

Luke 11:1-4 - Soul Food

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- [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.
- Amen. What a great song. We love those songs from the Behold the Lamb Christmas program. Y'all like those songs? We should sing them here more often, shouldn't we?
- You want to sing those more often, James? How about Thursday, December 14th at 7 p.m., we could sing these songs together here? Here. In this sanctuary?
- With the gentleman and scholar who wrote them, composed them on his own, Mr. Andrew Peterson. Yeah. So. Can we bring our friends and the rest of Huntsville? Yes. Yeah, yeah.
- Most of them will fit in here. I'll say this and then I'll leave. He's gotten really popular. And so we're telling you this now so that you all can get tickets. Before everybody else does and then there's not any left for us.
- [0 : 57] So. There you go. I think you have the rest of it. They will sell out quickly. Southwood.org slash Behold the Lamb. You can buy them today. I encourage you to buy them today and buy some for friends you're inviting with you or whatever.
- We do anticipate them going quickly and we're really excited. It's been six years since they've been here to celebrate Christmas with us. Thursday, December 14th. They'll be back.
- We have been talking about prayer as we make our way through the Gospel of Luke and have made it to the Lord's Prayer. As we get back into that this morning, I just wanted to remind you in our guest center, there are a couple of really good books about prayer.
- This one is Paul Miller's prayer. Really good theologically, but especially good practically. If you're looking for something like that.
- This one is Tim Keller's book called Prayer. When you're Tim Keller, all you have to do is title it Prayer. Experiencing awe and intimacy with God. It is really good practically.
- [2 : 02] It's especially good theologically. If you're more bent in that direction. Both of these are available in the guest center. I just, I tell you that to encourage you that as we study this together, one thing you might want to do is take advantage of where God has us corporately.
- As he's teaching us to pray and to study further on your own. If you've ever wanted to do that, these books would be good tools for you to follow up more with that.
- That said, let me read Luke chapter 11. The first four verses for us. And then we'll study God's Word together. This is God's holy, inerrant, infallible Word given to us.
- Luke 11 at verse 1. 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.
- [3 : 08] And forgive us our sins. For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation. This is God's Word.

Let's pray and ask him to teach us as we look at it together. Father, we do give you thanks for your Word. Jesus, we thank you for teaching us to pray.

For showing us how we can relate to our Father. And so we ask you again this morning that you would teach us to pray.

Teach us to trust our Father. Might we see you as great and glorious as we've come into your presence, worshiping you this morning. And might it drive us to bring all of our needs before you.

Teach us as we look at your Word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. How many of you have eaten at G's Country Kitchen on Oakwood?

[4 : 07] Yeah, ooh, that was some excited hands going up. Yeah, if you've eaten there, you've probably eaten fried chicken, mac and cheese, black-eyed peas, collard greens, things commonly referred to as soul food.

And for many of us, comfort food. And I'm going to stop talking about it because if the sermon goes too long now, you're all going to start leaving for lunch. So we love those things.

We enjoy eating them. But Jesus is teaching us today about a different kind of soul food. And that's forgiveness. Father, forgive us our sins, Jesus tells us to pray.

And it strikes me that Jesus in this model prayer is telling us things we can always pray for. That there's no reason ever to say, I just don't have anything that I could pray for.

He starts with God-centered priorities about God's name and God's kingdom. And then he turns to praying for things that I need. And he says, pray for your daily bread. For the things you need today, you always need to eat, right?

[5 : 22] Is there anything else you always know you need? Forgiveness. I always need to eat. I always need to be forgiven. It's soul food for us.

Absolutely essential for me spiritually. Without it, I die. Why? Andrew Murray said it this way. As bread is the first need of the body, so forgiveness for the soul.

And the provision for the one is as sure as for the other. That's good stuff, isn't it? The provision for one is as sure as for the other. We talked last week about God's fatherly care and provision for us.

That he meets all of our needs. That we can trust him in everything. The same is true with the forgiveness that we need. Jesus says, pray for daily bread and ask your father for forgiveness.

I want us simply to look first at the focus of the petition that we need to be forgiven. And then we'll notice briefly the comment attached to it that we also need to be forgiving.

