

# Abba !

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Preacher: Rev David Andrew

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] songs, amazing words when the race is complete. We're going to complete the race, did you know that?
- We're going to complete the race because it doesn't depend on us. We live as though it does because we strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
- We live as though it depends on us but we know it depends on him. He who has begun a good work in us will carry it on to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
- And you know if you really unpack that little sentence it means it all depends on God because he began the good work and he's carrying on that work and he will complete it. How much of it depends on us?
- None of it. Praise the Lord. So we're thinking about what it means to say our Father today.
- [ 1 : 0 3 ] We're looking at the Lord's Prayer but really actually we're only looking at the first couple of sentences of the Lord's Prayer. I just need to switch this on or I'll get dirty looks from the back of the church.
- There we are. Is that okay Stephen? Right. Okay. So we're in Luke chapter 11 first 28 verses this morning.
- Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is somewhat condensed from what you're used to because we normally if we say the Lord's Prayer at all we generally use Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer.
- But for our purposes this morning we're in Luke chapter 11. Now Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he finished one of his disciples said to him Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples and he said to them when you pray say Father hallowed be your name your kingdom come give us each day our daily bread forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us and lead us not into temptation and he said to them which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him friend lend me three loaves for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him and he will answer from within do not bother me now the door is shut my children are with me in bed

I cannot get up and give you anything I tell you though he will not get up and give you anything because he's a friend yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs and I tell you ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and it will be opened to you for everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened what father among you if his son asks for a fish will instead of a fish give him a serpent or if he asks for an egg will give him a scorpion if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him now he was casting out a demon that was mute when the demon had gone out the mute man spoke and the people marveled but some of them said he casts out demons by Beelzebul the prince of demons while others to test him kept seeking from him a sign from heaven but he knowing their thoughts said to them every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste and a divided household falls and if Satan also is divided against himself how will his kingdom stand for you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul and if I cast out demons by Beelzebul by whom do your sons cast them out therefore they will be your judges but if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons then the kingdom of God has come upon you when a strong man fully armed guards his own palace his goods are safe but when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters when the unclean spirit has gone out of a person it passes through waterless places seeking rest and finding none it says

[ 5 : 36 ] I will return to my house from which I came and when it comes it finds the house swept and put in order and it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself and they enter and dwell there and the last state of that person is worse than the first as he said these things a woman in the crowd raised their voice and said to him blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed but he said blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it I think the first thing we need to come to terms with in this this amazing prayer because it is amazing I think we've we've really underestimated the Lord's prayer over the years

I'm not suggesting that it's because we've taken it out of our our liturgy and we we don't use it as a formal prayer in the service anymore that's not what I'm saying but we've underestimated how important this prayer is for our understanding of God and our understanding of ourselves Jesus said an absolutely shocking thing now it's not shocking to us we don't see it on the page but I don't think you could exaggerate the shock that would have been in the faces of the disciples when the first word out of Jesus mouth was Abba now just think what they'd done they had just made a simple request they had been looking at John the Baptist and his disciples and it was quite common in those days for a rabbi or a spiritual leader they would write down little prayers for their disciples that they could recite and John no doubt did something similar for his disciples and so it gave them a sense of competence that they could pray because they had something that they could recite and it gave them a sense of confidence when they were praying that it was something that was kosher something they could actually pray so probably with that in mind the disciples said to

Jesus Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples and they're asking for something that will make them feel more competent and more confident when they're praying but they're not ready for what Jesus is going to give them because he's not going to give them just something to make them competent and confident he's going to give them something that makes them think totally differently about God and about themselves and give them a completely different approach to how they pray and there's no way they're going to pray like the disciples of John the Baptist they're going to be praying on a different level all together but we need to understand the shock of Jesus telling them how to pray because as soon as Jesus began to say to them this then is how you should pray say Abba say

Avinu our father that was a completely almost preposterous and unthinkable idea to Jews in those days there are lots of references throughout the Old Testament to God as the father of Israel as a nation Israel is my firstborn son etc there are plenty of references of that nature so there's a concept of God as a father to his nation but there is no concept and there is no practice in Jewish prayer life before Jesus comes along there's no practice of addressing God as father even less Abba I want you to try and remember try and think it in your imagination think of Jesus as a little preschool toddler running about in

Nazareth shouting Abba Abba Abba Abba and Joseph saying yes son that's my name don't wear it out you know but this is the little child's way of addressing father Abba you can go to Israel today and you'll hear children running about the streets shouting the same thing Abba and I wondered at one point I wondered well did he say Abba or did he say Pater because the New Testament is written in Greek but if you go to the Garden of Gethsemane you'll find that the Greek translation of the New Testament uses the word Abba without any translation Abba if it be possible let this cut pass from me so

