

# Lord, Teach us to Pray

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Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I invite you to turn to page 68 again from the Gospel of Luke. We're continuing our sermon series in this great gospel. This is on prayer, as you heard, the importance of prayer in our lives, where prayer comes from.

Prayer has been in the news this week, of course. The inauguration prayer was something that was very much discussed before it ever even happened. The question of whether there should be a prayer at all, whether it should be in somebody's name, the content of that prayer.

And they're actually good questions because prayer expresses who God is. It expresses the relationship that the prayer has with God as well.

Tremendously significant, what happens in our prayers. And the one who prayed the inauguration prayer, Rick Warren, did decide to pray in the name of Jesus as the one who changed his life.

And what he did at the very end then was to use the prayer that's in our passage today. And it's very good for us to be able to look closely at what that prayer is about.

[ 1 : 18 ] When that was prayed on Tuesday, many, many people were able to recite that by heart. And it's good for us and good for them as well to know what it is that they were praying.

What is the significance of what Jesus has taught there? The way that this passage starts out is that Jesus was praying himself. And he went off to a certain place, it says there in verse 1, probably a place with no distractions.

And he prays on his own. The disciples are off to the side, it seems, there. And it seems that they are probably just watching him and thinking about what he's doing.

And probably discussing amongst themselves what Jesus does, how he does this with regularity. And how it seems to be so central to his life.

And wonderfully what happens is that one of the disciples comes up to Jesus and very honestly says, Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples to pray.

[ 2 : 25 ] Lord, teach us to pray. And I think that this is a wonderful thing for us to be hearing this morning. Because if we are honest, this is a question, this is a desire and a request that each of us have of God.

Teach us to pray. How can we come to God? What can we say in our prayers? And Jesus wonderfully answers in this whole passage.

And I think that the thing that we have in common with the disciples as they ask the question is, we feel an inadequacy. The reason that the disciples ask the question is because they felt inadequate.

They wanted Jesus' help. And it is very easy for us as Christians now to feel very guilty about our prayer life. We can very easily make one another guilty in asking about it even.

And like the disciples, we know that it is very important. But there are so many things that get in the way. There are so many things that keep us from praying as Jesus wants us to.

[ 3 : 30 ] It is busy schedules, perhaps. Few places with real quiet in our lives. I think this is at a premium in our culture. It is a lack of motivation, perhaps.

Maybe it is just simply not knowing what to pray and how to say the prayers. Which is what the disciples were going through. We are also in an age where we need to produce.

Produce things that are tangible. And prayer does not do that right away. We are with the disciples in knowing inadequacy in our prayer life. And what Jesus does here in these short verses is he teaches his disciples.

He teaches us how to pray in verses 2 through 4. And then he teaches us why to pray. What is our motivation? What moves us to pray? And we need both of these things.

Well, Jesus is wonderfully gracious in this passage. And he is joyful as well. There is humor in the parables that he tells after the Lord's Prayer. And he is joyful, I think, because he is inviting his

disciples into his life with God the Father.

[ 4 : 39 ] The thing that is precious to him, the thing that brings the greatest joy, is to be in relationship with God the Father. And so the first thing he says to them is, When you pray, say, Father.

Father. And we cannot overstress how important that one word is. Because in it, Jesus is telling us the how and the why of prayer.

He is actually inviting us to pray to God just as Jesus prayed to God as Father. And he is saying that he has brought them into his relationship with God.

It is a powerful thing for him to be teaching. He is bringing them into that relationship. Remember at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he was baptized.

The Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus in bodily form like a dove. And a voice comes from heaven. And what does the voice say? God's voice. God the Father.

[ 5 : 41 ] You are my beloved son, he says. With you, I am well pleased. And the amazing thing is, is that Jesus is teaching them to call God what he calls him.

He is inviting them to intimacy with God. The reason Jesus will die on the cross and forgive the sin of the world is simply so that people can know God as their Father.

So they can come to him in prayer and call him Father. It is not a gift that we can deserve. We can't arrange it. It can only be accomplished through the power of God at work on the cross.

Through the power of his resurrection for us. This is the good news. And this is the connection with our last passage, I think. Do you remember?

Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet. And she is listening to his words. And Jesus says, you know, Mary has chosen the good portion. The reason I think Luke puts this teaching on prayer here is because it is the response to hearing God's word.

