

Luke 11:1-4 - Praying to Our Father

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: 06 August 2017

Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing. Martin Luther.

Though in its beginnings prayer is so simple that the feeble child can pray, yet it is at the same time the highest and holiest work to which man can rise.

It is the very essence of true religion, the channel of all blessings, the secret of power and life.

Andrew Murray. What a man is alone on his knees before God, that he is and no more.

Robert Murray McShane. Wow. Prayer is kind of important, right? Maybe you heard that. Maybe you thought it's supposed to be.

[1 : 06] Our church has said that prayer is one of our core commitments. It's one of those handful of things that we have said must shape how we do everything that we do.

We recognize our deep dependence and need for prayer. As our session has talked about these core commitments, the things we want to increasingly define us, one of the things we've acknowledged also is that this particular one about dependence and prayer is one that doesn't currently define us nearly as much as we wish it did.

I know it's a struggle for the pastor. I'm so much like Martha from last week's sermon, the story of Mary and Martha.

I so quickly find my significance in things that I do, how much I'm able to accomplish what other people can see. And so prayer can feel inefficient, unimpressive, and therefore secondary a lot of times.

We all live in a fast-paced, achievement-oriented culture where slowing down to talk with God is not often rewarded. Independence is praised more than dependence, right?

[2 : 35] So as we come to a place in God's Word in our study through Luke, where Jesus teaches us about prayer, we decided just to slow down for a few weeks, to talk about this together.

We'll ask as His disciples ask Him here in this passage, Lord, teach us to pray. I've been studying these past few weeks, and I'm more and more convinced that I'm learning right along with you, over and over.

You're probably going to notice that this morning in the unusually high number of other people that I quote, which could get a little bit annoying for you. But it's so good, y'all. The things that God's been teaching me over the last few months about a relationship with Him in prayer, I'm so eager to be able to share some of that with you as He continues teaching me.

I'm really looking forward to how Jesus will teach us and transform us through this. So let's read this familiar passage and then ask for His help. Luke 11 at verse 1.

This is God's Word. 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.

[3 : 59] And He said to them, When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation. The grass withers, the flowers fade, these words of our God will stand forever.

Let's ask for His help as we look to them. Jesus, teach me to pray.

Teach them to pray. Teach us to pray. We ask it in Your name. Amen.

Notice briefly before we look at the famous words of the Lord's Prayer that we've prayed already this morning, that Jesus Himself is praying yet again as we turn the page to chapter 11.

[5 : 09] And it's actually His activity of praying that prompts His disciples' request, isn't it? Now, think about that request for a minute. Lord, teach us to pray. Why teach us to pray?

Why not teach us to preach the way You do so incredibly well, Jesus? Teach us to perform miraculous signs and wonders as You do, and healing and other things.

Teach us to lead so powerfully as You do, Jesus. Why teach us to pray? I think Jesus' disciples must have seen how vital prayer was to who Jesus was.

They've been around Him. They've seen what drives Him. They've seen what fuels everything that He does. And Jesus praying is so often connected in the Gospel of Luke with His great deeds, with the things that He does.

He's constantly praying as He goes into them. And the disciples have watched that. And they come to Him with a request, not for information on prayer, but rather, Lord, teach us to pray.

[6 : 24] Jesus gets that request. Where's He gonna go with that? Where will He take them to start? He loves prayer, right? He does it all the time. What's He gonna tell someone first?

When to pray? Where to go to pray? No. Jesus starts with the identity of the person you're talking with in prayer.

My favorite book on prayer, which is available in the guest center this morning, if you want a copy, is this one, A Praying Life by Paul Miller. It's a really helpful book.

It's rich theologically and biblically. It's also very practical and gives you tips on how to develop a relationship with God where prayer is a natural part of life.

But in this book, Miller reminds us that fixing your prayer life is not something that you do by focusing on prayer itself, but rather by focusing on the God to whom you pray.

[7 : 28] He gives this analogy I've shared with you before that focusing on prayer is like driving and looking at the windshield rather than looking through the windshield to the road and the people where you are driving.

Trying to address prayer by focusing on prayer is like driving while staring only at the windshield. You're never going to get anywhere. What will motivate us, what will help our lives of prayer is knowing and trusting the person to whom we pray.

That's so important to think about it in any conversation that you have. Who you're talking to is directly connected to what you're willing to share with them, what things you might ask of them. You have to know who they are. While prayer is in many ways hard for all of us, in one sense, nearly everyone prays.

