

The Shameless Father and His Extravagant Answering

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 October 2013

Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[0 : 00] Amen. Living God, we believe that you enabled Luke to accurately record the words of the Lord Jesus for us.

And I pray now in your mercy and grace that you would help us enter into the reality these words are describing as never before. For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Lord, teach us to pray. You might know that it is the only thing any of Jesus' first disciples asked him to teach them.

There is no record of, Lord, teach us to heal. No record of, Lord, teach us to lead. Nor teach us to counsel. Or teach us to cast out demons.

Or teach us to evangelize. Not even teach us how to preach the gospel. Just, Lord, teach us to pray. Why? Because, I think, Jesus' first disciples could see that Jesus' healing, leading, counseling, liberating, evangelizing, preaching ministry emerges out of his relationship with the one he calls Father.

[1 : 18] And they could see that the key to this relationship is prayer. Jesus is regularly slipping away to pray. Lord, teach us to pray.

I take it to mean more than teach us some new techniques so we can do this well. I take it to mean teach us what you know about your Father that makes you always want to pray.

So, Jesus teaches them a shorter version of the prayer he had given them in the Sermon on the Mount. A shorter version of the Lord's Prayer. And he teaches them a parable.

Usually called, The Friend at Midnight. Now, I preached this parable from this spot as a guest speaker 12 years ago in July of 2001.

I also preached this parable for our family conference out at Keats Island in September of 2010. I would love to preach this parable every year.

[2 : 23] At least once a year. For one thing, the whole world needs to hear what Jesus reveals in this parable. And for another, I long to hear it again and again and again.

I want to keep hearing it until this message so transforms my soul. I'm going to say the same thing about Luke 15 when we get to that in two weeks.

Clearly, in its original context, Lord, teach us to pray. The parable is intended to encourage us. To encourage the first disciples and us to actually want to pray.

Does it? Does this parable make you want to pray? Verse 8. I tell you, even though he will not give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will give it.

Does that make you want to pray? Traditional Western interpretation and preaching of this parable has done two things with it. First, it has said that the parable is about the one asking for bread.

[3 : 41] That is, the parable is about us. We who pray. Second, it has said that the parable calls us to be persistent in prayer.

Verse 8 again, in the translation we read, because of his persistence. It was during the four years that my family and I lived in Manila, that I came to see that the traditional Western interpretation and preaching of this parable is off the mark.

That it does not get the wonderful thing Jesus is revealing in this parable. As I learned to look at the world through Filipino worldview, which I was discovering is very similar to the Middle Eastern worldview in which Jesus lived and taught, and as I, in that Asian context, learned more about the Middle Eastern worldview through the work of missionary theologian Kenneth Bailey, who had lived 35 years in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel, I came to see that, number one, the parable is not about the one who's asking for bread.

And number two, the parable is not about persistence. The parable in Luke 18, the widow and the unjust judge, which we will look at next Sunday, that is about persistence.

But not this parable in Luke 11, verse 8. Because of his persistence, we now know that persistence is not the right way to translate the word that Jesus used.

[5 : 31] Well, then what is this parable about? In order to see and hear what Jesus is revealing, we need to make five observations. observations.

Observation one. The parable begins with a question. Verses five to seven are a question in the original text. The only English or Western version I know that gets this is the ESV, which was published in 2001.

The version we read this morning, the NASB, begins with, suppose one of you shall have a friend. Now, if you had a study Bible, a copy of this version, you would see the little letter A.

Can I have that slide? Little letter A on top of the word suppose. You see that little word? You can't see it from way back there, but trust me, it's there. This little A on top of suppose, and then you would look down in your marginal note, and A would say, Luke 11, 5, lit, lit is a way of saying, literally, which one of you will have?

Verses five to seven are a question. Tis ex human, which of you? So, it's supposed to be read, which of you has a friend and shall go to him at midnight and say, friend, lend me three loaves of bread for a friend of mine has come on a journey and I have nothing to set before him and from inside the house answers, do not bother me, the door is already locked and my children and I are in bed and I cannot get up and give him anything.