[6 : 35] First, let me ask you, are any of y'all friends with Mavis Wanzik? Anybody? Nobody? That's too bad. Mavis lives in Massachusetts and this week she bought the winning Powerball lottery ticket for \$758 million.

And it just struck me, I was thinking about this, that maybe if you're friends of hers and you didn't mind getting lottery money, which of course the Bible would have a few things to say about, but theoretically she could probably wipe out your student loan debt.

Probably handle your credit card debt. Probably handle most of our mortgage debts. And it would cost her something, but I think she could handle it now.

When the Bible speaks of forgiveness, it uses a number of different images. We've celebrated some of them this morning. Cleansing, covering in the sacrifices, releasing.

But in particular in this passage, it's the idea of being set free from debt that is featured. The words used for forgive and indebted in the second line of this petition bring those legal monetary pictures into play.

- [7 : 54] So we're asking God to release us from the debt that we owe to Him. What are we really asking when we pray that? And maybe you gloss over this petition in the Lord's Prayer sometime as though it were no big deal.
- Yes, God, forgive me my sins. I know I'm not perfect. I always ask for forgiveness. Yes. But let me tell you, it's a bigger deal than we often stop to calculate.
- Even Mavis and her \$758 million can't touch this debt for you. Stop and think, what do we owe God?
- God created us to live in relationship with Him. A relationship where we desire His glory all the time. Where we trust Him, obey Him, enjoy Him, and therefore perfectly reflect His image in all His creation all the time.
- In other words, we owe Him lives of consistent, unfailing perfection for the sake of His glory all the time.
- [9 : 01] He has told us we're to love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. So we owe Him our emotions and our affections too, not just our actions.
- He's told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. So we are to take advantage of every opportunity to demonstrate His kingdom and His grace to everyone we could possibly tell and show it to.
- Now sometimes we rack up debt by specific violations of God's law. Those are probably the easy ones to think of. We lie.
- We covet. We worship idols. We harbor bitterness towards our kids. We lust. We lose our tempers with our spouse. And we could keep going on and on and naming things you know are our sins.
- If we had calculators and memories good enough, we could add up a big debt. But when we think of all that we owe God, much of our debt is actually what I was talking about a moment ago.
- [10 : 05] We often overlook it, but it's those sins of omission. It's our failures to speak when we should have spoken, to act when we had the opportunity, to reflect God's perfect image to everyone around us all the time.
- We start adding those in and our tab is ridiculously high, isn't it? We can never pay it, which is the point of a parable that Jesus tells where God ends up forgiving a debt that is absolutely unpayable.
- No one ever could live long enough to work hard enough to pay it off. Have you stopped to reckon your account before God?
- To consider what you owe Him? Have you considered not merely the sinful actions and attitudes you have, but just as certainly the times you failed to act?
- Neglected to pray? Failed to trust? Neglected to speak? And you might have thought this petition was smaller than, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.
- [11 : 18] Those were the big things. No way. This is a huge request. Every time we ask it, every single one of those sins has earned us eternal death.
- We have a debt we can never repay. We say we're spiritually bankrupt. That's the truth of who we are.
- And that's where the good news, the glory of Jesus, meets us. We've already been celebrating that this morning, what He's done. And we've seen it through the Gospel of Luke.
- Remember, as we've gone through Luke, Jesus is promised as the one who is coming to forgive sins. He's going to bring forgiveness and freedom. He's forgiven the sins of a paralyzed man in one encounter.

He's forgiven the sins of a sinful woman in another story. He has told us recently that He has set intensely on going to the cross where He will purchase the forgiveness of sins, and that's a priority for Him.

[12 : 21] That's where He's headed. So the one who teaches us to pray this way is the one who Himself provides the forgiveness that our souls so desperately need.

He says, ask for it, and I'm going to purchase it for you. It's why we sing, Jesus paid it all, right? All to Him I owe. He paid for the whole debt.

All the things we just talked about. Specifically, first, He paid for the penalty of all those sins we committed when we violated God's holy law.

Colossians 2 talks about Jesus' death on the cross in these terms. You were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, but God made you alive together with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

How did He forgive us all of those? By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this He set aside, nailing it to the cross.

[13 : 23] That record of debt would have been a legal document, a piece of paper that you would have had that showed what you owed to someone in this day. And Jesus takes that record of our debt and it is nailed to the cross.

