

Simple Faith

July 24, 2016

Luke 11: 1-13

When Jesus had finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his followers to pray." ² So Jesus told them, "Pray in this way: 'Father, help us to honor your name. Come and set up your kingdom. ³ Give us each day the food we need. ⁴ Forgive our sins, as we forgive everyone who has done wrong to us. And keep us from being tempted.'"

⁵ Then Jesus went on to say: Suppose one of you goes to a friend in the middle of the night and says, "Let me borrow three loaves of bread. ⁶ A friend of mine has dropped in, and I don't have a thing for him to eat." ⁷ And suppose your friend answers, "Don't bother me! The door is bolted, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you something." ⁸ He may not get up and give you the bread, just because you are his friend. But he will get up and give you as much as you need, simply because you are not ashamed to keep on asking. ⁹ So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. ¹¹ Which one of you fathers would give your hungry child a snake if the child asked for a fish? ¹² Which one of you would give your child a scorpion if the child asked for an egg? ¹³ As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks.



Today we continue in the "Simple" series as we look at the fourth message: simple faith. In the past three weeks we have covered the simple power we find in our faith, the simple witness our faith calls us to, and the simple choices of our faith that help us stay connected to God. We have walked with Naaman and Elisha, with the man attacked by robbers and the Good Samaritan, and with Mary and Martha. The Lord's Prayer that was at the start of our scripture today, from the translation found in our pew Bibles, was not the familiar, standard words you know by heart and it ended a little

before we are used to it ending. Perhaps it was even hard to recognize these words as the Lord's Prayer. I would admit to that! Our 'simple faith' calls us to focus on the things of God and not on the things of the earth. It is something we all struggle with and will be the focus of the message today. Let us pray...

As we begin today, let us look at the words of the Lord's Prayer we find in today's reading. These words focus on God's kingdom here on earth. They draw us away from the things of the world that can so easily lead us away from God and into sin.

*Father, help us to honor your name.
Come and set up your kingdom.*



³ *Give us each day the food we need.*

⁴ *Forgive our sins, as we forgive everyone
who has done wrong to us.*



And keep us from being tempted.



These words first call us to live a life worthy of God, one that brings honor to His name. These words invite God to come and to set up His kingdom here. In doing so, we are asking for a new world that is set up on love, equality, and justice. These words also ask God to provide for our needs. They do not ask God to give us all we want. Simply provide for our needs. These words ask for forgiveness for the times when we do wrong. They also remind us that if we desire God's forgiveness, that we must be willing to do the same for others. And lastly, these words ask for God to keep temptation from us. In this world, this last one is a big request.



Jesus knows that we need God's help in living our lives as His followers. So in a way, the Lord's Prayer is an example of how simple our faith can be and an example of our

simple faith. John Wesley would sum this idea up with three simple rules for living the Christian life. Wesley would say, in modern terms: do not harm, do good, stay in love with God.

This concept is pretty simple, isn't it? Do no harm, do good, stay in love with God. Simple faith.



Jesus also goes on to explain what it means to go to God in prayer. Put another way, the Lord's Prayer is simply a beginning. It covers the basics. But Jesus knows that God is so much bigger

that the simple faith reflected in this prayer. So He goes on to tell a story. Jesus gives several examples of things we will do for our family and friends as a means to illustrate how much more God desires to do for us. Jesus tells of how a man will get up in the middle of the night to give his friend some bread for a guest that has just dropped in. He will get up because his friend is persistent in asking. Jesus encourages us to ask and ask. Hear His words in verses nine and ten, "⁹ So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for

you. ¹⁰ Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks." These words apply to the literal situation in the text. But they also apply to our relationship with God. We are called to go to God and to ask so that we may receive. We are called to search so that we will find. We are called to knock so that the door will be opened for us. If



we ask not, we will not receive, find, and have doors opened for us. God loves His children and desires to give us good things.



Then Jesus goes on to illustrate His point. What earthly father would give his child a snake if the child asked for a fish? What earthly father would give his child a scorpion if the child asked for an egg? None of course. We need to be a little careful here though. In the illustration the child is not asking for a new pony or for a million dollars. The child is asking for the needs of life – for their daily bread. As we read earlier: ³ *Give us each day the food we need... And keep us from being tempted.* Our simple faith calls us to keep focused on the things of God and to be content when God meets our needs.

In Colossians 2, Paul speaks of how we are to focus on the things of God. Reading verses six and seven: ⁶ *You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep on following him.* ⁷ *Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught. And be grateful.* Last week we spoke of the simple choices of our faith. We talked of spending time daily with Jesus. Through daily time with Jesus, He becomes our foundation. Speaking for Wesley, this is how we “stay in love with God”. Paul encourages us to “*be strong in your faith*”. When we come to know Jesus as our foundation, we can be strong in our faith. “*And be grateful.*” Be thankful for the fish and the egg and all of the other daily bread God brings our way. Be thankful for His blessings in our lives.

At times we all need to remain focused on God and not on the things of the world. Distractions and the things of this world can be mighty pulls on our time, our attention, our focus. Recall how Martha struggled! In verse eight, Paul warns us:

“⁸ Don’t let anyone fool you by using senseless arguments. These arguments may sound wise, but they are only human teachings. They come from the powers of this world and not from Christ.” If we live a simple faith, grounded in the belief that God will provide for all of our needs, then the life we live honors God. *“Father, help us to honor your name.”* Recall how Mary honored Jesus. She sat at His feet and she listened to His words. She did not listen to the voices of the world, to all of the distractions and senseless arguments the world brings. *“And keep us from being tempted.”*

When we sit at Jesus’ feet, when we spend time with Jesus, then our faith becomes more and more rooted in Christ and more and more connected to God. Jesus becomes more and more our firm foundation and God becomes more and more our strength. Paul writes of this transformation in verses nine through thirteen: *“⁹ God lives fully in Christ. ¹⁰ And you are fully grown because you belong to Christ, who is over every power and authority. ¹¹ Christ has also taken away your selfish desires... Then you were raised to life because you had faith in the power of God, who raised Christ from death. ¹³ You were dead, because you were sinful and were not God’s people. But God let Christ make you alive, when he forgave all our sins.”*

Jesus is over every power and authority. When we proclaim Jesus as our Lord, He takes away our selfish desires. He calls us to a simple faith, one that fully trusts in Him. Through faith in God’s power, we are raised to new life. Life in Christ. We live as a redeemed and forgiven people. *“Forgive our sins, as we forgive others...”* A simple faith. Love God, love others. A simple faith. Ask and receive. Search and find. Knock and the door will be opened. A simple faith. Pray, sit at His feet, spend time in the Word. A simple faith. A simple faith. Amen.