

**Preacher:** Pastor Twyla

**Scripture:** Luke 11:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>3</sup> Give us day by day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." <sup>5</sup> 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;' <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> and 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'? <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> "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. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> 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!"

The following story is told of Harry Cohn, who for many years was the head of Columbia Movie Studios: In the early days Harry's brother came out from New York and was criticizing the way Harry did things. They got into a heated argument. Harry said, "I bet you don't even know the Lord's Prayer." His brother said, "What's that got to do with anything?" Harry came back to him saying, "I just bet you don't know the Lord's Prayer." His brother responded with, "Well of course I do: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Harry said then, "Oh! Well, I apologize. I really didn't think you knew it."

I have occasionally wondered if everyone is still learning the Lord's Prayer. With fewer people attending church, maybe fewer people know it. Worse yet, they may not pray at all. Maybe they don't ever consider going to God in prayer. I wonder sometimes if children are taught the prayer. I would be curious to know—with the availability of a wide variety of translations of the bible—what translation are they taught to memorize. It doesn't matter. I'm just curious about that. The important thing is that people are taught to pray.

In today's scripture reading, we find Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray. So, let me ask you: what is your prayer life like? How often do you pray? Why do you pray? When you pray, what do you say to God? Do you feel like God answers your prayers? I want to invite you to think about these questions about prayer this morning.

We find the Lord's Prayer recorded two places in the Bible. One place is Matthew 6:5-13. This text is within the teachings of Jesus that we call, "The Sermon on the Mount." The assumption we can make when we read the text in Matthew is that Jesus recognizes that the people to whom he was speaking—the Jewish Christians—were already familiar with the practice of praying to God; however, the point Jesus was trying to drive home to them is that prayer was supposed to be an intimately honest conversation with God—not a practice of showing off one's ability to compose eloquent lines of prose, as was the practice of the religious leaders of the day. Jesus called them offering attention-getting prayers. Those individuals, he called hypocrites. So, Jesus gave those he was teaching that day, the Lord's Prayer, to use as a model prayer.

The King James Version of the bible closes the prayer in verse 13 of the Matthew text with the affirmation/confession that, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Why is it in the KJV bible? According to GotQuestions.org, "This ending is not found in the original manuscripts of Matthew 13, such as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, which date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This doxology is believed to have been added by the early church in its liturgy and is found in many Greek manuscripts and theological writings. The inclusion of this phrase in the KJV is a Protestant tradition, and it reflects the themes of the prayer and the recognition of God's sovereignty and glory."

The other place we find the Lord's Prayer is Luke 11, which was read for you this morning. Luke's version of the prayer ends with the request for help to resist temptation. The context and the focus in Luke's recording of the Lord's Prayer is different from the Matthew text. Luke's gospel was written to the Gentile Christians—not the Jewish Christians whom Matthew's gospel addressed. The Gentile Christians did not learn to pray like their counterparts.

Luke's story has Jesus praying while his disciples are nearby, and one of his disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, which Jesus does. From Luke's scripture, we might wonder why that disciple made that request. After all, the disciples were all children of the synagogue. They had grown up going to worship and hearing public prayers; but remember, the Gentile Christians to whom Luke was writing did not have that same experience. The disciple's question, therefore, invites the Gentile Christians to learn about prayer.

The disciple's request, coming after witnessing Jesus had been praying, exposes that the disciple recognized the disciples' prayer life was inadequate, especially in light of what they were discovering about God in Jesus' presence. Maybe he recognized that the prayers they'd heard in the synagogue didn't translate easily into meaningful personal conversation with God, as Jesus' prayers did. Jesus responded to the disciple's request by giving this prayer as a model, knowing that prayer was something every Christian would need then and now. The prayer Jesus taught them was more than a few magic words that they could say to please God. The prayer itself teaches about the nature of the one to whom we pray.

The Interpreter's Bible Commentary says: "Luke 11:1-13 begins and ends emphasizing that disciples of Jesus can pray to God as to a heavenly Father. The first word of the model prayer is "Father." The "thy" petitions that follow establish what it means to revere God as Father, while the "our" petitions in the prayer assure that the Father will provide for the physical and spiritual needs of those who worship him. The concluding and climatic petition asks for protection as from a heavenly Father.

