

God's Gift to His Children: Prayer
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
August 18, 2024

Text: Luke 11:1-13

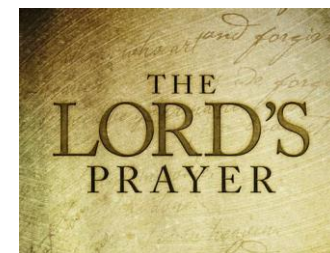
Purpose: Jesus' disciples wanted to be able to pray like Jesus prayed. Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer – God focused prayer, need based petitions, and prayer for protection from the tempter and temptation. If we continue in prayer, we will be heard, and God will answer in His time, in His way.



The Baptist minister was called to the bedside of a Presbyterian woman who was quite ill. After he went in and prayed with her, as he was leaving, he spoke with the woman's daughter. The minister said to her, "I'm very glad your mother remembered me during her illness and asked me to come pray with her. Is her minister out of town?"

"No," answered her daughter. "He's at home, but we thought mom might have something contagious, and we didn't want to expose him to it."¹

The Lord's Prayer passage of scripture we are looking at this morning is one that we are all familiar with. This is a passage of scripture that I have preached from based on the passage of scripture in



Matthew 6:9-13. Maybe you grew up reciting this prayer in school. Maybe you have heard it used at a graveside service. It is good to return to this prayer gift given to God's children. Our Lord has given us a pattern in which we can pray. It is not something that is to be said simply out of mindless repetition. It gives us three focus points as we pray. It helps us focus first, on the Lord. Secondly it guides us to pray to God for our needs. Thirdly, it petitions the Lord to protect us as we live day to day.

I would like to invite you to look at the bookmark that was placed in your bulletin this morning as we compare several versions of the Lord's Prayer in three passages of scripture. When you do a comparison between Matthew and Luke, you will see the primary difference is the ending of the prayer in Matthew. Luke ends with, *"But deliver us from the evil one."* While Matthew includes and summarizes the prayer with the phrase, *"For Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."* The one in Matthew is probably the last of the three synoptic Gospels to be written and therefore that ending was probably added as a part of the churches liturgy and the prayer "feels" complete with the ending found in Matthew.

The Gospel of Mark, which only has a single brief verse, is the shortest and probably the earliest of all three Gospels. This verse mentions the need to forgive others as God has forgiven you. (Mark 11:25)



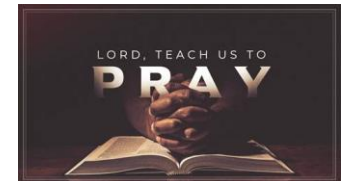
The Petition of the Disciples



I am sure this is a prayer that Jesus had shared with His disciples on different occasions. The setting for our scripture from Luke is not very specific. It does not mention where Jesus was. It doesn't put it in a context where we can tell if this was a part of Jesus' early ministry or towards the latter part as He is heading towards Jerusalem. If I were to take a stab at it, I would say it would be towards the end of His ministry. The disciples have seen Jesus time and time again, pull away from them and the crowds to pray.

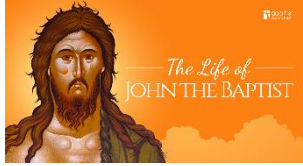
When I stop and think about Jesus praying, I am convicted about my prayer life. Do I pull away from the demands of living and pray? Do I have a set place and time in which I pray? Do you pull away from all the things that press in on you and pray? Do you set aside a place and time to pray? If not, maybe today could be a good time to make that a priority in your life.

One of the disciples came to Jesus and asked a simple question. ***"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."***



It was the practice of great teachers during Jesus' day to give instructions to their disciples on what they were to do and how they were to do it. The disciple was one that followed in the footsteps of their teacher. If the teacher prayed a certain way, then the followers of that teacher (a

disciple) would also do the same. It was their goal to become just like their teacher.