[ 11 : 19 ] Abba is a lifelong way of addressing God the father but you could not exaggerate the shock that that must have been to the disciples for Jesus to open his mouth and say this is how you're to address God this is El Shaddai this is God the almighty this is God the awesome God this is God the covenant keeping God this is this is the God who is a consuming fire and Jesus says when you pray say Abba with that degree of intimacy and familiarity Jesus isn't encouraging any casualness towards God quite the opposite he's really saying this is a relationship you don't know the depth of your father's love for you you don't understand how

God loves you you don't know what his purpose was in sending me you see we've been thinking over the last few weeks about Jesus triumphal exit what a wonderful series that has been and why Jesus actually did these things why did he borrow human flesh why didn't he just come as God almighty thundering and powerful like he did on Sinai he came as a man because as a man he would die and he wasn't going to conquer death by avoiding it he was going to conquer death by throwing it off so he had to die and he had to be mortal what a wonderful savior so here's

Jesus they've asked a simple question they've thought Jesus will you just give us a few little prayers write out some things for us that we can recite and then we'll feel like we can pray properly and Jesus is giving them so so much more than they've asked for because he's saying to them look you need you need to have a different mindset for coming to prayer because God wants to be so much closer to you than you know now think of this Paul said to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens he said we are all his offspring so in one sense every human being every person on the planet is a child of God in that universal sense but the children of God who enjoy his intimacy and who can call him

Abba are those who come to him exclusively through Jesus I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me Jesus said we are heading towards a coronation and it's hard to work out how that's going to work out but it seems quite clear that Charles has maintained his position that he announced 30 years ago that he did not want to be defender of the faith but defender of faith in a general sense and he wants his coronation to be a multi-faith thing with the readings of scripture and things from all sorts of faiths and addresses and prayers to all sorts of gods that is basically saying that

Jesus is a kind of also ran in the king's program he's not unique he's not special he's not the way and the truth and the life and the coronation wants to say that there are many ways to God Jesus has made that impossible that's not possible the coronation might say that but it will be a fake so we need to be in prayer for our king we need to be in prayer for our queen and we need to be in prayer for a country that could be headed by a monarch who has just relegated Jesus to something that's just not special at all Abba to those who believed said John in his gospel he gave the right to become children of God and John much later in his life writing with amazement at the end of his pen behold what manner of love the father hath given unto us that we should be called the children of God and that is what we are brothers and sisters

[ 17 : 05 ] Jesus shocked his disciples we need to understand that they would have trouble getting their heads around this whole idea that you could address God as father as Abba which was even more shocking so the disciples theology is being changed here they are beginning to think differently about God and their own identity is being changed here because they are no longer just thinking in terms of being disciples of Jesus or even servants of God but as children of God as soon as you say Abba your relationship with God is a father child relationship so their relationships changed and of course this changes their prayer lives what sort of confidence do you have in praying if you know you are going to a father who judges justly a father whose love for you is completely off the scale well actually that's not strictly true there is a measurement of

God's love you can measure it you go to Calvary you'll see the measure of God's love but that's the only unit of measurement and so when Jesus then goes on to say you can pray for your daily needs for your daily bread for forgiveness for deliverance from temptation all of that all these all these personal needs you go to God with these requests on the basis that you're praying to Abba with whom you have been given an astonishingly special relationship is there a hallelujah in the room our God has his love for us is astonishing and I think we need to be astonished afresh to be honest most of us don't look astonished most of us don't feel astonished we frequently feel overwhelmed by the pressures of life and sheer tiredness and weakness and the joys of getting old you know we feel these things deeply and very often we feel this overpowering weight on our shoulders but think of the weight that Jesus took on his shoulders behold the man upon the cross his sin upon my shoulders ashamed

I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers we sing those words quite often we'll come back to that in a moment but think of think of what Jesus is saying here you see when we go through the rest of this passage he's still answering their prayer when he starts talking about this what you might call holy impudence by which you can persistently keep knocking on the door and keep asking you're doing so not because you think God is reluctant but because you know that sooner or later he will tumble you it's like the child constantly pulling on mother's skirt mum mum mum and she's trying to talk to a friend she hasn't seen in ten years mum mum and that pulling is not going to go unnoticed indefinitely because mum is mum he said to them which of you if a friend you go at midnight and you say look somebody's arrived unexpectedly