[ 6 : 49 ] It is our response to knowing that Jesus has brought to us this magnificent relationship of being able to call God our Heavenly Father. And he does this by his Holy Spirit.

I want you to look at Romans 8. So if you just keep your finger there in Luke 11 and flip over to page 148, Romans 8. I want to look at one verse which is really key for us as we look at prayer.

The Lord's Prayer. It says in chapter 8, verse 15. Second column over there. It says, For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship.

That's the spirit of adoption. When we cry, Abba, Father, it is the spirit himself bearing witness within our spirit that we are children of God.

And that is the motivation to pray. That is what allows us to be able to pray this prayer that Jesus taught us. The same spirit that came to Jesus when God said, You are my beloved son, comes to you and me as well.

[ 8 : 04 ] When we trust in Jesus. And we are adopted into the life of God as his daughters and his sons. We call him Abba. Many years ago, I was a youth minister at a church.

And we were studying this passage. And it was a very striking moment when we finished. Because I asked the question, Do you know what Abba means? And being a youth group, there was a very quick, smart answer.

It's a Swedish pop group. And I said, No, but anybody else? And right away, thankfully, there was a 15-year-old girl who had just started coming to church.

Had never been to church before in her life. Had never read the Bible before. And she was really learning for the first time. And she spoke up right away. And she said, It means daddy.

I said, How did you know that? And she said, Well, my dad is from a Jewish family. And ever since I can remember, I have called my dad Abba. And I said, Well, that must be a very important word for you.

[ 9 : 11 ] And she said, Yes. She said, It means a lot to me. She said, He is the only one that I call Abba. And it means that I'm close to him.

I think of our relationship. And I thought, Well, she has just given us the Bible study there. What that word Abba, the force of it is, is that we are brought into intimate and a completely open relationship with God that is unique in all the world.

And Jesus is teaching that when you pray, you are experiencing that relationship you have in him with God. You are praying from the inside. You are praying as one who is close, who is part of the family life that God the Son has with God the Father.

So just as God is well pleased with Jesus and takes joy in him, so he takes joy in us because of Jesus. He delights in our coming to him.

And that's why Jesus teaches us to spend time talking and thinking about God, our Father, our Abba, at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer.

[10:24] The first two things that Jesus teaches to pray are about God himself. Jesus is teaching us to lift our eyes to him, to shift our focus away from our own needs for that time and our own, the things that we are going through ourselves and seek the glory of God, the goodness of God in our prayers.

And so he says, first we ask that his name be hallowed or sanctified. And when we pray that prayer, we are asking that the glory of God might shine into the world.

In other words, that people will understand his power and his goodness and his righteousness and his wisdom. And in fact, all the attributes of God that we see in his word, that that would shine into the world.

I think it's a prayer of evangelism, of God's glory extending into the world. And secondly, we ask that his kingdom will come.

Now remember that in this part of Luke, there is an emphasis on Jesus' journey. He is setting out for Jerusalem and he is going to heaven through Jerusalem.

[11:39] And in this prayer, what is marvelous about it is that Jesus is joining his disciples in that journey. He is bringing them into that journey to heaven. And this part of the prayer keeps the disciples' eyes and our eyes fixed on our final destination.

It's really clear here. We are longing for the day that Jesus will come in all his glory, bringing the kingdom of God in power. And we are praying always that Jesus will come quickly.

So that is the great fact that is in front of us as we pray. And also when we're praying that prayer, we are praying for the process that we are now part of in which God's kingdom is extending into the world as well.

We are asking that all people will be brought into the, under the gracious, loving rule of God the Father and that they would know him as their Father.

So now that our minds are filled with God's agenda and his glory, Jesus then teaches that we would pray for ourselves, everything that is important to us.

[12:48] And there are three ways Jesus is talking about praying, three different ways. He says, first of all, give us each day our daily bread. And when he says that, he is talking about our ongoing needs, not just food, but all our physical and spiritual needs that we must have for our journey to heaven.

Jesus is teaching us here by saying each day that we are depending every moment on the kindness of God. We, in fact, last week, I think there was a good expression of this at the end of our services at 9 and 11, we were praying for daily bread when we thanked God for meeting the financial needs in our parish when a deficit seemed inevitable.