Apparently, John the Baptist had a following of people that were trying to be imitators of what John taught. John did not consider himself anything but a messenger “crying in the wilderness.” John the Baptist may have been one of the members of the community of Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947. John gave instructions to his disciples as to how they were to pray. Because several of John’s disciples had left to follow Jesus, they were well acquainted with John’s prayer practices.

When I was in Jerusalem about ten years ago, I happened to see something out of the corner of my eye as our bus was traveling by. It was an image that I wish I could have stopped and taken a picture. It was an image that was imprinted on my mind so clearly that I don’t ever think I will forget it.

As we were traveling down the road by the Sea of Galilee, we passed by an old cemetery dating back to the 2nd and 3rd century. Some of Israel’s greatest teachers of the scriptures are buried there. Many Rabbis are buried there and people still go there to pray over the place where they are buried. Apparently they have had so much foot traffic there in the cemetery that they had to build a walkway over some of the graves to keep people from desecrating the markers. As our bus was passing by, I saw a man dressed in all black, long curly sideburns, holding his prayer book, swaying back and



forth as he lifted his hands up occasionally as well as his head towards heaven. In fervent prayer, this man was probably following the pattern of prayer taught to him by his teacher. So many generations later, someone was coming to pray for their ancient, and long gone, teacher.



When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, this was probably an example of what they wanted so that when Jesus was no longer with them, they could still try to keep the teachings of Jesus alive.

Jesus said this **“When you pray, say:”**

He didn’t say, **“If you pray”** he said, **“When you pray.”**

For a follower of Jesus Christ, our prayers should not be optional. We should not put our prayer life on the back burner and fit it in when we “feel” like it. It should be something so ingrained in our daily routine. If Jesus prayed, shouldn’t we? If we are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, shouldn’t we do what He did?



Am I stepping on a few toes this morning? I know I am stepping on mine!

**The First Pattern of Prayer –
God Focused Life**



The very first portion of the “Lord’s Prayer” gives us a pattern for prayer that involves a “God Focused Life.” Are our lives “God Focused” or are they “Me Focused”?



This first petition given to us is not really the “Lord’s Prayer” it should be called “The Disciple’s Prayer.” There are parts of this prayer that are for you and for me, not for Jesus Christ. He never sinned so therefore He had no need to seek forgiveness for His sins.

He taught us to say

² Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.



We are so accustomed to hearing the language of God being our Father that we don’t really realize how transformative the use of that word was. During Jesus’ day, the Lord was not commonly viewed as “Father.”

Sadly, people refer to God as “The Man Upstairs.” Or “The Big Man.” Or some other type of slang. But God is a Holy God but He loves us like a perfect Father.



In our world today, the word father is often associated with someone that abandons his children, or someone that abuses their family, or someone that is there only at the moment of conception and few other times in between. When I was at Kennedy Home, the house parents were strongly encouraged to avoid the language of God being our Father. Many of the children there had suffered greatly at poor examples of an earthly father.

But God is a Father to His children. His name is to be considered to be Holy. One of the Ten Commandments said we were not to take God’s name in vein. We are not to run God’s name through the gutter of our community and treat it as worthless. We need to revere God and when we take on the name of Christian; we are to live as if we are a part of God’s family. How you live impacts your family’s name. How you live as a follower – a disciple – of Jesus reflects on the Family of God.

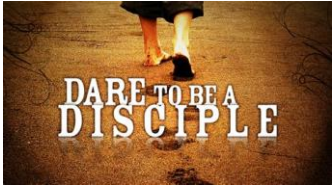
Honor God’s name by living a life that reflects the character of God.



Another part of a God focused prayer involves seeking the things of the Kingdom of God. We know our world will never perfectly reflect what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like.



There was a time when America sought to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth by transforming the institutions of the country. Through the laws of our country, we abolished the sale of alcohol. That didn’t last very long but it was the goal of many to transform our society to one like the Kingdom of Heaven. Our country has tried to legislate morality by outlawing prostitution, pornography, drugs, and many other sins listed in the Bible. Today, the laws of our land are loosening the grip of instilling a Biblical morality for our country. It was an attempt to make our communities like the community of Heaven.