Jesus on the cross is famous for saying many things. One of the ones that is sweetest is that Jesus on the cross says, it is finished.

Tetelestai, He cries out. That's actually a legal accounting term. It is finished. Paid in full. Stamped on your document, the record of your debt to God.

What's the sin that you think you could never pay for? What's the sin that you think about it and you feel guilty and you think this keeps me at a distance from God.

He couldn't possibly love me because of this. Jesus says, paid in full. It is finished.

[14 : 32] God no longer demands payment from you for that sin that Jesus pays for fully. The debt is forgiven by the death of Jesus.

That's why we're saying, what mighty sum paid all my debt when I a bondman stood and has my soul at freedom set to His Jesus' precious blood?

But what else do I owe God? We've said it's actually more than those violations of His law, right? I need a perfect record of righteousness, perfect obedience, perfect reflecting of God's image for all the times I've failed.

I can't go back and redo them all. I can't go back and redo them all. I can't make my record perfect and I'm required to have that. I owe it to God. And 2 Corinthians 5 says, God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for our sake so that in Him, in Jesus, we might become what?

The righteousness of God. Romans 4 talks about God crediting to our account righteousness that is not ours originally.

[15 : 57] The righteousness of Jesus credited into our account. Jesus pays this part of my debt too, right? The need for righteousness.

Every year I go online and I transfer some funds from my savings account into my daughter's college accounts. And we've been doing that for a few years.

Hope to continue to do that. I haven't started the wedding fund for three girls because that's a little scary and intimidating to me. But here's how this college fund is supposed to work.

Many of you are living in this right now. You understand this. You make the payments in and then if Caitlin goes to college, she'll rack up a tuition debt and that debt that she owes, this money will come out of this fund and pay that tuition debt, right?

Let me keep dreaming for a minute. Then there's gonna be some left. And that just brings her up to zero. She just doesn't owe them for tuition but she's gotta live, right?

[17 : 03] While she's in college. And so in this dream world that I'm in where all this money has accumulated, she says, dad, I need books and I need to eat and I need something to wear and I go in and I click transfer and a thousand dollars shows up in Caitlin's account and she can live.

And she didn't contribute a dime to this account. It's only hers because she's connected to me, right? Because she's my daughter, she gets these benefits coming to her.

Debts forgiven. Even. Active righteousness, what she needs to live provided for. That's what Jesus does when we're connected to him.

He pays the penalty for losing my temper, for lusting over someone else's family or home or body, for lying about my homework. Jesus pays that penalty and at great cost to himself brings my account to zero.

I'm back even. Then he makes the righteousness transfer. Speaking God's truth to my neighbors as I'm called to. Quoting scripture to resist the temptation of the devil.

[18 : 19] Humbly trusting God in pain. And those things start showing up in my account. Who did those? Jesus. They start showing up in my account.

Things that I need. And that's the full picture of what my soul needs. The forgiveness for the debt and the righteousness credited. I need both and Jesus has provided them for me.

So why does he tell me to keep praying about it? This is not just Jesus talking about forgiveness. This is Jesus teaching us to pray and he says, when you pray, pray, Father, forgive us our sins.

It's another thing that Jesus has already accomplished. It's already secure that he tells us to pray for in this prayer. You know by now why, don't you?

Why does Jesus keep telling us to pray for things that are secure already? What's prayer about? It's about the relationship, isn't it?

[19 : 23] The relationship with the one we're praying to. We've said it over and over. Our Father wants relationship with us and forgiveness is the very basis of that relationship.

As we come to pray to him, when I come to talk with my Father, I'm remembering that I do so only through the blood of Christ that pays my debts and brings me into relationship with God.

It's absolutely essential or otherwise I can't pray to him. I can't talk and have relationship with him. Forgiveness is needed for my every sin and my every failure.

See, this is an ongoing prayer for Christians, isn't it? Not just some of y'all need to pray this once. This is how Jesus teaches his followers to pray.

Always praying for forgiveness. Always remembering our need for forgiveness and laying hold of what Jesus has done. God knows we're still sinners. And the full debt for our sins has been fully paid by Jesus.

