

**Be Persistent**

July 28, 2019 - Jo

Scripture: Luke 11: 1-13

*<sup>1</sup> He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. <sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial".*

*<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' <sup>7</sup> And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.*

*<sup>9</sup> "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*



Be persistent. This morning we will look at a passage that contains three little sections, each just a handful of verses. Being persistent is the theme that runs through each of these. It was the theme last week for Mary too: be persistent in your time with Jesus. This past week, I hope that you were able to experience being more persistent in your pursuit of Jesus. Today's passage is found at the beginning of Luke 11. Please turn to that place in your Bibles as we begin this time together today. Thank you. Let us pray...

In verses 1 through 4 we open with a familiar prayer. It is so familiar, let's again pray it together. The words will be on the screen. Let us pray together as we share what has become known as the Lord's Prayer: *"Father, reveal who you are. Set the world right. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. Amen"*. I couldn't help but notice that a few of you did not know Eugene Peterson's version of the Lord's Prayer. Peterson wrote "The Message"

translation of the Bible. Perhaps this translation is better: *"Father: may your holy name be honored; may your Kingdom come. Give us day by day the food we need. Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who does us wrong. And do not bring us to hard testing"*. That is the Good News



translation. No matter what version or translation you pray, there are some basic elements to the Lord's Prayer. When Jesus' disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, like John had taught his disciples, these are the basics that Jesus

included. Before we look at each element of the Lord's Prayer, let's go personal for a few minutes.

I am going to read a word or a phrase two times and then I will pause. In the moment of quiet, I invite you to ponder that word or phrase, to consider for a few seconds what it means to you and how it affects the way you live out your faith on a day to day basis. As we begin this exercise, I invite you to close your eyes, to bow your head if that feels comfortable, to center yourself. Let us begin. *Father... father... hallowed be your name... hallowed be your name... Your kingdom come... Your kingdom come... Give us each day our daily bread... Give us each day our daily bread... And forgive us our sins... And forgive us our sins... for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us... for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us... And do not bring us to the time of trial... And do not bring us to the time of trial...*

Thank you for partaking in that exercise with the Lord's Prayer. While we pray it corporately on Sundays, it is also a personal and intimate prayer. What each word or phrase means to each of us and to our faith life may vary to a degree. The Lord's Prayer calls us to consider our faith and our relationships with God and with each other. It calls us to several things. First, we recognize that God is holy. We acknowledge God's place above all other things. This echoes Deuteronomy 6:5. Second, we pray that God's kingdom would come – not just to the earth but to our hearts as well. Third, as the prayer shifts a bit, we ask that God would give us what we need for each day. We do not pray that God would help us get what we need each day. We pray that God would provide

what we need each day. Do not miss the difference. One recognizes that God is in control, the other claims a bit for ourselves. All that we have comes from God. So, Lord, give us our daily bread.

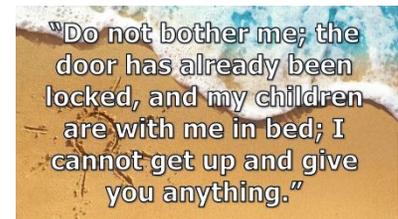
The fourth part of the Lord's Prayer speaks of forgiveness in two ways. As we pray, we seek for God to restore us back into a right relationship with him by forgiving our sins against God. That keeps our vertical relationship right. Here Jesus also connects to Leviticus 19:8. Our love for neighbor is connected to our love for God. Therefore, we also need to be forgiving when others sin against us, restoring our horizontal relationships in love. I like how the Message connects these two. Again, this translation words it this way: *"Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others"*.

The last phrase in the Lord's Prayer asks God to help us in our greatest battle. Jesus closed the prayer by asking God to keep us from trials, to keep Satan or the Devil from us. The prince of this world is ever at work trying to lead us astray, to tempt us and to turn that temptation into sin. The Devil is always trying to separate us from God. That goal is accomplished by leading us into sin. Because of Satan's constant attacks we need to be persistent in our prayer that God would shield and protect us from the attacks of the enemy. To summarize: God is holy, God provides for our needs, forgiveness is essential in all of our relationships, and we need God's protection from Satan. The Lord's Prayer: our pattern for daily prayer.



The second section in our passage today begins in verse five. This section is about hospitality and it is about persistence. It also connects the Lord's Prayer with the teaching that we find in verses 9 through 13. In verse 5

Jesus sets up a hypothetical scenario. A friend shows up unexpectedly at your house and your pantry is bare. Tomorrow is your normal grocery shopping day. It is late and the grocery stores are both closed. Your unexpected guest arrives hungry. So, you go to your neighbor, even though it is midnight, and you knock on the door and call out, *"Friend, lend me three loaves of bread"*. You are trying to be a good host to your guest, and you want your neighbor to be a good neighbor to you, helping you out of a jam. But alas, he is already in bed. The neighbor yells back, in verse 7, *"Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything"*.