In light of the shifting moral standards of our country, should we throw in the towel and give up? No. Instead, we need to make sure we are living examples of what a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven should be.

Sometimes we get so upset by the moral standard of the world, that we forget we are only responsible for ourselves, how we live, what we say, what we do. If God's children would live like Children of the Kingdom of God, then we could be salt and light to a dying and dark world.



Our prayer is that the perfect place of heaven would be reflected here on earth. For that to happen, it has to start at the house of God. *"IF my people, which are called by My name, would*

HUMBLE themselves, and PRAY and SEEK My face, and TURN from their wicked ways, THEN I will HEAR from heaven, and will FORGIVE their sin and HEAL their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Before God can move in our communities, He must first move in the hearts of the children of God.

Second Pattern of Prayer – Our Needs

When we pray, we need to first focus on God and His Kingdom. The second pattern for prayer is related to our needs.

Jesus taught them to pray³ *Give us day by day our daily bread.*



Many times, when we pray, we come to Him with a specific need in our life. It could be related to our health or someone we love's health. Many of the prayers we lift up on Sunday morning are related to health. But that is not the only area about which we should be praying. It could be a financial need. Our job is not paying enough. Or our lack of employment could be the cause of our money problems. There may not even be enough money in the bank to buy bread. When it comes down to it, money spent on things other than bread is wasted. It could be a marital problem we are experiencing and we need God's leadership in that area. All of these are important to us and we need to bring our petitions and requests before God.

I am reminded that God does not always answer the way we want – sometimes it is a “yes,” other times it is a “no,” or it could be “wait.” I believe we need to trust God with His answer because He sees things we do not see and knows how to give us good gifts. Do you know that God can give us a good gift by saying “no”?



Another often overlooked pattern in our prayer is related to the topic of forgiveness. When I have done something wrong I want someone else to extend forgiveness and grace to me quickly. When someone has done something wrong to me – well that's a whole different story! I may not be as quick to extend forgiveness and grace then. In many of the parables of Jesus, the topic of forgiveness is expanded upon time and time again.

In the prayer Jesus summarized His teaching on forgiveness this way ... ^{4a} *And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*



If we have been forgiven by God for our sins, we are expected to extend the same to others. The same measure we forgive others will be the same measure in which God will forgive us. The same standard of judgment we place on others, is the same measure of judgment God will use on us.

Lord, give us a heart willing to forgive others like you have forgiven us.

We need to be reminded of this daily. We daily sin and others daily sin against us. Lord, help us to keep this prayer close to our hearts daily.
Lord, give us your heart of forgiveness.

Third Pattern of Prayer – Our Protection



In the “Disciples Prayer” we find the third pattern for prayer – a prayer for our protection. Jesus taught them ...

^{4b} *“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

At every turn in life, we can find temptation. When we drive down the road, when we are at work, when we are quietly at home – there is temptation. Jesus wants us to

understand how easily it is for us to yield to the temptations that come our way. We need to have the protection of God around us. That protection comes as we listen to the voice of God leading us away from those temptations that come.

God is not the one that is tempting us – He never tempts His children.

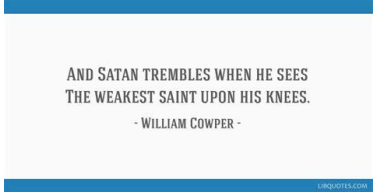
Satan is the one that is seeking to remove the power of prayer from our lives and keep us weak and ineffective. We need this prayer to keep the priority of God first and foremost in our life. We need this prayer to petition God for the needs in our life. We need this prayer because it provides us the strength to resist the temptations that come our way daily. When Satan keeps us from prayer, he has accomplished the first step in drawing us away from God.



The Japanese introduced a tree to the world that is called a Bonsai tree. It is measured in inches instead of feet as other trees are measured. It is not allowed to reach anywhere near its full growth potential but instead grows in a stunted miniature form. The reason for it growing in stunted form is

that when it first stuck its head out of the ground as a sapling, the owner pulled it out of the soil and tied off its main tap root and some of its branch feeder roots and then replanted it.

