

Sermon Reading: Luke 11:1-13

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.”

² *He said to them, “When you pray, say:*

*“‘Father,^[a]
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.^[b]*

³ *Give us each day our daily bread.*

⁴ *Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.^[c]
And lead us not into temptation.^[d]”*

⁵ *Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity^[e] he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.*

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. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

¹¹ *“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for^[f] a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ 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!”*

Sermon Theme: Boldly Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking

It was a horrible accident. The doctors aren’t holding on to too much hope. Distraught and with no idea what else to do, he walks down the hospital hallway, running his hand through his hair, slouches down into a chair defeated. You see him putting his hands together and starts saying, “I don’t really know how to do this. I haven’t done it in such a long time. But if you can hear me, Lord, I could really use the help.”

Prayer shouldn’t be that difficult. God speaks to his people through his Word and then we speak to God in prayer. It’s a blessing and gift God that allows us to go directly to him and he listens. Why do we pray? Simply, God tells us to and this is what Christians do; we pray. And so when good things happen, we go to God in prayer out thanksgiving and praise to him. Or when we are in a situation and we recognize that it’s beyond our control, we go to the one who is in control

of all. When there are more questions than answers to the problems and issues, we take it to the Lord who knows all. When we wake up in the morning, we thank him for keeping us from all harm and danger and ask for his blessing on the coming day.

Still we can thank that nameless disciple for his request, because like him we can struggle with how to pray. When we pray, Jesus is teaching us to pray boldly. And to do that he doesn't direct our eyes to the Almighty Lord who created the heavens and the earth, the all-powerful, all-knowing, holy God. He knows that when we recognize our own unworthiness—our sinfulness and the knowledge of all the wrongs we have done—we know we have no business approaching him. You don't ask for help from someone you are afraid of or from someone you have personally wronged. No, you either say nothing to that person or even hold resentment for them.

And Jesus knows this; so he directs us to our Father. Yes, he is the all-powerful and all-knowing Lord who is not hedged in by the limits and laws of nature or time so that nothing is impossible for him. And he's your Father who invites you to come to him. He knows what you were at one time; he sent his Son to save you from that sin. He is well-aware of that dividing gap that sin causes so that it completely separates us from him. He sees that seemingly impenetrable wall of sin that kept us from him. In fact, because of that sin, we cannot and do not want to pray or go to him. The sinful mind is hostile towards God enslaved to sin and its own selfish desires.

But when the time had fully come God sends his Son who buys us back from slavery to sin so that we might receive full rights as children of God (Galatians 4:4). The Father wants to have a relationship with you so he gives you Jesus who had no sin, to become sin for us, so that we would be made right with God. That means the gap has been bridged, the wall has been taken down, the sin has been removed from you, you are forgiven and are at one with the Father. Your relationship with the Father has been fixed and in the waters of Baptism you were made his child. You can go to that same Almighty Lord calling him *Abba*, Father knowing that he will not only hear you but he carefully listens and answers. And as his children we look forward to that time when our Father will call us home to be with him and be welcomed into his warm embrace.

But until that time comes, we continue to live in this world riddled with sin and continued struggle with our own sinful nature. We continue to be attacked by the devil with his lies and temptations so that if we were left alone we are hopeless and would certainly fall from the faith. And so we need go to our Father in prayer because we know we need his help.

We pray that his name is hallowed; that it remains holy and set apart. His name is holy without our asking and it's at its holiest when it is being proclaimed through the Word. So we ask in this petition that God's Word continue to be taught in its truth and purity to guard us from the devils stinging arrows and his oh-so-convincing lies.

We ask that his kingdom come, that is, he continue to rule in our hearts and lives through the Word and Sacrament. You and I know how too easily we stray from his Word. You know how easily we are distracted by the busyness of life and are quick with reasons and excuses. And so we ask our Father to keep calling out to us through His Word so that we do not stray or wander too far so that one day we might be brought to him in his kingdom of heaven.