Following the prayer, Jesus went on to teach his disciples about the value and blessings of prayer, by telling the parable of the neighbor in need. Through the parable Jesus taught the disciples about "God's reliability, arguing that if a neighbor will get up in the middle of the night to answer one's need in order to avoid being shamed, how much more can one count on God's readiness to answer a call for help. The sayings that follow the parable "encourage confident and persistent prayer in the knowledge that God's goodness is greater than that of any human father."

What does this mean for us? One point we can hear Jesus make through this parable is that we all need God. A prayerful spirit recognizes its absolute need and dependency on God. On the contrary, we won't find ourselves in need of prayer if we believe in and rely on ourselves to know absolutely what is best for us and how to do and get what we think we know is best for us. One who prays with this kind of attitude offers meaningless prayers that are empty of any real desire to have a true relationship with God nor God's involvement in one's life or to receive any help from God. We need God!

Secondly, Jesus teaches us that we can count on God for his care and help more than we can count on any earthly person or thing. God is perfect and, therefore, better than any earthly father could ever hope to be. God hears every single one of our prayers; and God answers all our prayers—maybe not instantly or as we want them to be answered, but God answers all prayer.

When Jesus said that we should, "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you," he was **not** giving us a blank check to get everything we want. He was **not** telling us that we should expect God to solve all our problems exactly the way we want them to be solved.

Jesus wants us to be persistent with our prayers, not out of our anxieties, but instead with an open spirit seeking God and God's will. We knock and we ask because we have every confidence that God knows what we really need and God knows what is best for us, and we trust God's answers to our prayers. For some things that means recognizing we need to do something with God's help in order to overcome a challenge, to discern which direction we should go when trying to make decisions, to acquire something we think we want or need, instead of having it handed to us on a silver platter. Prayer puts us in tune with God and with God's hopes and dreams and God's will for us.

An aircraft pilot was following a major highway and observing the traffic below. One particular car caught his attention. The driver was attempting to pass a large truck, but because of oncoming traffic and no-passing zones, he was not able to pass safely. Over and over again, just as he would pull out, an oncoming vehicle would force him to retreat. The pilot, being able to see several miles down the highway, thought to himself, "If I could only talk to the driver, I could tell when and where it was safe to pass."

God, of course, is the ultimate Pilot and his perfect knowledge is exactly what we need to guide our life. Prayer is how we talk to God, and as we learn to listen to his responses, we will find the guidance we seek.

Jesus teaches us to pray continuously with persistence, expecting God to answer. We need to listen for God's answers and yes, God's answers may be different from what we want, but God does answer.

Jesus tells us through this text in Luke that there is a lot more to prayer than the mere words we speak. Prayer's main purpose is not for telling God what we need, what we want, how we hurt, how to do things or anything like that, although the words we think or say when we talk to God may sound of that nature. D.L. Moody once said, "Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The way to trouble God is not to come at all."

I want to leave you with this cute, yet poignant story, written by a caring grandfather.

My wife and I were trying to show our grandchildren the importance of thanking God for everything that He had blessed us with. We encouraged them to speak to God whenever they needed to know what they should do. Michael, our 4-year-old grandson, enjoyed holding our hands, and with head bowed, he would close his eyes and listen as my wife or I led in prayer. One evening as we were preparing to eat the evening meal, I asked that we all join hands and bow our heads as I led in prayer. To my surprise, Michael asked if he could say the prayer. I responded by asking him "Michael, do you know how to ask God to bless our meal?" To which he nodded with enthusiasm that he did. So, we all bowed our heads and I gave Michael permission to begin. Instead of hearing words of a prayer, I heard nothing, and was about to ask Michael to begin again, when my ears caught a very faint sound coming from the direction of his bowed head. I listened, I strained, yet I could not make out any intelligible words. Finally, Michael uttered a very hardy "Amen, and he looked up with an expectant expression that looked for an affirmation from his grandparents that he had done a very good job. Before I could say anything, to Michael, my wife instructed him that we would say the prayer again, because she could not hear a single word of anything that he had said. After all, we wanted to teach them how to talk to the Father, and they needed to know how to do so. What happened next drove home the lesson my wife and I had been attempting to teach. Michael's facial expression changed from one of joy to one of puzzlement, and then he quickly added, "But Granny, I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to God!"

Brothers and sisters of mine: talk to God; talk to God, a lot. Amen.