

IT HAPPENS AFTER PRAYER

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

October 15, 2017

Luke 11:1-13

Welcome to the third week in our sermon series, It Happens After Prayer. This series is based upon a book by HB Charles, Jr. It's not too late to jump into one of our small groups and study the book or pick up a copy and read along with us. Last week we came to understand a key concept of prayer is that prayer changes us.

In the passage in the Bible that we're going to look at today it says that Jesus went away to spend private time in prayer with God. He finds it very important to be with people and to worship with everyone else, but we also learn that it's importance to spend time building a relationship with God. Now have you ever dated someone and that first date was so great. You were excited, you got in your best clothes, took a shower and everything. And you have a great time and you think to yourself, I'd like to get to know this person better. It is only over time that you come to know that person more deeply. Date after date reveals something more about that other person. And putting in that kind of time is how you truly get to know the other person. That is what prayer does with our **relationship** with God. It helps us get to know the nature of the God that we worship.

PRAYER REVEALS GOD'S NATURE.

So, turn with me to the book of Luke in the NT. Of all the gospels, Luke is the one that emphasizes prayer for us and how important it was for Jesus. It is in Luke where Jesus goes off for times by himself and where there are whole sermons on how to pray and how not to pray. And today, we come to what has become known as the Lord's Prayer. Jesus is again praying by himself and the disciples want to know more. They are craving to know how to pray and they ask Jesus to teach them. And here is what happens. READ Luke 11:1-13.

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."² ***Jesus said, "This is how you should pray:***

"Father, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

³ Give us each day the food we need,

⁴ and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation."

⁵ Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ⁶ 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.'⁷ ***And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.'***⁸ ***But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.***

⁹ "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ "You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? ¹² Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! ¹³ So if you sinful people 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."

This passage can be divided into three different sections – the Lord's Prayer, a parable on prayer, and then Jesus' teaching on prayer. And a constant throughout the entire passage is that we learn more about God in each section.

So, let's take a minute to go back and look at the Lord's prayer again for just a moment as we hone in on the nature of God and our relationship to God. Jesus begins Father. In one word we learn about who God. Father – now in the Hebrew this is Abba, which is the very personal word for father. It is an intimate word that is used among close relatives. When we call God Father, we are naming a very intimate God as a part of the very nature of who God is and that God wants to have a deep and intimate relationship with us.

FATHER = INTIMACY WITH GOD.

Jesus said, "This is how you should pray: Father..." (Luke 11:2 NLT)

The first time God as Father is used is when Moses stands boldly before Pharaoh and says, "Thus says God/Yahweh, Israel is my son, my firstborn; let my people go, that they may serve me." We learn that God is our Father when Moses is declaring our freedom from slavery in Egypt. Theologian NT Wright has pointed out that calling God Father isn't just about an intimacy with God, but it is revolutionary. That when we call God Father we declare a freedom from this world and oppression and declare ourselves citizens of God's loving Kingdom. (NT Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer*)

FATHER = FREEDOM.

'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. ²³ I commanded you, "Let my son go, so he can worship me." (Exodus 4:22 NLT)

Imagine that, when you go to God in prayer, you elevate yourself above your current circumstances. You sit in the presence of an all-loving and all-knowing Father who desperately wants to free you from this world and offer you hope and a future.

And then Jesus tells a parable on prayer. In verses 5-8, Jesus tells a story about a man who has received visitors at night. In middle eastern tradition, still to this day, it is considered beyond embarrassing to not have any food to serve your guests. Hospitality is huge in the middle east and this man has nothing for his guest. So, he does what we all may have done at some point in our lives. Have you ever been following a recipe and run to your neighbor for a cup of flour or an extra egg? Well in Jesus' parable, the man needs some bread. Bread was more like a utensil. Bread is necessary to eat because instead of using utensils you use your fingers or you use bread. And in a village of Jesus' time, all the women baked bread together and they would have known which of their neighbors would have had extra bread left over from the day's meals. So, the man runs to his neighbor's house and begins knocking on the front door. When he doesn't get an answer, he keeps knocking and pounding and finally yelling for some bread.