So as a parish, we're experiencing our daily bread as we prayed at the end of 2008 for what seemed an insurmountable sort of goal.

It was very good to kneel together to thank him because it's a picture of our dependence on God and his goodness. And I want to tell you that this prayer for daily bread extends to the smallest matters in our life as well.

Calvin puts this very wonderfully, John Calvin. He says that because God is our Father, his fatherly kindness extends to the smallest matters in our lives.

[14:11] So there's nothing that we need to worry that we are bothering God about. It's quite the opposite. He desires to hear from us as children. An example for us was a member of our staff, who we'll call Edie, I was riding with her to VGH to visit somebody in the hospital.

And it was snowy and we needed a parking place close by. So we pulled right into the closest parking lot. And as we drove in, Edie started praying.

She said, God, give us a parking place close to the door. And as soon as she prayed, out comes a car backing out of the closest parking spot. And I was amazed by that.

There's the smallest thing and yet God answers. And that's something you should keep in mind. If you see Edie in a parking lot in a car and you're in a different car, start praying.

But this is an expression of the fact that we live and move and have our being in God himself. It is right to come to him as our Father for everything.

[ 15 : 19 ] And he goes on to say that we ask God, he teaches us to ask God to forgive us our sins, as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Now this last part of the prayer, or this middle part of the prayer, is about our life together. It is about the center of our life together. And did you notice that the Lord's Prayer is a communal prayer? It doesn't say my Father. It says our Father. It doesn't say give me my daily bread. It says give us our daily bread.

It doesn't say forgive me my sins. It says forgive us our sins. There is this real sense that we are praying together. Even if we are alone in our home and praying, we are praying to the same Father. And we pray for one another. And we are related to one another as we pray as well. That's what's great about liturgy. It reflects this aspect of prayer.

[ 16 : 19 ] And central to the life together that we have is forgiveness. And this is what Jesus is teaching here. We need to know the powerful forgiving grace of God through Jesus' death.

It is essential for us as we go on this journey. And not only that, but we need to extend the grace that we have received in the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who we have hurt and who have hurt us.

And we can only do it by God's help. That's why Jesus says pray for this. And I want you to notice that Jesus teaches us to forgive those indebted to us is the word he uses.

And that's powerful because he is saying that we carry on the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of release, the release of debts, which was very basic to Jesus' ministry.

We are actually with him in that ministry as we release the sins of those who are against us. And we release in that sense ourselves from the bitterness and the pain of holding on to that debt as well.

[ 17 : 27 ] And then the final part of the things that we ask for is that Jesus says, lead us not into temptation. This is a prayer for spiritual protection.

And I think that it talks about our relationship with the loving father. Because if you have children, you know that one of the basic things that you want for all the time is the safety of your children. The spiritual and physical safety of your children. This expresses God's heart towards us. That he wants us to be safe in him.

We are asking here for God to give us grace not to give into the temptation to leave the journey, to walk away from this relationship that Jesus has established with us.

It is a prayer to avoid falling into a situation where we would need forgiveness. And we pray this because God can prevent sin from overwhelming the believer.

[ 18 : 26 ] And that is his promise to us. The only way to avoid sin is to follow where Jesus leads, where God leads. And that's why this call, this prayer to lead us as well.

So this is how we pray. And I wanted to just mention that this, of course, is not the extent of our prayers in the sense that we pray those words of the Lord's Prayer and that's the prayer life. Our prayers are framed by this. Jesus is teaching that this is the guide to prayer. It is the summary of all our prayers. All prayers that are good and right are contained in this teaching on prayer. Now, the question is, why do we pray? And I want to close with this as we leave the passage because what the last section from 5 to 13 talks about is that we can be certain, Jesus is teaching, that God, your Father, will give you what you need for this journey.

You can be absolutely assured of that. And so he uses a parable. He says, now imagine that you had a guest unexpectedly drop in on a journey in verse 5.

[ 19 : 44 ] And you end up coming up short as far as your basic food. And your three loaves is all you need. It's midnight.

And you go to a friend and you start banging on his door. Now the problem with this is that the door is shut and the children are with him in bed, which was the way in the Palestinian world.