In the general sense of speaking to someone or something beyond yourself, all sorts of people pray. Perhaps you have prayed at some point in your life or heard someone else pray to the great being or to God if you're even there or can anyone help me.

[8 : 53] Certainly to gods of other religions different from the God of the Bible and Christianity. Well, certainly then the content and the effectiveness of your prayer hinges on who is hearing your prayer, right?

Who's hearing those words when you throw them out there? Who will respond? And so when Jesus teaches us to pray, He begins with the identity of the one we're addressing.

And He says, when you pray, say, Father. Father. We're actually going to stop at this word for today.

I promise we'll move faster next week beyond the word who. But you really could stop at the word Father. And the rest of the prayer would fall out if we stop and contemplate what it means to be coming to God and saying, Father.

Did you know in the Old Testament, no one ever addressed God as Father? Father. God is described there as a Father, but no one would ever address Him with such a comfortable, familiar, affectionate term.

[10 : 13] No Jew would ever speak to God that way except Jesus. And you turn to the Gospels and here is Jesus walking into a context where you don't call God Father in every single prayer in the Gospels with only one exception.

on the lips of Jesus calls God Father. So the disciples have watched Him and heard Him pray this way.

Undoubtedly, they've heard and they've wondered, what's He doing? That's not what you say. But they know that this is how Jesus, the one they're beginning to know is the one and only Son of God always begins.

He can do it and nobody else can. He says Father. And now Jesus turns to His disciples and says, you call my Father your Father.

You call God the same thing Jesus does. You come to Him in the same way as you pray. R.C. Sproul marvels at what he calls the unspeakable privilege privilege of addressing God in the same terms of filial familiarity that Jesus Himself used.

[11 : 34] Abba. Father. There's so much wrapped up in that one word. Relating with God as our Father is the essence of a life of prayer.

It goes beyond just saying a word. It's a relationship where we relate to God as one who is indeed our Father and that's what a life of prayer is all about.

Let me unpack what Jesus' disciples would be hearing there just a little bit and then we'll actually practice letting this guide us and guide our hearts into prayer. Two things this morning that Jesus is teaching us about praying in terms of God being our Father.

and the first is that God our Father adopts us into His family. That's not just the heart of prayer.

That's really the heart of Christianity if you were wondering about that this morning.

We talk about Christianity don't we as a personal relationship with God. We're very prone to saying that or hearing that in the South. That's not unusual for you to hear about having a personal relationship with God but I think often we say that may not have any idea what we mean.

[12 : 49] What do you mean a personal relationship like do you all even communicate? Yes. Yes we should. Praying to our Father is at the heart of having a relationship with Him.

J.I. Packer famously wrote that if you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity find out how much He makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as His Father.

Because see the family of God has how many sons? One. The family of God had one son. The only begotten Son of God Jesus Christ.

So for God to be my Father He has to adopt me. He has to bring me into His family. And the Jews know immediately what that takes.

They're familiar with this. Because in the Old Testament God is called the Father of the whole nation of Israel. It's referred to as God's Son. He is the Father.

[13 : 57] And they know that the context of that relationship being discussed that way began when God calls them out of slavery in Egypt in the Exodus to freedom to worship Him and leads them out delivers them.

That's what it meant for God to be their Father. When Jesus tells His disciples to call God Father they hear that He is their deliverer. That the slaves are called to be sons as Peter read from Romans 8 earlier.

Jesus has come for a new Exodus hasn't He? to set the captives free to make slaves into sons and if that's going to happen that requires complete forgiveness because this is a holy family the one of which God the holy God is the Father.

To have Jesus as your brother and the holy God as your Father you must be delivered from your slavery to sin and given a perfect record of a son and that's exactly what Jesus has come to do right?

That's why He can tell us this. Jesus says you can call God Father because you're following me trusting me and I'm headed to a cross to purchase forgiveness from all your sins and in their place to give you my perfect righteousness so the Holy Father can welcome you into His family.

[15 : 31] See there's nothing you can do you can't clean yourself up enough to call God Father but Jesus can and does and so tells you to call God Father.

I read this week the story of Stan and Laurie Helm you don't know them but they many years ago adopted a son Nicholas when they went to get him he was living as an infant in a squalid orphanage in Russia.

The day they picked him up Nicholas was covered in scabies blisters on his hands and his feet and his mouth and covered in the stench of his own excrement and that's when they see their son.

Stan said this I looked at him in all his distress I just wanted to hold him to comfort him to heal him but more than anything else I wanted Nicholas to know just how much Laurie and I love him.

