will take the place of our kingdoms. We are asking God to set things right, to push back all that harms and destroys, and to save all creation.

We're all used to adding "*Your will be done*" after this, because Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer has that. But praying "*Your kingdom come*" essentially includes "*Your will be done*," just as later on when Luke has only included "*lead us not into temptation*" but that implies the Matthew phrase of "*deliver us from evil*."⁴ Jesus most likely taught this prayer on multiple occasions, or Luke just desired to have the more compact version. But we cover the same ground.

The 2nd half of the prayer, the "Our" section, contains 3 Requests: Provision, Pardon, Protection.

Provision: "*Give us each day our daily bread.*" With our Costco-sized groceries and stuffed pantries, sometimes it's hard for us to empathize with asking for our daily bread. And yet, for the majority of people on this planet that is still a very real prayer. The early church fathers could not accept that this was about literal bread or physical things; this must be about spiritual food. Calvin called that absurd, Luther said it meant all the necessities of life: food, a healthy body, homes, spouses, children, good government, peace; necessities, not luxuries. Bring these requests before God.

Pardon: "*Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*"

I used to wonder: why do we have to keep asking for forgiveness? I was taught, and I still believe, that it's good Biblical doctrine that when you are saved by Christ's redeeming death that all of your sins (past, present and future) are forgiven. So why do you have to keep asking? Well, there is a difference between being forgiven by God in a court room/legal sense and being forgiven by Him in the family room. I think this is the key to these verses. On the face of it, it sounds like our salvation is linked, or dependent, on us forgiving other people. But we need to separate this from salvation - you are forgiven of your sins in a saving way only through the atoning work of Christ. But now that we're Christians, we still deal with God the Father and ask for daily forgiveness to clear our relationship with Him. So this is the part of the prayer where we confess our sins by name, ask for the Lord's ongoing forgiveness, for the ability to turn away from our sins and change; as well as the grace and ability to forgive others. If we cannot forgive others, it's either because we've never received God's love and salvation in the first place, or because we have lost sight of all that we have been forgiven. You've heard the phrase "hurt people hurt people"? Well, "forgiven people forgive people."

Protection: "*And lead us not into temptation.*" God leading us into temptation doesn't seem possible since James 1:13 says, "*Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*" I think that we need to understand this more along the lines of "don't abandon us in temptation." It's best understood with 1 Corinthians 10:13b - "*God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*" I don't know about you, but it's really easy for me to ask for deliverance from evil and temptation, but then not to take God's escape routes. I hang around temptation, I let my thoughts linger on my favorite sins.

⁴ Hughes, p. 414.

We've got to stop that- pray this prayer and use God's power to remove ourselves from tempting situations. We don't pray "bring on temptation" while puffing out our chests trying to be heroes; we modestly pray for protection and guidance.

Having analyzed Jesus' prayer, we need to remember that just having a pattern for prayer won't necessarily make us effective. We must have determination and perseverance.

II. Persistence in Prayer (vv. 5-10)

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.

Two things to remember about the culture in Jesus' day: 1) hospitality was a really big deal, and 2) there were no convenience stores and the markets of the city were obviously closed well before midnight. This man had no bread left from the day when his friend showed up unexpectedly at his door. So not only was he embarrassed that he couldn't be a good host, but he now leaned on his neighbor to show good hospitality to bail him out.

Have you ever heard the phrase "your lack of planning does not constitute an emergency for me." It seems like that is the initial feeling of the man who is being imposed upon – "we're all asleep and done for the night. I'm not helping you, go away." But he gets up and gets him bread anyways not because of their friendship, but because of one word: *anaideian* in Greek. The ESV translates that word in verse 8 as "impudence," it can also mean persistence, perseverance, boldness, even shamelessness. We would say he had a lot of nerve. Most of us like to beat around the bush, hint at our needs, but we're too reluctant to actually come right out and say what we want. Jesus is telling us that God expects us to be bold, even shameless, in prayer. Hebrews 4:16 – "*Let us then with confidence (or boldness) draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Now, I'm not saying that the neighbor in the parable is an exact picture of God; it's not that He gets annoyed when we ask Him for things. God doesn't need to be pressured or exasperated so much that He has no choice but to give in so we'll shut up. That's not what Jesus is saying. It's the idea that if your inconvenienced neighbor can be persuaded to help you, how much more will your Heavenly Father hear you? Prayer is not trying to get things from God that He doesn't want to give, it's God's way of seeing if we will admit our need and acknowledge He is the giver of all good things.