I need some help here I need some provisions because I've nothing to set before this weary traveller didn't expect this can you help me he says no no go away go away I'm in bed the kids are in bed with me because in those days the whole family slept in one bed one person gets up everybody's up okay no no go away but you keep asking you keep seeking you keep finding you keep knocking you keep at it and that's what Jesus is saying because the Greek tenses here are present tenses and if you were to translate it quite literally it would be keep on asking keep on seeking keep on knocking when God's will is your will said Charles Spurgeon when God's will is your will you will have your will you see we might tend to think that what

Jesus is giving us is a sort of blank check so we can say well Lord I'm just I'm going to keep hammering at your door until you put this Rolls Royce at my door you know but that's not what Jesus is advocating here he's simply saying look your perseverance is actually a signal to the father that you really think it's worth keeping on at this prayer that he's really going to give you what you're asking for but he wants you to persevere because he wants you to want his will as much as he wants it so if you're praying for the soul of a person who is absolutely precious to you it might be a wife or a husband it might be a son or a daughter it might even be a community maybe God's given you a heart for the community let me tell you your prayers are not wasted those prayers are not futile but we need to persevere we must not give up because when

[ 23 : 50 ] God lays something on our hearts he wants to see that we want it as much as he wants it and when your will is God's will you will have your will persevere don't give up don't be discouraged because you see there's a theological point to be made here here's a question is God bad is God bad that might sound like a ridiculous question and we're sitting here all wise amongst ourselves thinking well of course I know the answer to that God but is God bad Jesus said what father among you if his son asks for a fish will give him a serpent or if he asks for an egg will give him a scorpion and we all know the answer to that and so

Jesus says you've really got to allow for the possibility that God is more good than we are you need to allow for the possibility that God is kinder than we are and that if we would ask for if our child would ask for something good we would not give them something bad so if you're asking God for something good allow for God to be good in answering your prayer allow for that do not allow for the possibility that God will give you something bad don't allow for that possibility now let's let's just think about that for a moment David Andrew has just said God won't give you something bad what I mean by that is that sometimes God gives us something bad which is actually good for us

Christian Getty in one of her songs writes about the sun and rain of God's sovereignty there's a sense in which this amazing God of ours has the wisdom sometimes to bring something into our lives that we would not choose for ourselves but God is righteous in all his ways if God has brought something into your life right now that is not what you would have chosen in fact might be the opposite of anything you would have chosen it's God who has brought it into your life and therefore it's good and therefore the goodness of God is in and through and under and behind all that's happening in your life right now there's nothing random going on in your life right now it's part of a plan it's part of a tapestry and only Father sees what the whole tapestry is going to look like you're only seeing a little bit of it so let's come back to Jesus question then if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will the Heavenly

Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him here's Jesus telling us that we should ask the Father for the Holy Spirit hello because you see we're being called to live the life of Christ now hands up all those who can live the life of Christ it's a doddle isn't it it's a doddle to live the life of Christ we all know that don't we no we all know it's not a doddle and for that very reason God has said through Jesus he would send us a helper to be with us forever why do we need a helper forever because forever we're going to need help to live a life that is anything close to the life of Jesus but all that amazing power of the Holy Spirit in his person indwells anyone who has faith that Jesus is the son of God and the father gives us the Holy

Spirit if we ask don't tackle anything in your own strength don't tackle anything by your own resources I was putting up a light fitting the other day there well Agnes could tell you something about the agonies of that because I used to be Mr.

[ 28 : 46 ] DIY but I'm not any longer I think I am but my body disagrees so here I was up the top of this ladder feeling incredibly sorry for myself having a personal pity party at the top of the ladder and it didn't matter what I did this screw wasn't going to go in but you know with every problem and I had several problems in the installation of this thing all the way through because nothing was straightforward it should have been but it wasn't and at every point I found myself thrown into prayer I found myself saying Lord I can't do this in my strength I can barely do it in yours Lord will you help me here you know father's a great electrician and he's great at DIY but we do really need to come to the end of our own resources one of the most precious verses for every single one of them one of us should be what the

Lord said in John 15 when he was talking about the vine and the branches apart from me you can do nothing okay right okay you're in charge of your next breath are you is that right you're in charge of your next breath 20 no okay so how much can we do without Jesus absolutely zero we can do nothing without him how wonderful is that what a what a discovery Paul said I will all the more glory and boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ might rest upon me we're taught to be self sufficient the world teaches us to be self sufficient we get it with our mother's milk and the