[7 : 01] It's one long question. Which of you? with the nuance of can you imagine? Can you imagine Mr. A receiving a guest at night needing to put some food before his guest?

Can you imagine Mr. A then going to Mr. B and saying to Mr. B, can you lend me three loaves of bread so that I can feed this guest who's come to me?

And can you imagine Mr. B saying from inside, go away. The children and I are already in bed. I will not get up and give you anything.

Can you imagine that? Which of you can imagine that? Which of you can imagine? Mr. A receiving the guest, needing to feed the guest, going to Mr. B asking for help and Mr. B just sitting there.

Can you imagine that? Which of you? So, the first observation is the parable begins with a question. Second observation, the culturally expected answer is none of us.

[8 : 16] None of us can imagine this scenario. Which of you? None of us. Can you imagine it? No. It's impossible in a Middle Eastern context.

And I've tested it in Lebanon, in Nazareth. I've tested it in the Philippines and all kinds of cities in the Philippines.

I've tested it in Singapore and Malaysia and Korea and in Beijing. I've tested it among the Armenian people of Glendale, California where we used to live. I've tested it with Chinese and Korean and Vietnamese in this city.

And everyone answers, this is a culturally impossible scenario. Now, in the West, it's very possible. In fact, in the West, you can imagine Mr. B getting up and calling the police because he's been bothered at midnight.

But not in the Middle East. Not in Asia. Asian friends, am I right? Am I right? It's impossible to imagine. Why?

[9 : 20] Third observation. Because of cultural dynamics that are at work in this parable. You see, there are two great cultural values in the Middle East.

They are hospitality and avoidance of shame. Hospitality and avoidance of shame. And they're at work in the parable in a number of ways.

First of all, the host, Mr. A, has to put more food in front of his guests than the guests can possibly eat. That's how you show hospitality.

You put more food than they can eat. That's why I think people coming from other parts of the world don't think we're very hospitable here in Canada. We don't put enough food on the table. I learned this in the Philippines.

We were invited, Sharon and I, we only had two kids at the time, invited to a Filipino home for dinner. We walk into that house. My goodness, the table is just full of food. I said, are your family members coming?

[10 : 18] No. Other members of the church coming? No. But they had to put more food on that table than Sharon and I and the two kids could possibly, possibly eat. This is true in Armenia when I was there, in Lebanon, in Jerusalem, in Israel, I mean, in Korea.

I was preaching in Korea and every morning at this place where I was staying, she put more breakfast there than I could possibly eat. They took me out to dinner after I preached. We had more meals and food than I could possibly eat.

Am I right? This is how it's supposed to be. By the way, there's a corollary to that and that is you have to take seconds. Otherwise, you insult the host. So, I learned that you just take a little bit the first time because I know I had to take seconds.

Also, what's going on in this parable then is that the guest of Mr. A is a guest of the whole village, not just of Mr. A. A guest of the whole village.

I used to love it when Filipinos would say to me, how do you like our country? Not my country, our country. The average Filipino knew that they were expressing hospitality on behalf of the whole Philippine islands.

[11 : 27] It's the same thing in Jordan and Lebanon. How do you like our country? So, he's a guest of everybody in the village. Another cultural dynamic going on here.

The man who, Mr. A, is asking for Mr. B. He's always asking for is the utensils with which to eat the meal. He's asking for the bread. See, in that day and even now, there's a common meal in a big bowl like a stew and a loaf of bread would be passed around.

You break off a hunk of bread, you dip it into the stew and then you eat the stew with the piece of bread. It all goes into your mouth. Which is, by the way, why people who come right out of the Middle East and have never been exposed to the West think that we are really gross people.

Because we do a really gross thing. We put our fork into our meat. We put the meat into our mouth and the fork goes right into the mouth. And then the horrible thing we do is we pull the fork out.

You never pull anything out of your mouth. Oh, you people, you're so gross. But they're kind enough never to say that. Okay. Okay. All this is to say that Mr. A has to get some more food.