After first seeking God's kingdom we then ask for our daily bread. You know how tempting it is to doubt and to worry about what tomorrow will bring. The fluctuating market prices can put you on edge. The bills quickly add up so you may worry: "Are we going to make it?" And so we go to the Father recognizing that it all comes from him. We ask him to continue to provide all that we need in our physical lives from the clothes we wear to the food we eat; from the people in our lives who support us to people he has placed to protect us. And because he is our good and merciful Father in heaven, he does.

We not only know the temptations, you know how often you fail to resist them. And so we ask God to forgive us our sins because you know how we daily sin much. The guilt of sin can weigh heavily on your shoulders and past sins plague your minds. But for Jesus' sake, for the sake of his perfect life and innocent death, we ask that God not treat us as our sins deserve. And the Father tells you, "I forgive your sins and remember them no more. You might; I don't." And as we grow in that forgiving love that God freshly gives you every morning, we pray that God continue to work in our hearts to forgive others as he forgives us.

Yes, the temptations are so very real. Sins that we struggle with, pet sins that we can't seem to get away from continue to weaken our will to resist every day. And so we ask that God not lead us into temptation. God does not tempt us to sin. But I ask that he not allow sin and temptation to overwhelm me; that when I've fallen he not abandon me and give me over to that sin. I'm asking that he continues to defend and be with me as I face temptation from all around.

Here in the Lord's Prayer Jesus gives you the model to pray. Resist the temptation to just spout off the words because it's that time in the service. Think about what you are asking and how those words apply to you and your life. Be honest with yourself and boldly go to your Father in prayer because he invites you to go to him.

Be bold because your God is going to answer you. That's what Jesus assures you starting in v.5 **"Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.** The friend had every reason to not help; the loud lock on the door and rustling about the house was sure to wake the kids and it was the middle of the night! The friend does help; but his motivation was

less than pure. It wasn't friendship but the shameless audacity—he couldn't believe you pulled this on him—that's what moves him to help.

Jesus' point? Friends don't always answer and when they do it's not always for the right reasons; but God always does. God will never refuse to answer because of any so-to-speak inconveniences on his part. There's no question about God's motivation for answering your prayer either. He even commends you for your boldness in approaching him.

Jesus says to you v.9: **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.** Too easily we give up on prayer because it's not answered according to our time schedule or plans. Too often prayer is done with doubt in the back of the mind, "I know you probably won't do this, but I'm going to ask anyway." Or, "I'm only doing this because I know I should." Jesus is telling you, trust that prayer does something.

Understand why it does. It's not because the pastor said something and it holds more weight. It's not because you forwarded that email or the Facebook post received so many "likes" and was shared by so many people that now God has to pay attention. It's not because you found the magic amount of people bringing this prayer to God so that God has to listen. The reason the prayer of the righteous person is powerful and effective is not because of the individual. The power in prayer is from the one who answers prayer. And then, sometimes, God gives you the opportunity to see how your prayer was answered. You asked, and look, you received. You were seeking, and you found. You went knocking, and it was opened for you. Because you prayed, God answered.

And when he answers, the Father always answers for your good. Jesus points out how fathers who are evil, who are still sinners and struggling with sin, even they know the good gifts they should give to their children. "**How much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.**" He who gives every good and perfect gift continues to pour out His Spirit on us; there is no higher good or gift that can be given. The grace that the Holy Spirit pours into us through Word and Sacrament Jesus promises is sufficient to cause us to rejoice even in the middle of our sorrows and afflictions. This grace works in our hearts to trust that when we pray, "Your will be done," what God does do and how he answers it really is in our best interest. And that can be very hard for us. God knows it. So he continues to come to you in the Word to fill you up with his promises and his love. He continues to call you forward to the Lord's Supper where he feeds your faith and forgives your sins. He continues to send his Spirit who works in your heart to know that your Father does hear your prayers, to believe that he really does answer them, and to trust that when we ask we will receive, when we seek we will find, and when you knock, the door will be opened. Be bold and pray. Amen.