

Bible Study Guide: Week of 7-18-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 11:1-13

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”² 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 indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”⁵ And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread;’⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’⁷ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.⁹ “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish?¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give 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!”

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Luke, more than the other three Evangelists, emphasizes Jesus’ practice of prayer. Here, upon finishing one such time of prayer, a disciple asked Jesus for instruction on prayer. Just as today there are certain set prayers (think, for instance, of the childhood favorite “God is Great, God is Good...” or the common table prayer “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest...” so in Jesus’ day there were apparently set prayers for different occasions and times of day. Apparently, John the Baptist had taught at least one such prayer form to his followers. In the same way, this disciple of Jesus wants Jesus to instruct them on how they are to pray.

²He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

The so-called “Lord’s Prayer” is most familiar to us through our use of it in our Liturgy. The version we most often use as the basis for our Liturgical prayer is Matthew’s version (see Matthew 6:9-13). Luke’s version is certainly recognizable as the same basic prayer, though it is missing a few petitions and the wording is somewhat different. Still, the sentiment of the prayer remains the same. We are instructed to pray to God as “Father”—*Abba*—in Aramaic. This is a term of familial intimacy similar to the English “papa” or “daddy.” Addressing God in this personal and informal way would have been somewhat uncommon among Jewish prayers of the time.

Aside from this distinctive term for God, Jesus’ prayer here also emphasizes God’s holiness. For God’s name to be hallowed or made holy means that God will act to establish God’s rightful place of power and esteem. At the same time, it anticipates the day when all people will recognize and worship God’s holiness.

Jesus' followers are invited to ask God's kingdom to come. Keep in mind that the Kingdom has been the purpose and goal of Jesus' ministry throughout the Gospel.

Those who believe in Jesus are instructed to ask God to hasten the fulfillment of the Kingdom. The request for bread for each day calls to mind the gift of manna in the wilderness. Remember that the Israelites were only to gather enough for each day's use. Also, however, "bread" doesn't just mean "bread." It certainly includes food for each day, but in Luther's Small Catechism, he says that "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

Jesus' dual petition about both receiving and giving forgiveness emphasizes that mercy is a two-way street. To be forgiven and to forgive others is part of the same gift and both are marks of discipleship in the lives of those who follow Jesus. This is a theme that runs throughout the gospels. Consider, for example Matthew 18:21ff and Luke 7:36ff. Luke's version of this part of the prayer uses the more theological term "sins" to describe what is forgiven; Matthew, by contrast, uses the financial term "debts." Each version gives a slightly different slant to a similar theme.

Finally, in asking for God to not lead us into a time of trial assures us that no matter what comes our way, God can be trusted to be present with and provide for us through any circumstance.

⁵And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

Jesus tells this parable—the parable of the friend and midnight—to teach the disciples about God's trustworthiness in answering prayers. The setting of this parable is quite foreign to us. For many of us, a midnight visit from a neighbor to borrow a loaf of bread would be met with a much harsher response than "Do not bother me." In Jesus' day, however, in a Galilean village life was much more communal than it is in our day and age. Villagers baked bread together each day, so a neighbor would know who in the village had extra bread each day. Further, communication was slow and unreliable, so a friend arriving unexpectedly at midnight would not be out of the ordinary. Social expectations would have demanded the neighbor with bread get up and share with a neighbor in need. The term translated as "persistence" is better translated as "shamelessness" or "lack of concern about propriety." The term may refer to the one doing the knocking, in which case the friend inside will get up and give him what he needs because the person knocking is disturbing the peace at a late hour. More likely, the term refers to the one inside sleeping who will get up and fetch bread in order to avoid losing face by ignoring cultural norms of hospitality and welcome. In either case, it is not persistence in prayer that is emphasized here. For that emphasis, see Luke 18:1-8—the parable of the persistent widow. Instead, it seems that Jesus is emphasizing God's trustworthiness in answering prayer. Whereas an average neighbor would answer one's desperate plea despite initial resistance, God will answer without hesitation or delay. Rather than being an allegory, this parable seems to be a parable of contrast. Jesus is contrasting a run-of-the-mill neighbor with our heavenly *Abba* and there is no comparison. God's faithfulness in answering far exceeds that of the lazy neighbor who himself eventually does hear and answer due to social pressure.

⁹So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

These two verses underscore the meaning of the parable—God will respond quickly and lovingly to those who call upon him. Interestingly, these commands are plural: "Y'all ask and it will be given to y'all; y'all search and y'all will find; y'all knock and the door will be opened to y'all." This is not so much about individual prayer (as wonderful and important as that is," but about corporate prayer. The asking, seeking, and knocking are not

individual efforts to make one's own will come true; rather, they are communal efforts to bring about God's will. God will hear and answer such prayers with haste and love.

¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If 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!"

These verses are a further explanation of the parable and functions like that parable as an illustration of contrast. Of course, no loving parent—not even an evil loving parent—would give a child a serpent or a scorpion to eat. If an evil earthly father gives good gifts, Jesus asks rhetorically, how much more will the “hallowed heavenly *Abba*” give the Holy Spirit to those who ask? The Holy Spirit is portrayed elsewhere in Luke/Acts and indeed throughout the New Testament as the greatest of all gifts. Therefore, God can be trusted to give us all we need, up to and including the best gift of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. How does Luke's wording of the Lord's Prayer change or enhance your understanding of what we pray together each Sunday?**
- 2. Why do you think Jesus' model prayer is so brief and simple when many of our prayers are often so long and complicated?**
- 3. What do you think Jesus is referring to when he says “Ask and *it* will be given to you?” What is it we are to seek in our corporate life of prayer?**