[12 : 41] After he asks Mr. B for the bread, he goes to Mr. C for carrots, to Mr. D for potatoes, Mr. E. He's got a lot more work to do that night. That's why in verse 8 Jesus says he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

He needs more than bread. He needs all this stuff on the table. And Mr. B knows everything I just told you about the culture. He gets it. The guest of Mr. A is also a guest of Mr. B.

C, D, and E. He's a guest of the whole village. Okay. Observation 4. Verse 8. This word in our text rendered as persistence.

It's the word anidion. Now, some other people translate it as boldness or audacity. I want to tell you something about this word anidion. This word did not have the meaning persistence until after the third century A.D.

If you had had a first century Greek dictionary, they didn't exist at the time, but if you had had a first century Greek dictionary and you'd looked up anidion, it would not say persistence.

[13 : 54] Not until the third century dictionary does that meaning come to this word. Well, what did the word mean? It meant shamelessness in the sense of avoidance of shame.

So, for instance, if you had a study Bible again, can I have that next sheet? Next slide, please. You'll notice on the word down here, here it is, persistence, there's a little c, and you look down in your margin, and it says Luke 11, 8, literally, again, shamelessness.

Notice that in your study Bibles. It'll all say shamelessness. You know what I discovered living in the Philippines? Every single time that you had this literally in the margin, that should have been the reading.

But the Western world didn't get it. So it didn't put that reading in there. It didn't mean persistence until the third century.

It meant shamelessness. Now, shame is a negative thing, but the positive thing is avoidance of shame. So shamelessness, I think, means avoidance of shame.

[15 : 06] In Middle Eastern cultures, in many Asian cultures, in some Hispanic cultures, I'm discovering, shame is the name of the game. In Greek and Roman, British, Swedish cultures, guilt is the name of the game.

We know about guilt. That will motivate us. But in those other cultures, it's shame. Yes, in the Middle East, there are rules. But life is governed by this shame.

And not in the sense of the way we use it in the West. We use the word shame in the West to mean, oh, I just really feel bad about myself. I'm such a horrible person. That's not what it means. Shame means losing face.

I'm hearing, uh-huh. Losing reputation. And a central cultural value is doing everything you possibly can do to avoid bringing shame on yourself, on your name, on your reputation.

I began to learn that living in Manila in two really interesting ways. One is the so-called third-party reconciliation. Let's say I had an issue with Judy. In the Middle East, I don't go directly to Judy.

[16 : 19] Right? I go to Abe. And I tell Abe everything. Then Abe goes to Judy. Judy can respond. And he pulls off this reconciliation. When I first heard about that, I thought that's a really chicken way to relate.

It's not. What it's doing is it's saving face. What if I was really upset with Judy? And I go to her and she sees on my face this upsetness. I see on her face that I disturbed her.

This is all God cattywampus and we can't relate. I can go to Abe and say oh man, Judy did this. She's always doing that. I can do everything I want to do. Because he's going to save my face.

He's then going to go to Judy and say it in some polite way. You know, we're concerned about saving her face, saving my face. Isn't that beautiful? That's what's going on in international politics by the way.

With Middle Eastern Asian countries. You've got to listen for that. The other way I learned it was at birthday parties. Our children didn't like this. At a birthday party, you don't open the gift in front of people.

[17 : 24] Right? Why don't you? Well, you might open the gift and not like what was given and the giver will see your displeasure in the face and everybody is shamed in that.

So you take it home and you open it up. And then you can open it up and go, oh, this is not a very pretty sweater. This is even my color. The giver doesn't see that. And it gives me a couple of days to kind of come to terms with the fact it's an okay sweater.

I wear the sweater to church the next Sunday and the person can say, did you like it? And I go, see, it looks okay on me. Everybody says face. So anition then means avoidance of shame at all costs.

Do I have it right, those of you from those cultures? Of course, you're not going to speak out loud either. Well then, if avoidance of shame is the meaning of anition, why have the western translations regularly rendered it as persistence or boldness or audacity?

