**Lord, Teach Us to Pray**
**October 12, 2025**

Our sermon focus verses for today are the words of our Gospel reading for the day, Luke 11:1-13. Today's sermon will be presented in a little different manner than usual. We'll read the verses today in succession as we work our way through this portion of God's Word, and we'll note the lessons Jesus teaches us about prayer. (Rev 7:12) "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

So, dear people, do you know how to pray? At first, this seems like a ridiculous question. You might reply, "Do we know how to pray? Of course, we know how to pray!" But it's a legitimate question. In fact, it's the question that Jesus' disciples brought to him. 13:1) One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Luke and the other Gospel writers show us that Jesus often prayed. Sometimes he prayed early in the morning. Sometimes late into the night. Sometimes all night. Jesus' disciples knew that Jesus was a man of prayer. They also knew that John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. So they ask Jesus to train them to pray. Jesus spends the rest of our focus verses doing just that, training his disciples to pray.

11:2a) He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father…" Lesson #1) Jesus teaches us to whom we are to pray. Jesus gives us very specific instructions. When we pray, we are not talking to some ambiguous, no-name god. We are not talking to a made-up god, or a god altered by human perceptions. We are not talking to the stars, the sun, or the moon, or any other created thing. When we pray, we are talking to our heavenly Father, to our heavenly Father who loves us so much that he gave us his one and only Son to live and die and rise from the dead for us. As Paul reminds us so beautifully and strikingly: (Romans 8:32) He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things. The parents here can perhaps remember taking their young children in for vaccinations. If you've ever done that, you know how hard it is to hear your child screaming and crying in pain as the needle goes into their body. And as a parent, you grit your teeth and bear it. You bear it because you know that the suffering is for their own good. Now imagine God the Father watching and listening as his holy Son cried out in agony as the scourge bit into his back, as the crown of thorns was slammed onto his skull, as the nails were driven through his hands and feet. And the Heavenly Father let his Son suffer, NOT because it was for his own good, BUT because it was for our good. Because it was for the disease of our sins that he was suffering. Because it was for our forgiveness and for our salvation that he was dying. What an amazing love God has for us! What an amazing comfort it is to us to know that it is to this loving Heavenly Father that we pray, the Heavenly Father who placed us above even his own dear Son. If our Heavenly Father would love us so much that he would give us a Savior, then he loves us enough to answer our prayers as well.

Jesus continues by giving the disciples some examples of requests they might pray. 11:2b-4) hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. You recognize these words as petitions from the Lord's Prayer, of course.

But perhaps you noted that several of the petitions that we typically speak in the Lord's Prayer are missing here. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and "deliver us from the evil one" aren't mentioned here. Either the Holy Spirit didn't see the need to repeat all the petitions here as Luke records Jesus' words or Jesus is restating what he said earlier and he didn't see the need to repeat all the petitions here. But here is lesson #2) Jesus teaches us that spiritual requests are more important than physical ones. There are 2 petitions, requests, for general spiritual blessings; hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. And there are 2 petitions, requests, for personal spiritual blessings; forgive us our sins and lead us not into temptation. So there are 4 spiritual requests in this prayer. If you include the other 2 requests found in Matthew, you would find 6 spiritual requests in the Lord's Prayer. And in both versions of the Lord's Prayer, there is only 1 physical request; give us each day our daily bread. Where does Jesus clearly lay the emphasis as he teaches us to pray? On spiritual matters! Jesus urges us, both in our lives and in our prayers, to focus primarily on our spiritual needs. So while our physical and material needs are important, they are not nearly as important as our spiritual needs.

Furthermore, in regard to our physical and material needs, Jesus teaches us to ask God to provide, NOT for our every want and desire, BUT for our basic needs. I submit to you that the vast majority of our prayers are the opposite of Jesus' prayer. I submit to you that the vast majority of our prayers are much more focused on our physical needs than our spiritual ones. Maybe, just maybe, we include a spiritual request in our prayers every now and then. But almost certainly the vast majority of our prayer requests to God are for physical things. Furthermore, besides focusing almost exclusively on praying for earthly things, we also tend to ask God to provide for our physical wants, and not just for our physical needs. In the one petition regarding our physical needs, Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, that is, the bread (the things) that we need for today.

In light of these things, perhaps we do need some training on praying. Then Jesus moves from the specific words of a prayer to the specific approach and attitude toward prayer. 11:5-8) Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Lesson #3) Jesus teaches us to pray boldly. It was the middle of the night when the friend came pounding on the door. Remember that the Jews of Jesus day didn't have electric lights to read by or late night programs to watch on their televisions. When it was dark, they went to bed. So after the entire household has been asleep for hours, a friend comes banging on the door begging for 3 loaves of bread. Why does the man give him the bread? Not because of his friendship, but because of his boldness. This guy came out into the dark night. Maybe he even had to cross town. He has the audacity to bang on the door in the middle of the night to get some bread. Let's be honest, that definitely takes boldness. If the guy is going to go to that much bother for a few loaves of bread, his friend will give it to him. As Jesus said, because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Jesus' lesson to his disciples and to us is, pray with boldness. Go to the Father with boldness. Pray at any time of day or night, with boldness. Lift your requests for anything to the Lord, with boldness. God considers us more than just friends. He counts us as his very children. Consequently, God loves us dearly and is eager to help us. One night a 4 year-old boy was being put to bed by his father. The father noticed a piece of rope tied to the boy's bed. "What's the rope for?" he asked his son. "Oh," answered the boy, "I'm praying for a pony tonight and that rope is for the angels to tie the pony to my bed." Like that boy, God wants us to pray with boldness.