Bible teaches us to be God reliant not self reliant and God reliant to the very smallest detail of our lives to the next breath of our lives if we need to trust God for our next breath if we need to lean on him for our next breath if he needs to give us the strength to breathe in again then we need his help with everything including putting up a light fitting and we really need to be humbled to that extent I want to tell you my brothers and sisters a church that is self reliant is humanistic it's not a church it's just humanism with a religious face on we don't dare be a self reliant church because it's a contradiction in terms so God is good and he gives the

Holy Spirit to those who ask so we're all going to make sure right I remember once sitting watching I was listening to Jim Packer and Jack Hayford and here you've got this solid Calvinist who wrote Knowing God and we love that book and here's this Calvinist standing there and Jack Hayford and died the whole Pentecostal man who wrote the song Majesty that we all sing quite often and these two guys sharing a platform talking about the Holy Spirit and it was utterly astonishing because there were far more points of agreement than disagreement between the Calvinist and the Pentecostal far more points of agreement and the wonderful thing about it all is they both agreed about one thing ask the father for the Holy Spirit ask for the Holy Spirit's help for life in Christ they were both agreed about that now Jesus was casting out a demon that was mute and when the demon had gone out the mute man spoke and the people marvelled and interestingly enough

Luke who usually is our go to man for detail doesn't tell us any more about this miracle he just says the people marvelled but what he does do is he says that there was stuff going on in the crowd that caught Luke's attention because people were saying the most appalling things about Jesus they were saying this man's in league with the devil that's that's that's how he's able to cast out these demons the devil says okay we'll just we'll let this man go free just so that we can score a few points and it will look good for Jesus and people you know that's just that's total rot that's nonsense Satan doesn't set people free Satan relishes slavery the powers of darkness enslave people you know what you know what the

[ 34 : 35 ] Lord's prayer is doing the Lord's prayer is saying to us all come on it's time to come out of the orphanage you've got a father sin runs an orphanage and we're all orphaned until Jesus comes along that's why no one comes to the father except through him as he was discoursing in the upper room with them before he went to the cross he was teaching them about the Holy Spirit he said I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you what he was talking about was the Holy Spirit coming I love the way the New Testament uses the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus interchangeably telling you right now to help you obey the father is that good news so here you've got this ignorant crowd and they're saying he's in league with the devil he's getting help from

Beelzebul to cast out these demons and others wanting to test him were looking for a sign from heaven and a speaking mute is not a sign from heaven I mean the ignorance of this crowd the sheer arrogance of this crowd they're looking for a sign from heaven can you believe how ignorant and disrespectful this crowd was toward Jesus yes I think we can believe how ignorant and disrespectful they were toward Jesus because if we had been there we would probably have been in the crowd shouting abuse at Jesus that's what Kirsten Getty is getting at in that song I think it was Stuart Townend who wrote it actually behold the man upon a cross my sin upon his shoulder ashamed

I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers way back in 1960 the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad actually snatched a man off the streets of Buenos Aires his name was Adolf Eichmann he was the mastermind the logistical expert who made sure that there was always transport available to take millions of Jews and other people the Nazis hated to the concentration camps he actually boasted at one point that he would jump into his grave laughing with five million people on his conscience but Mossad actually kidnapped him from the streets of Buenos Aires where he had taken exile and they took him back to Israel for trial there was a little man who was a survivor of

Auschwitz was brought into the courtroom to give his testimony among all the other testimonies and this man came into the courtroom and he was taken to the witness box and they sat him down and he started to give his testimony and it was kind of mechanical almost as though he was just remembering it all without emotion it was like he was numb and then in the course of his testimony he looked over at Eichmann who was sitting there with a bulletproof screen around him and suddenly this man went into absolute paroxysms of grief he just he completely he went berserk he threw himself on the floor of the courtroom and he was beating his fists and crying and weeping sobbing uncontrollably eventually they managed to calm him down and he finished giving his testimony and left the courtroom he was interviewed by a sort of

American equivalent of Jeremy Paxman years later and the interviewer said to him what was actually going on there what was it that caused you to collapse like that in the courtroom he said when I saw Eichmann he said I saw I didn't see what I expected to see I didn't see this godlike person in a smart uniform who had the power of life and death over millions of people and could say you go that way you go that way you go you know he says I didn't see that he said I saw an ordinary man with a collar and tie and I thought Eichmann's in me I could do that I'm capable of these things this sin this evil this wickedness is in all of us that's a sobering thought isn't it but that takes it to a different dimension when you think of being there when Jesus was being catcalled by the crowd it's very probable that you and I would have been doing the cat calling with everyone else it's only by the grace of