James 4:2b says, "*You do not have because you do not ask.*" Ask, seek, and knock in verses 9-10 are continuous verbs; they're not done once, they're done multiple times – keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. We don't say, "I asked God for that and it didn't happen, so I gave up." No, we persevere. If you are unwilling to persevere, it reveals something about you or your prayer subject: either the thing you are praying about does not matter enough or you don't have enough faith that God will grant your prayer. I've prayed for certain people that I've known to come to faith in Jesus. But it's an every once-in-a-while, only when I'm thinking about them, kind of prayer. It's not a persistent, constant prayer. So that tells me that 1) I am not bothered on a constant basis that this people I know might be lost for eternity, and 2) I don't really have a ton of faith that God will

save them. I won't usually admit those things out loud, but if I'm not praying persistently, then that's what I actually believe. I pray that He would change my heart in both of those areas so that I would be more faithful in prayer.

The last three verses reflect on the character of the One that we petition in prayer.

III. God Answers Prayer (vv. 11-13)

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!"

Jesus was saying that most fathers would not answer their children's simple requests with dangerous, harmful things. Both of my earthly dads - my father and my father-in-law - are unbelievably generous and would give you the shirt off their backs and lavish me and my family with such good gifts. I love to give my children gifts that they'll enjoy (Milwaukee Bucks game story). But Jesus says that earthly Fathers are not perfect; He actually uses the word "evil," not because we're as terrible as we could be, but because the very nature of humanity is bent towards evil and selfishness. Any comparison to God the Father shows how far we fall short. If we evil fathers give good gifts, our perfect heavenly Father gives the best gifts. He is greater in every area! Romans 8:32 teaches us that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is a reminder, a sign, that God is a generous God: "*He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"*

We don't twist this idea and join the prosperity preachers and say, "God has to give us anything we ask for." James 4:3 - "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*" On the contrary, notice what God the Father's favorite gift to give to those who ask is (verse 13): the Holy Spirit. That is the greatest gift we could get. We may think we want possessions, health, friends, rewarding lives, all kinds of material, tangible things. And there's no shame in asking for those. But our greatest need is to have the Holy Spirit inside of us moving us to be stronger spiritually. Think about what Jesus is saying: the Son is promising that the Father will give the Spirit to those whom the Three of them have lavished Their love upon and adopted into Their family. The Spirit will work all good things in us: the conviction of our sin, the assurance of our pardon, the gift of faith, the miracle of salvation and spiritual adoption, gifts for ministry, and the ongoing work of victory over our sin.⁵

Conclusion

Maybe you're like me and you struggle to pray. We have external reasons and rationalizations - I'm too busy, but I pray more than that guy does, I should be covered fine. But your internal reasons are stronger and more troublesome - you're not actually convinced that prayer works (or you'd do it!). Maybe your doubts sound something like this - this is an actual letter that an atheist father wrote to his Christian son that was published in a book called *Letters From a Skeptic*:

"I don't see that prayer ever works. Not only this, but I don't see how prayer ever could work. If God is all-good and all-powerful, and concerned about us, doesn't He already want the best for us? And so wouldn't He already be doing as much as He can ever do for us? So what are you asking for in prayer? For Him to care more? He supposedly already cares as much as He could. Are you asking Him to do more? He's supposedly already doing everything He can. Are you informing Him of some problem so He'll do something about it? He supposedly already knows

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, Vol. 1* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2011), p. 592.

everything. So you can't inform Him about anything, you can't coax Him to do anything, and you can't empower Him to do anything. So what the heck are you doing when you pray? The whole thing seems like a total waste of time to me."⁶

How's that for some blunt honesty? Is prayer just a waste of time? Will God really change? There's a sense that everything in the Lord's Prayer is going to happen, whether or not you pray it. God is going to be praised, His kingdom will come, His will will be done, He will provide, forgive and protect His children. I guess the question is how much do you want to participate in, and benefit from, those things? There is a mysterious interaction between God's ordained, predetermined actions and our prayers and choices. I'm not going to solve all your questions and problems with how God's sovereignty interacts with our wills, but the short answer is: that even though He has ordained all things to pass and He is the first cause of all things, He gives us the freedom to make choices that have consequences, good and bad. And He wants us to come to Him in prayer with the knowledge that our prayers will change things. We may not always get the answer we want; God is free to say "Yes" "No" or "Wait." But He tells us to come, to talk to Him. He wants to conform us to the likeness of Christ so that we will pray in His will.

As the old song says, "What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." It's a privilege to sit at our Father's feet and tell Him about our lives, and to ask Him to further the things that will glorify Himself and that will sanctify us. Jesus says that His Heavenly Father is the most loving, generous Father you could ever have. Do you believe it? If you do, then approach the throne of grace with confidence.

➔ Transition to communion

Benediction

Ephesians 6:23-24 - *"Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible."*

⁶ Gregory and Edward Boyd, *Letters From A Skeptic* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), p. 79.