Partly because the Greek and Roman mind, which is the mind that has basically translated the Bible for us, the Greek and Roman mind can't get its head around this concept of shame. We're still trying to understand it.

[18 : 39] But primarily because the Greek and Roman mind could not understand how this quality applies to the man asking for bread. Why do you have to have shamelessness in asking for bread?

What's shameful about going to ask for help in order to extend hospitality? Well, well, well, now we come to the fifth observation. anition does not apply to the asker, to the guy outside.

Anition applies to the askee, to the guy inside. Notice verse eight again. Verse eight has six clauses in it. Even though, it went out.

Okay, I can do it anyway. Look at line one. Even though he will not get up. Who's the he? Guy outside or guy inside? Inside. Inside. Correct.

And he, give him anything. Who's the he? Guy inside. Because he is his friend, not quite as clear, but probably the guy inside. Go to number five.

[19 : 48] He will get up. Who's that? Guy inside. And he will give him as much as he needs. Who's the he? The guy inside. Well, you got five clauses with the subject being the guy inside.

How come we then switch it in line four and make the subject the guy on the outside? The quality of a nightion applies to the guy inside, to the guy being asked for bread.

And now we come to the point. Even if the guy inside hates this guy on the outside, he is going to get up and he is going to give Mr.

As much as he needs because he does not want the word to spread to the village the next morning that he failed to help extend hospitality.

He has an idea on. He has shamelessness. He will avoid shame. He will do everything to enable this man to extend hospitality.

[20 : 53] hospitality. The point is that in that culture, there is something that goes beyond friendship. And it is avoidance of shame.

I'm not going to damage my reputation. I'm not going to lose face. I'm not going to hear someone say in the morning that I was asked to help and I refused to help.

I don't want that shame. So Mr. B will do it even if he hates Mr. A to save his honor, his name, his reputation.

Are you listening? Are you getting this? Yes? Now we can hear the parable. Lord, teach us to pray. Okay, I will.

He gives us the Lord's prayer and the parable. The parable is not about us who ask. The parable is about God. It's about God the Father.

[21 : 54] When you pray, say Father. Say, Father, hello, your name. And he does. The parable says the Father has an idea on.

He has avoidance of shame. Or to put it in positively, in biblical terms, the Father will always act in a way that honors his name. The Father will never shame his name.

Amen, indeed. Well, what is God's name? A whole host of names. El Shaddai, El Rophe, Jehovah, Jireh, the list goes on.

But the name above every name is the name Yahweh, the sacred name, I am. Moses asked, what is your name? And God responds, Yahweh, I am who I am.

Now, it's not I am who I am in the philosophical sense, but I am who I am in a relational sense. I am there with you and for you. I am there with you and for you.

[22 : 59] I was there with you and for you. I will be there with you and for you. Yahweh is the covenant name. All the covenants have this line from God, I will be your God.

All I am, I'm placing at your disposal, all that makes me be God, I place at your disposal. I give it all to you. I give all my power, all my holiness, all my purity, all my wisdom, all my strength.

I give it all to you. That's what Yahweh means. And Jesus says, God will always honor that name.

The Father will never act in a way that shames that name. Now, God has gone public with this name. I am who I am.

And he's placed this name on his people, Yahweh's people. God has said, I will be there, I am there with you and for you. I will be there with you and for you.

[23 : 58] And God does not want to hear the rumor go around the next morning that someone came asking for help and was told to go away.

He will honor this name. God has been to God. Now, if you know the Bible well, you should now begin to see a lot of things in the videotape. This is how they pray in the Old Testament.

Moses, it's Exodus 32. God says to Moses, I've just had it with these people. I'm frustrated with them ten times now. I've blessed them ten times.

All they do is grumble and complain. I've had it. And you remember how Moses prays? What he says to God in that moment? If you wipe them out, what are the Egyptians going to think?

You said, I am there with you and for you. And if you wipe them out, you have shamed your name. And God changes his mind.