What is prayer?

- Effective prayer requires steadfast **dependence** on God.
- Without a sense of dependence, we most likely will not pray.
- Prayerlessness is a declaration of **independence**.
- **Earnest**. Luke 11:9-10
- **Diligent**.
- **Persistent**.

Why Pray out of dependence?

When you have a problem you **cannot solve**, do you pray?

When we pray it should be with a **boldness**.

When we pray it should be with **confidence**.

Now inside the house the neighbor doesn't want to get up. Stuffed in that house would have been all the man's animals. And then the entire family sleeping somewhere as well. So, to get up, he would have had to step over his entire family, his wife and the kids. Then he would have had to walk through the animals, all to get to the front door and hand out some bread. To get back to sleep would have been a long process with the animals and the kids rustling around. To hand out a loaf of bread wouldn't have been an easy task and the neighbor didn't want to bother. And yet that man keeps

standing at the door, knocking. The scripture describes his knocking as 'shameless persistence' or boldness I love the NIV wording, 'shameless audacity.' This guy is bold and persistent about his need for this bread. And this is the way God describes prayer!

Parables are designed for us to put ourselves into the story and to also see God as a character as well. That's why Jesus is using such a common illustration, a friend needing bread and knocking on a neighbor's door, everyone can relate.

And yet there are always two ways to understand a parable. Often Jesus' parables are used as a comparison. But, some parables are a contrast with who God is – it is a description of the earthly world as a comparison of who God really is for us. That is exactly what Jesus is trying to convey in today's parable. God is the exact contrast of the neighbor shut inside who doesn't want to be bothered and doesn't want to open the door.

The neighbor is asleep and doesn't want to wake up. He may be laying there hoping the neighbor goes away. I imagine he'd be saying to himself – can't he just wait until morning. Or go find another neighbor. Now contrast this image of a human friend who doesn't want to be bothered and our biblical knowledge of God. The scriptures teach us that we have an ever-present God who neither slumbers or sleep.

"If a sleepy friend will meet the need of his bothersome neighbor just so he can get back to sleep, how much more will our God meet your needs when you pray." HB Charles Jr.

While the neighbor is pestered into opening the door, God is always there for his people. The following verses for Jesus build upon his understanding of this parable. "***if you sinful people 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.***" This parable enlightens for us who God is not. God is not far off and closed off in a house, not wanting to be bothered. God doesn't ever reluctantly give. Rather, God's door is open, ***Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you,*** and God desires to give all good things. Not only does God desire us all good things, but we are also taught through the Bible that God knows what we need even before we ask. Asking – our standing at the door is our commitment to the relationship. God already knows the hairs on our heads and our needs even before we ask. From all of this, we learn,

GOD'S NATURE IS TO GIVE US THE BEST.

So if you sinful people 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. (Luke 11:13 NLT)

Now in all of Jesus' teachings, not only does he reveal who God is for us – all loving, ever present and giving Father, but we are also taught exactly how to pray. With all parables, we are to see ourselves. In this morning's scripture we are to see ourselves as the man standing at the door and knocking. For Jesus here, he is describing prayer as this relationship and asking for what we need. And Jesus goes all out, prayer is standing and knocking at the door. Being shamelessly persistent and audacious. To keep asking God over and over again. Now God is never shamed into opening the door, but God does want us to keep asking. To keep up the relationship and keep coming back. When we know God's nature, it is a spur on to deepen the relationship. And prayer is our way of deepening the relationship – that conversation we talked about on week one. And here we learn it isn't just a conversation, but it is a persistent and shameless conversation asking and listening and waiting at the door.

GOD WANTS US TO BE PERSISTENT IN PRAYER.

And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. (Luke 11:9 NLT)