What a great picture of the heart of our Father who sees the filth of our sin and yet instead of being driven away desires to heal us and let us know how much he loves us.

[16 : 58] Someone said to Stan once years later wow with you and Laurie Nicholas just won the lottery of adoption and Stan said no no you're wrong we are the lucky ones we won the lottery here

no one in the world could be happier than we are to have Nicholas as our son.

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that that's how God feels about sinful broken bleeding you?

Could your Father love you like that? He is not ashamed to be called our God He's our Father who delivers us and delights in us because the love of God is a perfect love He's everything a father is supposed to be and that many fathers often aren't He's perfect always present tender strong bringing security reassuring guiding He loves to care for His children That's why Andrew Murray urges us to pray in our lowest darkest most pathetic moments He says just because your heart is cold and prayerless get you into the presence of the loving Father as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth you do not be thinking of how little you have to bring to God but of how much He wants to give you think of His love His wonderful tender pitying love just tell Him how sinful and cold and dark all is it is the Father's loving heart will give light and warmth to yours look up and say my Father that's what it means to have a Father that even when you have nothing to offer Him He's already planning to care for you when there's little to give and you know you have nothing to bring He's waiting to give to you when you've blown it and life is falling apart when you're sleepless in the middle of the night when your closest friends have hurt you deeply you can call out to the Heavenly Father and be confident that He loves you and forgives you because of

Jesus but many of you have heard those things before and sometimes you don't feel lovable like that right when life hits hard a lot of times we feel more orphaned than we do beloved I feel fearful alone weak unwanted how could anyone possibly care perhaps even for many of you feel cynical that God would hear at all or would care if He did and it's actually especially in those moments when we feel emotions like this that we need to pray Father Martin Luther says in prayer we wage a mighty warfare in prayer we wrestle against the anxiety and unworthiness we feel within us do you fight that battle with anxiety and unworthiness

[20 : 45] I mean not sure do you have a father who listens and cares what we need to remember in that battle is that because He has adopted us into His family God our Father always always invites us into His presence you may have seen this iconic photograph of John F Kennedy Jr underneath the desk of his dad in the Oval office peering out from the neat little door there in the desk it's a famous photo of course because of how remarkable it is that someone would be there in that place where no one goes in that office right it's reported that John Kennedy Jr.

would come running into the office in the middle of all sorts of important meetings and jump right into his dad's lap and start talking gets in there because he's his son because he was not at work but at home he had full access full access to the father Tim Keller says just like the only person who dares wake up a king at 3 a.m.

for a glass of water it's his child that's what we are so that as Galatians 4 says we have the full rights of sons we're not just partially included like because he has to the full rights of sons full access to the father who welcomes us into the throne room of heaven walking straight into his presence all the time never doubt that you're welcome there at the throne of the king of heaven you can run in and jump in his lap anytime because you're his child if you can imagine it actually gets better than that it actually gets better than just you can come in anytime he doesn't just accept us into his presence he actually invites us in and wants us there and I gotta confess to you this is where I really struggle to believe this and feel this because when I'm struggling with prayer it's not usually that

I think if I went and prayed God would ignore me or he just tuned me out and nobody would listen it's just that I'm not always convinced that it's all that important to him so if it's not a big deal to me if I don't really need to pray or if I don't really have time exactly today then no big deal to him I don't need it carry on and then I think of how my parents always seem to answer the phone when I call they may be in a meeting or at lunch with friends or on vacation and they answer and there are other people talk I'm afraid one day they're going to answer at a wedding or in the middle of a classical music concert or something to talk with me I think of how I drove home from work a little faster this Wednesday because I was so eager to hear about the first day of school and I wanted each of my girls to come up on my lap and just talk and talk and talk until they couldn't think of anything else to tell me about what happened at the first day of school think of how you respond when your pregnant daughter calls to give you an update on your grandchild or how you rush into the crying child in the middle of the night eager to know what's going on these are images of your heavenly father's eagerness to hear from you to hear your heart let me give you one more

image of that think of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane sweating drops of blood in his anguish and as he struggles and bows he cries out father Abba what do you think his father feels do you think God was eager to hear from his son in that moment he hears the same word out of your mouth father you get to cry out exactly what

[25 : 23] Jesus did in that moment no line more special or quicker access than the one you have you call Jesus his father your father and he's on the edge of his seat to hear from you amazing Thomas Watson writes were a man to petition his enemy there were little hope but when a child petitions his father he may hope with confidence to succeed the word father works upon God it touches his very bowels the word father on the lips of Jesus the word father on your lips the depths of his heart wants to hear from you because God is our father J.I.