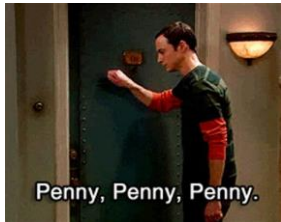
By doing this, its grower deliberately stunted its growth by limiting the root’s ability to spread out and grow deep and take in enough of the soil’s



nutrients for a normal growth. What was done to the Bonsai tree by its owner is what Satan has purposed to do to the believer, if he can. He is going to try to tie off our tap root of prayer. He wants to limit our receiving in prayer what God supplies for our spiritual growth.² William Cowper once said, “And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”

An Example of Why We Need to Continue in Prayer

We do not need to fail in this area of our life – our prayer life. We need to be persistent in our prayer petitions.



I don't know if you have watched the television program “Big Bang.” In the program there is a super nerd by the name of Sheldon. Sheldon has many annoying qualities about him. One of them is when Sheldon goes to Penny's apartment across the hallway. Every time Sheldon knocks on the door, he knocks three times (knock, knock, knock) and says, “Penny.” (knock, knock, knock) “Penny” (knock, knock, knock) “Penny.”

Penny opens the door after the third time and looks at him with great annoyance. Sheldon knocks till Penny opens the door. Sheldon always needs something and will not leave until Penny complies with the request.

Jesus gave us a similar illustration about a friend that comes in the night.

A Friend Comes at Midnight



⁵ And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’?”

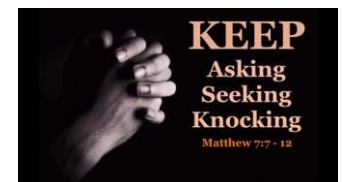
⁸ I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

- Jesus is not saying God is deaf and needs to be asked repeatedly.
- Jesus is not saying God is unsympathetic to our needs.
- Jesus is not saying God is slow to answer. Jesus is not saying God wants us to ask until God is finally annoyed and gives in.

He is saying we do not need to stop talking with God simply because His answer is delayed. It may not be the right time for that answer. God's ways are not our ways. We need to continue to come because we need it.

The Teaching Principle – Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking

The teaching principal Jesus was trying to instill in His disciples is ...



⁹ “So I say to 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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

- God delights in us. We should also delight in the Lord.
- God loves us. We should love to spend time with Him.
- God forgives us. We should be willing to be forgiving of others.
- God wants to be our Heavenly Father. We should want the same kind of relationship as well.

Our Earthly Father and Heavenly Father Compared

Jesus concluded this section on prayer by comparing God the Father to a good earthly father.

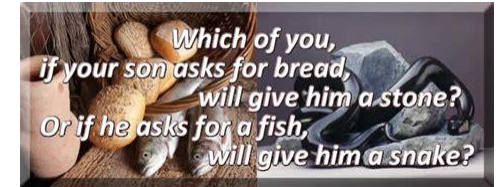


A good earthly father wants the best for his children. He wants them to be warm and fed. He wants them to be safe and secure. He wants them grow up and be able to provide for their future families. A good earthly father listens to his children and responds to them. They may not get the candy bar from the store, they may not get the BB gun at Christmas, and they may not be allowed to stay out past midnight.

But a good earthly father will give them food that is good for them. He will give gifts that are right for their age. He wants them to be home at a decent hour because “Nothing good ever happens after midnight.”

Jesus said it like this....

¹¹ If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”



Good earthly fathers don't give their children stones for bread, snakes for fish, or scorpions for an egg. Our Heavenly Father knows how to give us the gifts we need – not necessarily what we want.

He loves us and has given us the gift of prayer.

Let us join our hearts in prayer together. Let us use the prayer as printed in the bulletin as quoted from Matthew 6:9b-13 in the King James Version.

LET US PRAY



Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies, A Prayer Funny, August 8, 2024

² Sermon Central – Illustration by Bill Lobbs – accessed 7/26/2013