[20 : 30] So what's this? This prayer is another chance for us to experience his grace personally. Every day. To experience in our lives that account transfer.

Transfer. The funds are there from an account that will last well beyond any account Mavis ever has. It will never run out. They've been credited to me by faith.

But when I pray this, I'm laying hold of that reality practically for me. For my specific debts. debts. I'm opening my account page and recognizing again where my righteousness comes from.

That's experiencing grace. It's for me personally. It's why someone once said that Jesus died on the cross is history.

That Jesus died for sin is theology. That Jesus died for my sin is Christianity. I need to remember and revel in Jesus paying for my debt over and over.

[21 : 46] Just as surely as I see God provide my daily needs one day after another. Remember the provision for this need in my relationship with God is just as certain. This forgiveness is soul food for me in my relationship with God.

I'm at peace with him. And forgiveness works the same way in other relationships too. It's soul food for others in my relationship with them.

This is the second part of the petition. Not only do we pray about being forgiven, but also we pray about being forgiving. See, the kingdom of God is one characterized by this lavish grace.

forgiveness full and free where Jesus pays a high price and I am released from my debts. And if the kingdom is going to come in my life, it also, my life also, must be characterized by lavish grace.

Forgiveness full and free where I in turn pay a high price and release others from their debts to me. That's why we talk at Southwood about our mission being to experience and express grace.

[23 : 04] We can't forgive others' debts unless our account is paid up and full of credit. But once it is, and as it is continually in our experience of it, we're to be passing that blessing along with the same lavish generosity, I might add.

Over and over, the money transfers in. We experience grace and over and over we're told to express that grace to others. In this case, the grace of forgiveness.

For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Wonderful. God, I've got a great idea.

You forgive me at the same rate I forgive everybody else in my life. Be as generous in my account as I am in theirs. You good with that?

That cool? You comfortable? Feeling good about the forgiveness you need for this? You know how we are. I mean, really gracious if you like them and a bit stingy on the days they're really getting under your skin.

[24 : 19] full pardon for the little things but breaking off the relationship altogether when they really hurt you. Immediate release from the debt sometimes if they're really sorry but probation for a while if you're not sure they're really going to change.

Right? Sounds like forgiveness to me. Just doesn't sound like Jesus' forgiveness. forgiveness. Forgiving others is hard isn't it?

The reason for that is that forgiveness is costly. Someone has to absorb the cost when a debt is forgiven.

Ken Sandy of Peacemakers says it this way forgiveness can be a costly activity. When you cancel a debt it does not just simply disappear instead you absorb a liability that someone else deserves to pay.

Similarly forgiveness requires that you absorb certain effects of another person's sins and you release that person from liability to punishment. That's hard.

[25 : 32] You have to choose to absorb the cost. But that's the essence of forgiveness. Right? Absorbing the cost of someone else's debt.

The payback you could have demanded rightfully. The weeks of housework you could have held over your husband. The weeks of cold shoulder you could have used to make your wife pay.

The weeks of favors you could have demanded from your friend. Whatever it is you're forgiving that debt. Now to be clear forgiveness doesn't always remove all consequences.

You may forgive and still need physical separation for your own protection. You may forgive and still take the person to rehab for their own good at the same time.

But forgiveness means you absorb the cost that the offender owes to you. And that is so hard to do because it is so much easier to be bitter and distant or hateful in your heart.

[26 : 38] Isn't it? Who are you thinking of right now when you think of forgiving others? It's so hard to absorb the cost of those debts but it's so Christian.

Sandy concludes this way this is precisely what Christ accomplished on Calvary. The absorbing certain effects of another person's sin to release them from punishment.

It's exactly what Jesus did for us. He set us free from our debt at great cost to himself right? It hurt. It wasn't easy.

And that's how he has forgiven us. And so Jesus is now saying that forgiven people forgive people. It's not that you're forgiving others earns your right to be forgiven by God but rather if you don't forgive others you evidence the reality that you have not received the greater gracious forgiveness of God.

This is why it's so important regularly to calculate our debt to God the unpayable debt that cost him his only son because no debt anyone owes us is that great.

[28 : 01] And what does the gospel say? that unpayable debt has been forgiven us by God. No holds barred no strings attached running off the porch counter cultural throwing your arms around the prodigal son kissing him kind of forgiveness that we've received right?