Packer says he is always more ready to hear than we are to pray and he loves to give more than we either desire or deserve he delights in that that's the God the father that we pray to what an incredible privilege full access to the throne room where he leans forward on the edge of his seat eager to hear the cries of our hearts John Calvin says contemplating God as our father should impact our hearts too not just God's heart the heart of a father but ours as his children by the great sweetness of the name father father he frees us from all distrust Calvin says Andrew Murray adds in the infinite tenderness and pity and patience of the infinite father that's a lot of infinite in his loving readiness to hear and to help which will never run out the life of prayer has its joy this is what is to delight us when

Jesus starts our lesson in prayer by telling us to call God father he's directing us to consider this incredible relationship that we have with God a relationship we have only because we're united to his son by faith we enter into the throne room with confidence because of his complete forgiveness and his perfect love you can come to your father today with full access because of Jesus and know that your heavenly father is eager to hear from you that's the one to whom we pray Jesus says each week of this series on the Lord's prayer we're going to stop and take some time to practice what Jesus is teaching us give me a chance to make you feel awkward we're not just learning things about prayer right we're asking that Jesus would teach us to pray

I'll try to give us questions to consider each time in light of how Jesus is directing our hearts in prayer which he's begun today with one word and is going to keep explaining in the weeks ahead today when Jesus says father when he's inviting you to come and begin your prayer as father what are things we could consider questions we could ask ourselves to prepare our hearts and lead us into prayer we need to slow down and consider what what is my relationship with God what does it mean that he's my father we should meditate on how is it that I have this relationship how is that even possible then finally ask yourself how does that reality impact how I pray how I'm about to pray now if I've set aside some time how I live through this day and relationship with him will

I pray again before this time tomorrow I'm going to guide us through a season of prayer considering these three questions for each one I'm going to have us read together out loud a passage of scripture on the screen that will direct us into prayer in these areas then we're going to take some time privately silently to contemplate that and to pray to our father and then after each section I'll close us in prayer join me as we read 1 John chapter 3 at verse 1 what's our relationship with God let's read together see what great love the father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are take a moment silently to contemplate that and pray to your father spent year or Invest around

[30 : 42] Jeff him son a dog been a son minutes that S Father, we marvel at the privilege, the wonderful reality that we call you Father.

You who are rich in every way, perfectly loving, always forgiving, full of compassion and tenderness.

You have made us your children. We're reminded that even though we fail as parents, even though a human parent may forget her child, yet you will not forget us.

You've engraved our names in the palm of your hand. We're precious to you. So Father, I'm a child of the King, a recipient of a love I can't even comprehend, an heir of glory today and forever.

Thank you. Amen. How do we come into that kind of relationship? We know what Jesus has done for us.

[32 : 33] Galatians 4 reminds us of that. Join me as we read. Amen. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

And if a son, then an heir through God. Spend a minute praying. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

The lengths that You've gone to to make us Your own astonish us. To make those of us who are in no way worthy of Your love, who've often chased after other pleasures, who don't deserve a Father like You.

[34 : 14] You sent the One who did, who was deserving, Your own perfect, worthy, beloved Son for us.

Remind us of how precious we are to you. Jesus, we praise you for your perfect life, for your atoning death. We thank you for your sacrifice to wash us clean, to clothe us in your royal robes, to usher us into the family table and seat us in front of the King forever.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen. These are realities that as we begin to contemplate them ought to change the way we talk to our Father, the way we enter into prayer.

And God's Word directs us in that for what it can look like in our lives. Hebrews chapter 4, let's read this together. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

[35 : 38] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Come boldly to the throne now. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, in the silence we hear some of the cries of your children and we delight in them as you do.

You love to hear your children. And it seems so easy and obvious that we would come to you often to find mercy and grace in time of need.

[36 : 57] And we know the needs in this room alone are many. The needs of my heart alone are many. And yet, Father, I confess my heart's slow to learn, slow to approach the throne of grace and admit that need and plead for your help.

So, Father, thank you for the amazing gift that I never stand before you alone, that I have no need to fear entering your presence in any moment because through the blood of Jesus you've welcomed me in and you delight to hear from me.

Father, might I come boldly and expectantly before such a gracious God. Would we have such a vision of you this morning that there's nowhere we'd rather run than to talk with you?

Might I come often into your presence to cry out in grief, to rejoice in your provision, to plead for those I love, to cling to the promises of your word.

Lord, teach me, Jesus, to pray like this. We ask in your name. Amen.

[38 : 14] For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host).