[ 40 : 20 ] God that you and I are able to say Abba and what grace is that so do you know who you're serving because there's no neutrality you see Jesus makes this point he's still answering the prayer of his disciples here at this point they've asked him teach us to pray and he's teaching them to pray he's saying there's no neutrality every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste and a divided household falls he says you're going to have to come to a place of making up your mind because you're either for me or you're against me there is no middle ground there is no middle ground you're for me or you're against me you're gathering with me into the kingdom

Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to gather us to bring us to God that's what he's doing and he says if you're not in the gathering business helping people to come to God you're in the scattering business and you're driving people in the wrong direction and that's why we must pray for our future king because if he's not gathering with Jesus he's a scatterer and there's no spiritual vacuum you know there are so many self help techniques around to us today mindfulness and Alexander's technique and all sorts of stuff around to help people sort of take control of their lives and reform themselves morally and be better person and be all they can be and all this secular occult nonsense and Jesus is warning against all of that and saying that kind of self help is dangerous you do a little bit of spring cleaning sort your life out a bit and then the demon just goes out and it finds some mates and says hey come on there's room for demonic community here let's move in in this person's life he's a bit clearer than when we left him we'll have a lot more fun bringing him down again it's only

Jesus who can drive the wickedness out of our hearts and our lives only Jesus and he said and this is the great thing you know when you when you when you cry Abba you're also saying Abba our faith is not in ourselves it's in your son who is the stronger than the strong he's the one who has invaded Satan's territory and overpowered him the only one who was capable of fighting for us and overpowering the enemy the strong man who comes against the strong man and proves to be the stronger man is the one who is the son of God and the son has set us free and therefore we are free indeed more free than we know so one there's one woman in the crowd who's brave enough to stand against the mockery and the insults and she cries out above all the other voices blessed blessed is the womb that bore you she's talking about Mary blessed is the womb remember

Mary said that very thing she said from now on all women will call me blessed for he who is mighty has done great things he has been mindful of the lowest state of his handmaiden and Mary said she says all women will call me blessed here's a woman doing exactly that blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed and Jesus says well actually and he's not he's not telling the woman she's wrong he's not reproving her he's improving her he's not telling her that she's got it wrong because he would never think that Mary his mother wasn't blessed so he's not telling her she's got it wrong he's just saying no no there's more there's better yes it's it's true it's absolutely true that Mary is greatly blessed but blessed rather are those who hear the word of

God and keep it and the word actually in the original it means to isolate to guard to protect to cherish that's the exact opposite of what the bishops have done in London recently instead of keeping guarding cherishing protecting the word of God they've ignored the word of God basically so brothers and sisters Jesus is teaching us how to pray here and he's saying at the heart of all you're praying there has got to be a sense of cherishing the word of God cherish the word of God because if you can pray from the pages of scripture then you're going to be praying according to God's will let's do that right now Abba

[ 46 : 22 ] Abba we are utterly amazed that you would give us the right to become children of God but that is what we are today and we pray dearest Abba that you would help us to understand that we don't diminish you in any sense in fact if we are to hallow your name the way we hallow your name is by saying Abba is by realizing that El Shaddai and Emmanuel and Yahweh and Abba are our God that you are all these things and more to us so father we bless you now that we are children of

God and you have given us permission you've even given us encouragement to bring our request to you because what's happening father is that our requests are coming from you in the first place you're planting your will in our hearts so that we pray for the very things you want to do each one of us here right now has a person who comes immediately to mind when we think of salvation Lord help us now just take a quiet moment before you to bring that person before our Abba and ask you to reach into their hearts to remove the scales from their eyes to undo the blindness that the God of this age has placed upon them and to enable them to reach out to you in repentance for the salvation that they so urgently need hear our prayer



Lord help us in this quietness to bring them before you go to go to the Kiss in a riDe ■■■  
Abba your son has said to us that if we ask anything in his name we should believe that we have received it and it will be ours Father we believe that you would not lay someone on our hearts if you do not intend to bless them we believe that our prayers are given by you in the first place and so we dare to believe Father that you have heard our cry and you will find a way to move their hearts because the king's heart is in your hand oh God and you move it like a water course as you please and if you can move a king's heart you can move a relative's heart and you have moved our hearts and we pray you always will

Abba dear Abba please take us into all that it means to call you Abba and look to you as father and be obedient children and be concerned for the honour of your name help us to be numbered among those who hear your word and keep it in Jesus name Amen Thank you for all that things were fuckin and one of thee to pray in your God and one of you is worth it