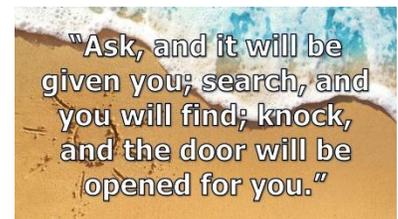


The man with the unexpected guest is in quite the pickle. He has to give his guest some bread to eat and the neighbor will not get out of bed to help him out. He cannot go back home to his guest and say, "Sorry, no food for you". He persists at the door of his neighbor, knocking and calling out, until at last the man gets out of bed, comes to the door, and gives his neighbor what he needs. The man's persistence paid off – he got what he needed for his unexpected guest. He can be a good host.

In our lives, we can be like the man with the need and God can be the one that meets our needs. To the persistent friend, like his neighbor, God is approachable. Like a persistent friend of God, we should approach God often and with confidence that God will hear and will answer our prayers.

We should approach God with confidence that God will act, and that God will answer. This is where this middle section connects in to the last section. Which of you would have the nerve to awaken a friend or neighbor and his family - at midnight – to ask for something you need? It is bold but it is also what is needed. We too should have this same shameless approach with God. The friend with the guest will not take 'no' for an answer. His neighbor must give him some bread for his guest. He asks out of need and believes that he will get what he needs. When we ask God out of need, in faith we too should believe that God will provide what we need. It connects back to the opening section, where we prayed, *"Give us this day our daily bread"*. We pray trusting that God will provide.

As we move to verse 9, we enter the last section of our passage for today. In verse 9 Jesus says, *"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you"*. There are three actions in this section: ask, search, and knock. There is a progression to this action that requires some persistence: asking, searching, and knocking. Let's consider the meaning or implication of each action. Writer Cleophus J. LaRue words it this way: "Asking means making a simple request. Searching implies a stronger desire and a more definite kind of request. It is something that takes time. It implies a greater sense of urgency. Knocking shows determination to get an answer". When we lift our prayers to God, we should ask and search and knock.





The claims made by Jesus in our passage today are lavish and assertive, bold and extravagant. They invite us, through prayer, to fling open wide the doors of God's mercy, to come at once to the throne of grace, hesitating not for a moment, to ask for the desires of our hearts. In three different ways, one in each section, Jesus insists God is ready to respond. For our part, we must trust that God hears and is eager to respond, that God will act in love on behalf of those who come to him in honest and sincere prayer. We must trust. We can trust because the action is binary. By this I mean that we when approach with confidence, then God takes delight in answering. In today's text from Luke 11, we are encouraged to approach frequently and filled with confidence in our loving God.

Prayer is powerful. As I draw near to a close today, I would like to share a story that illustrates the power of prayer and the amazing impact that a praying believer can have. First, a little background.

*E. V. (Ed) Hill, who pastored Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, tells the story of how "Mama's" love and prayers changed his life.*

*During the height of the Depression, Hill's real mother, who had five children of her own, didn't have enough food to go around, so she sent four-year-old Ed to live with a friend in a small country town called Sweet Home. Ed just called her "Mama". As he was growing up in Sweet Home, Mama displayed remarkable faith which led her to have big plans for young Ed. Against nearly insurmountable obstacles, Mama helped Ed graduate from high school*

*(the only student to graduate that year from the country school) and even insisted that he go to college.*

*She took Ed to the bus station, handed him the ticket and five dollars and said, "Now, go off to Prairie View College, and Mama is going to be praying for you." Hill claims that he didn't know much about prayer, but he knew Mama did. When he arrived at the college with a dollar and ninety cents in his pocket, they told him he needed eighty dollars in cash in order to register. Here's how Hill describes what happened next. As Paul Harvey would say, "and here is the rest of the story":*

*I got in line... and the devil said to get out of line... but I heard my Mama saying in my ear, "I'll be praying for you." I stood in line on Mama's prayer. There was another new student ahead of me, and I began to get nervous, but I stayed in line... Just about the time the other student got all of her stuff and turned away, Dr. Drew touched me on the shoulder, and he said, "Are you Ed Hill?"*

*I said, "Yes."*

*"Are you Ed Hill from Sweet Home?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Have you paid yet?"*

*"Not quite."*

*"We've been looking for you all this morning," he said.*

*I said, "Well, what do you want with me?"*

*"We have a four-year scholarship that will pay your room and board, your tuition, and give you thirty dollars a month to spend."*

*And I heard Mama say, "I will be praying for you!"*

Just as God answered Mama's prayers for Ed, so too does our God delight in answering our prayers. Our loving God wants us to come to him with simple and direct prayers – like the Lord's Prayer. God wants us to come with persistence – like the friend in the night who would not take 'no' for an answer. Sometimes we get bogged down with feeling unworthy or when we feel like things will never change. Jesus encourages us to ask, seek, and knock – to dig in and hunker down and to pray trusting that God will act in love.

### **GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

- 1) Grow. Looking back over your faith journey, how has your prayer life evolved and developed? What is your 'next step'?
- 2) Pray. Where do you feel 'stuck' now? Pray for God to create some movement and positive progress forward.
- 3) Serve. Who has come to you 'in the middle of the night' recently? How would serving them be an example of God's love?