That's how God forgives us. He's not waiting to see how well we perform. He's not hedging his bets on how sincere we are. He's running to forgive us.

And then he tells us that's how you forgive others. It's the very essence of Christianity of our relationship with our heavenly father that he loves and delights in us the way that father delights in the son who has deeply sinned against him.

Do those who've offended you who are indebted to you feel that kind of love from you? And if they did imagine that they begin to feel that from you wouldn't it transform your relationship?

Wouldn't forgiveness like that make your relationship with them entirely different? Couldn't it transform even a seemingly hopeless marriage? Couldn't it transform even a community with diverse people and a lot of wounds?

[29 : 31] Couldn't it transform our fractured world these days? Ten years ago in Lancaster, Pennsylvania Charles Carl Roberts broke into an Amish schoolhouse and out of anger at God took hostage several elementary aged schoolgirls and shot and killed five of them before killing himself.

It was a horrific event, you may remember it from the news. For that Amish community the grief was intense.

A quiet old fashioned Christian community broken into by the evil of murder. But as intense as their grief was, their grace was equally intense.

By the afternoon of the shooting members of that community were praying and crying with the widow of the shooter and her family. They began to make public pronouncements of their forgiveness of the shooter.

And they demonstrated tangible reality of that forgiveness by inviting the widow as one of the few outsiders to the funeral of these girls. And by setting up a fund to provide for her children, not just their own.

[31 : 04] This widow, her name is Marie Monville now, thought for sure she'd be leaving this area, needing to move to a different community.

She stayed there and lived, never had to leave. she's since written books about the Amish grace, the incredible forgiveness she was shown, that she says, and I quote, helped to provide the healing we so desperately need.

Gifts you've given have touched our hearts in a way no words can describe. Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world.

now you might not have realized that many criticized the Amish for this whole situation. This forgiveness was ridiculous, they said it denied the reality of the evil that had taken place, they forgave too quickly and too thoroughly, but they knew it was quite the opposite.

Forgiveness like that doesn't deny the reality of evil or sizable debt, quite the opposite. It rather acknowledges the reality of debt and says there is nothing that can pay a debt like this other than the blood of Jesus.

[32 : 26] It requires his payment for this to be covered and it chooses to say that God's grace is bigger than the debt that is owed. That even though the Amish had lost their own children, their God had forgiven them a debt at the cost of his very own son.

How could they not also forgive? And forgiveness like that really does change the world. It's soul food for you and for the one you forgive, healing your relationship in a way nothing else can, giving them something to share with others as Jesus has given to you forgiveness to pass along.

And so we pray regularly, Father, forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive all those who are indebted to us.

We pray that God would forgive the evil we do, the good that we neglect to do. We pray God would continue to allow that grace to change us and flow through us, that the very forgiveness we experience would be expressed to many others.

Let's spend a minute reflecting on our own hearts, confessing our personal sins and then we'll join together in praying for God's forgiveness. Pray silently for a minute.

[34 : 11] Sometimes two rest ago to go CH gonna translate nothing good,voc fundamentally over■ tomorrow to.

fingers or■■■ Completely apart join me in your hearts as I pray and then join me aloud in the responses each time it's the same response forgiving father God of grace mercy and forgiveness we confess our sins in thought word and deed the evil we have done and the duties we have left undone father forgive us we have not loved you with our whole heart mind and strength nor our neighbors as ourselves father forgive us we confess our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation and neglect of other people father forgive us we have been prideful self-righteous and hypocritical looking down on others while minimizing our own wickedness father forgive us we have neglected your word your worship and prayer and so failed to seek first your kingdom and our relationship with you above all else father forgive us we confess our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our discontentment with your fatherly provision father forgive us we have been indifferent to suffering and injustice in our world and harbored uncharitable thoughts towards those who are different from us father forgive us we have pursued our own pleasure and success at the expense of those you have called us to love father forgive us and we have failed to forgive others and so been ungrateful for your abundant forgiveness of us father forgive us let's continue to confess our sin and cling to our father's abundant forgiveness as we stand and sing

God be merciful to me David's words from Psalm 51 stand and sing for more information visit us online at southwood.org you