You all slept together on a mat. So if somebody gets up, everybody gets up, especially if somebody's banging on the door. And so the guy's got to get up, step on things, maybe try to light a lamp and have the door slide, bolt back, and open this creaking door.

The result will be chaos in the home. And anyone who has very little children know that when the child falls asleep, you will do absolutely everything to keep from waking them up.

Jesus says, imagine that. And so of course, the friend whispers very loudly, get out of here. I can't give you what you want because my children are here.

[ 20 : 52 ] Now Jesus is saying that even if the friendship is ignored, the person will get up. Why is that? Well, it's because of this word called importunity in verse 8.

Because of this importunity, he will rise and give him whatever he needs. Now that word importunity is not only unusual in English, it's unusual in the original language as well.

The sense is basically it's about shameless boldness is the way that it's put. And it's saying that the fact of God's relationship with us is that the father is not a friend who would feel inconvenienced.

Often we think of him that way. And Jesus is saying that that friend who feels very inconvenienced will give what is needed because of that other man's boldness.

Because of your shameless willingness to come at midnight, knock on the door so the whole town knows that you have to provide hospitality and he has to do it. The man will respond to boldness.

[ 21 : 59 ] It's saying, now how much more will God our father who wants us to come to him and ask for our needs, how much more will he respond to our boldness of coming to the God who created heaven and earth?

And of course, infinitely more. And therefore, Jesus says, ask and it will be given. In other words, come to God with your needs, it will be given. Secondly, seek.

And what he means by seek is looking for the things of the kingdom, for the blessings of the kingdom that come in your life and the life of the world. You will find that, Jesus says.

And finally, knock. In other words, come into God's presence. Come to him as the one who can only provide for you. That door will be open to you.

So Jesus is saying be bold in asking. Be confident that God wants to give and wants you to come to him. In fact, his desire to give is far greater than our desire to pray.

[ 23 : 03 ] That's a motivation for us. And Jesus just brings that home to us finally. Just pushes it even further by telling us again that God is our father.

And he says, you fathers among you, imagine that your son is asking for a fish. And I don't know if that's a live fish as a pet. That's what my son wants.

He wants a fish to play with. We're holding back on that one. And Jesus says, now imagine giving him, you fathers, a pet rattlesnake.

Imagine doing that. And of course, that would be a shocking thing. Impossible. Or if they asked for an egg, a little treat of an egg, would you give him a scorpion instead?

So in both of those things, would you fathers give him something that would harm her or him? And of course, the answer is no. It is ridiculous. And Jesus says, okay, then if you are, who are evil, in other words, who have selfishness in your heart, who need God's rescue, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

[ 24 : 14 ] And I think this strikes at our heart. It strikes at the issue of mistrust. We don't trust God as we ought to. And Jesus is saying, be bold, trust in the response.

God delights in giving his children good gifts. In fact, we who are good at giving gifts have sin at our heart, can do it.

You cannot imagine how good the Holy God is at giving gifts to you, his beloved child. love. This is something that we should meditate on. How good God is at giving us his very, very good gifts.

And the greatest gift that this passage ends with is how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? And that's saying that on our journey, God by his Spirit in us witnesses with us that we are his children as we said at the beginning.

And that is the greatest gift of all. The Holy Spirit is telling us you are my beloved daughter, you are my beloved son, and that is the basis of your life here on earth. It is the reason that you will pray.

[ 25 : 25 ] The Holy Spirit helps us to pray. The life of God is in you, and you pray from the inside of God's life. And so, we leave this passage with Jesus' command to us to be bold because you have been adopted.

You are in the life of Jesus. Talk to your Father who is in heaven. Amen. Shall we pray? We thank you, our Lord, for this lovely gift, this mighty gift of prayer.

By your grace, keep us always faithful together and as a community in lives of prayer. To your glory and to our great good.

Lord, in your mercy, Lord, we would pray today for our troubled world. So many, Lord, stand in need of our prayer, this prayer which you command.

We pray for refugees and for victims of war. We would pray today for the hungry and the homeless.

[ 26 : 48 ] We would pray, Lord, for all who live in despair. we think of troubled places, Lord, in our world. We would ask for peace and order in Iraq, in Afghanistan where Canadians serve this day.

We pray for the crisis in Darfur. Lord, show the leaders of the world and us all the way to peace.