[25 : 04] It's riddled in the Psalms. Psalm 25 verse 11. Oh Yahweh, pardon my iniquity for your namesake because it's really great.

Not pardon my iniquity because I need it or I'll be better. No, for your namesake. You said, whoever comes to you and repents of sin, you welcome and you forgive.

And so I'm appealing to your name. Ezekiel chapter 36. God laments the fact that the people of God have shamed his name. We understand that.

And what's God's response to that? So I'm going to clean you up. I'm going to give you a new heart. I'm going to put my spirit in you so that my name will be glorified among you.

So do you see how then this parable is giving us help in praying? It's giving us great assurance in prayer. the wonderful assurance that God will not dishonor his name.

[26 : 07] He'll never shame his name. The Father loves us. We're going to discover big time in Luke 15 in those parables. The Father loves us. I need you to say that with me because I'm going to say something else that will throw you off.

Ready? The Father loves us, right? Again, please. One more time, a little stronger. Father loves us. But even if he doesn't, Father loves us.

Say it again, please. The Father loves us. But even if he doesn't, he loves his name and he will honor that name.

I told you, I'm there with you and for you and I'll never shame it. Wow.

Well, God's commitment to his name then translates into commitment to his people. 1 Samuel 12, 22. For the sake of his great name, Yahweh will not reject you. Huh.

[27 : 11] This is the context in which the people want a king like everybody else. And Samuel says, you don't want that. Let me tell you, you don't want a human king. And then he says, but for the sake of his great name, Yahweh will not reject you.

So John Piper can say, it was God's good pleasure to join you to himself in such a way that his name is at stake in your destiny.

Or, it was God's good pleasure to possess you in such a way that what happens to you affects his name. Wow. The Father's name is I am there with you and for you.

I give myself to you. Now, this helps us understand the rest of what Jesus is saying in Luke 11, 1 to 13. Look at verse 9. Ask, seek, knock.

I don't know about you, but I grew up with a sense that this was calling me to persistence, as though I had to keep asking, seeking, and knocking, to wear God down. It's not about persistence.

[28 : 19] It's a note of assurance. Ask, seek, knock, because something always happens when you do, when you ask and seek and knock. Ask, seek, knock are in the present tense, so you literally translate them.

Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Why? As though you have to wear God down? No. Look at verse 10. Receive and find. Receive and find are also in the present tense.

Is receiving, is finding. Jesus is saying, the one who keeps on asking is receiving. The one who keeps on seeking is finding. What?

What is happening as we keep on praying? Mother Teresa answers best. We are expanding our capacity to receive. To receive what? God.

God. We are expanding our capacity to receive this extravagant gift the Father wants to give. He wants to give us himself. Therefore, verse 13, give the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 25] Will not the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who are asking him? The African theologian Saint Augustine of the third century says that the Holy Spirit is the embodiment of the love relationship between the Father and the Son.

the Father loves his Son. He delights in his Son. The Son loves the Father and delights in the Son. And the Holy Spirit is the embodiment of all of that love and delight. And the Father and the Son have declared publicly the promise to give the Holy Spirit to whomever is asking.

Jesus calls the Spirit the promise of the Father and the Father will never shame his name. He made the promise. man alive.

I don't even know how to respond to that. So, can you imagine Mr. A receiving a gift at midnight or receiving a guest having to put food in front of him doesn't have any food.

Can you imagine Mr. A going to Mr. B and saying, hey, can you help me out? I need a couple of loaves of bread to extend hospitality to this guy. Can you imagine Mr. B just sitting there and saying, no.

[30 : 49] It's inconvenient to me. Just go away. Can you imagine that? No. Can you imagine me or you going to God the Father in the name of God the Son and asking the Father to give more of the Holy Spirit to you.

Can you imagine the Father just sitting there? No. He will get up and he will give you all of the Spirit that you need in order to practice hospitality in the world.

Whoa. I feel like dancing again. He's, oh, it's something. Something.

I don't know how to respond. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh.

Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh.

[32 : 11] Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh.

Oh.