Lesson #4) Jesus teaches us that God expects us to pray. In fact, he commands us to do so! 11:9) "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Note that these are commands, not requests. The Lord doesn't say to us "If you aren't too busy, If you don't mind overly much, If it isn't too much of an imposition, If you think of it, I'd like it if you would." No! Rather, Jesus commands us to "Ask, Seek, Knock." In other words, do it! Pray!

Typically, the times we are quickest to pray, and the times we pray most urgently, are when we need God's help. Oswald Chambers had this insight: "We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense." Richard P. Cook said: "Most of us have much trouble praying when we are in little trouble, but have little trouble praying when we are in much trouble." And don't get me wrong, God wants us to go to him in prayer when we are in trouble. But God also wants us to go to him in prayer when we're not. God wants us to pray to him all the time. God wants to hear from us. God wants us to talk to him, to tell him how grateful we are for his blessings, to thank him for the day and the moment, to discuss with him our thoughts and concerns, to review our plans for the future, and to communicate with him regularly. The Apostle Paul summarizes this lesson succinctly. (1 Thes 5:17) Pray continually. God has commanded us to talk to him regularly and about everything. And we do so, not only because God has told us to do so, but because we want to. Why in the world wouldn't we want to pray? Through prayer we have access to the Creator, and Savior, and Sanctifier. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In prayer, we get to talk one-on-one with the Almighty God! How amazing and awesome is that!

Jesus continues. 11:10) For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Lesson #5) Jesus teaches us to pray confidently, expecting answers. A town was in the middle of a severe drought. A local church invited everyone to gather for prayer. The whole town turned out to pray for rain. Only one little girl, however, brought her umbrella. Only one little girl was confident that God would answer their prayer immediately. Very simply, Jesus says, everyone who asks for God's help receives God's help. The one who seeks God's assistance finds God's assistance. The one who knocks on heaven's door in prayer will find the door will be opened. Jesus said, "When you pray, expect God to answer that prayer." God has the power to answer our every prayer. God has the wisdom to answer our every prayer. God has the desire to answer our every prayer. Furthermore, God has promised to answer our every prayer. What we must understand is that whenever, as often as, God can answer our prayer with a "Yes," he will! And isn't it awesome when he does! Sometimes the Lord answers our prayers "Yes, but not yet." In other words, the Lord decides to give us what we requested, but he knows that right now isn't quite the right time, so he wants us to wait. And this is

awesome too! It's a "Yes" answer from the Lord. However, it seems like a "No" answer because we don't see it immediately. Yet, the Lord is once again answering our prayers according to his love and wisdom.

But sometimes God in his wisdom and love does answer our prayer "No." And this is hard for us because we are convinced that we know what is best for us. And maybe you are out there thinking, God sure seems to answer a lot of my prayers with a "No." That may very well be true, but very likely at least part of the reason so many of your prayers are answered with a "No" is because most of your prayers are for physical blessings instead of spiritual ones. You are asking God to fill your bank account with treasures, instead of your soul. You are asking God to give you peace in life through making changes in your situation, instead of asking for peace in your life where you are at. You are asking God to give you physical health, instead of spiritual health. You are asking God to open someone else's eyes to their faults, instead of opening your eyes to your own. The Lord's Prayer shows us that God longs to hear and answer the spiritual request. I find it hard to imagine that God would ever answer a spiritual request with a "No" answer. So if you want more "Yes's" to your prayers, then focus your prayers more on spiritual things, and as you grow more spiritually, you will also grow in the ability to pray more wisely in regard to physical requests. As Jesus himself said, (Matthew 6:33) Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So when you pray, expect an answer, because God will give one. He may answer "Yes" or he may answer "No" but God will answer and he will always answer in love.

Jesus expands on this point. Lesson #6) Jesus teaches us to pray confidently, expecting LOVING answers. 11:11-13) "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" If we, imperfect as we are, manage to answer our children's requests with love, if we manage to give our children good gifts, how much more doesn't our holy heavenly Father know how, in love, to give us good answers to our prayers, to give us good gifts. As we stated earlier, our Heavenly Father's love goes beyond our comprehension. It's a love that gave us his Son, Jesus, to be our Savior, to win forgiveness for us for all the times we prayed selfishly, or griped to God because his loving answer to our prayer was "No." You do realize that even a "No" answer can be a good answer? Especially when our all-knowing, ever-loving God says "No." So we are to pray to God, expecting good answers, expecting answers given in love.

You know, if God were to greet us at the start of each day, perhaps he would say something like this. "Good morning: I am the Lord your God. Today I will be handling all your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help. If the devil happens to deliver a situation to you that you cannot handle, do not attempt to resolve it yourself. Kindly put it in the 'Something for Jesus to Do' box. It will be addressed in my time, not yours. And in my way, not yours. Once the matter is placed into the box, do not hold on to it or attempt to remove the matter from the box again. Holding on to it or removal of it will delay the resolution of your problem. If it is a situation that you think you are capable of handling, please consult me to be sure that it is the proper resolution." And God's message to us in the evening might be: "Sleep well, my dear child. Because I do

not sleep, there is no need for you to lose any sleep at the end of the day. Rest, my child. If you need to contact me, I am only a prayer away. Love eternally, the Lord your God." To which we say, "Thank you, Lord, for loving us, and dying for us, and saving us, and caring for us, and thank you for teaching us to pray!"