

**Preacher:** Pastor Twyla  
**Scripture:** Luke 11:1-13

*<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup> So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>3</sup> Give us day by day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." <sup>5</sup> And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup>for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup>and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? <sup>8</sup> I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. <sup>9</sup> "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup>If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

**A man took his small son** with him to town one day to run some errands. When lunch time arrived, the two of them went to a familiar diner for a sandwich. The father sat down on one of the stools at the counter and lifted the boy up to the seat beside him. They ordered lunch, and when the waiter brought the food, the father said, "Son, we'll just have a silent prayer." The dad got through praying first and waited for the boy to finish his prayer, but he just sat with his head bowed for an unusually long time. When he finally looked up, his father asked him, "What in the world were you praying about all that time?" With the innocence and honesty of a child, he replied, "How do I know? It was a silent prayer."

What is your prayer life like? How often do you pray? Why do you pray? When you pray, what do you say to God? Do you feel like God answers your prayers? I want to invite you to think about these questions about prayer this morning? Last Sunday, you may recall, we explored the call to offer praise and thanksgiving to God, based on the example we find in Psalm 138. This Sunday, we are going to venture into what more Jesus teaches us about prayer.

We find the Lord's Prayer recorded two places in the Bible. One place where we find it is in Matthew 6:5-13. The specific location of this text is within the teachings of Jesus that we call, "The Sermon on the Mount." The assumption we can make when we read the text in Matthew, briefly, is that Jesus recognizes that the people to whom he was speaking to—the Jewish Christians—were already familiar with the practice of praying to God; however, the point Jesus was trying to drive home to them is that prayer was supposed to be an intimately genuine conversation with God, not a practice of showing-off one's ability of composing eloquent lines of prose, as was the practice of the religious leaders of the day. Jesus called those offering attention-getting prayers, hypocrites. So, Jesus gave those he was teaching this prayer as a model prayer.

Matthew also concludes the Lord's Prayer with the affirmation/confession that, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Now, the other place we find the Lord's Prayer is in Luke 11, which was read for you this morning. Luke's version of the prayer ends with the request for help to resist temptation. The context and the focus in

Luke's recording of the Lord's Prayer are different from the Matthew text. Luke's gospel was written to the Gentile Christians, not the Jewish Christians whom Matthew's gospel addressed. The Gentile Christians did not learn to pray like their counterparts.

Luke's story has Jesus praying while his disciples are nearby, and one of his disciples asks Jesus to teach them to pray, which Jesus does. From Luke's scripture, we might wonder why that disciple made that request. After all, the disciples were all children of the synagogue. They had grown up going to worship and hearing public prayers; but remember, the Gentile Christians to whom Luke was writing did not have that same experience. The disciple's question, therefore, invites the Gentile Christian to learn about prayer.

The disciple's request after witnessing Jesus praying exposes that he recognized the disciples' prayer life was inadequate, especially in light of what they were discovering about God in Jesus' presence. Maybe he recognized that the prayers they'd heard in the synagogue didn't translate easily into meaningful personal conversation with God, as Jesus' prayers did. Jesus responded to the disciple's request by giving this prayer as a model, knowing that prayer was something every Christian would need, then and now. The prayer Jesus taught them was more than a few magic words that they could say to please God. The prayer itself, teaches about the nature of the one to whom we pray.

The Interpreter's Bible Commentary says: "Luke 11:1-13 begins and ends emphasizing that disciples of Jesus can pray to God as to a heavenly Father. The first word of the model prayer is "Father." The "thy" petitions that follow establish what it means to revere God as Father, while the "our" petitions in the prayer assure that the Father will provide for the physical and spiritual needs of those who worship him. The concluding and climatic petition asks for protection as from a heavenly Father.

Following the prayer in Luke, Jesus further teaches his disciples through the parable of the neighbor in need. Through the parable Jesus taught the disciples, about the "issue of God's reliability, arguing that if a neighbor will get up in the middle of the night to answer one's need in order to avoid being shamed, how much more can one count on God's readiness to answer a call for help. The sayings that follow the parable, "encourage confident and persistent prayer in the knowledge that God's goodness is greater than that of any human father."

What does this mean for us? One point we can hear Jesus make through this text is that we need God. A prayerful spirit recognizes its' absolute need and dependency on God. We won't find ourselves in need of prayer if we believe in and rely on ourselves to know absolutely what is best for us, and how to do and get what we think we know is best for us. One who prays with this kind of attitude offers meaningless prayers that are empty of any real desire to have a relationship with God. We need God!

Secondly, Jesus teaches us that we can count on God for his care and help more than we can count on any earthly person or thing. God is perfect, therefore, better than any earthly father could ever hope to be. God hears every single one of our prayers; and God answers all of our prayers, maybe not instantly or as we want them to be answered, but God answers all prayer.

When Jesus said that we should, "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you," he was not giving us a blank check to get everything we want. He was not telling us that we should expect God to solve all of our problems exactly the way we want them to be solved.

Jesus wants us to be persistent with our prayers, not out of our anxieties, but instead with an open spirit of seeking God and God's will. We knock and we ask because we have every confidence that God knows what we really need, and God knows what is best for us, and we trust God's answers to our prayers. For some things that means recognizing we need to do something with God's help in order to overcome a challenge to discern which direction we should go when trying to make decisions, to acquire something we think we want or need;

instead of having it handed to us on a silver platter. Prayer puts us in tune with God and with God's hopes and dreams God's will for us.

A man wondering what to do with his life was sleeping one night in his cabin when suddenly his room filled with light, and God appeared. The Lord told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might. So, this the man did, day after day.

For many years he toiled from sunup to sundown, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the unmoving rock, pushing with all of his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling that his whole day had been spent in vain.

Slowly doubts came. He thinks to himself: "You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't moved." He begins to believe that the task is impossible and that he is a failure. These thoughts discourage and dishearten him.

Then he thinks, "Hey, why kill yourself over this? I'll just put in my time, giving just the minimum effort; and that will be good enough." So that's what the weary man planned to do, but first he decided to make it a Matter of Prayer and to take his troubled thoughts to the Lord.

"Lord," he prayed, "I have labored long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimeter. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

The Lord responded: "Wait a minute! When I asked you to serve me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all of your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it. Your task was to push. And now you come to me with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed. Really? Look at yourself. Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewy and brown; your hands are callused from constant pressure, your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much, and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. Yes, you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be obedient and to push and to have faith, to trust in my wisdom. That you have done. Now I, my friend, will move the rock."

- When everything seems to go wrong ... just P.U.S.H.!
- When the job gets you down ... just P.U.S.H.!
- When people don't react the way you think they should ... just P.U.S.H.!
- When your money is "gone," and the bills are due ... just P.U.S.H.!
- When people just don't understand you .... just ... P.U.S.H.!

P=Pray ... U=Until ... S=Something ... H=Happens. PUSH.

Jesus teaches us to pray continuously with persistence, expecting God to answer.

When Martin Luther's puppy happened to be at the table, he looked for a morsel from his master, and watched with open mouth and motionless eyes; he said, 'Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat! All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat. Otherwise, he has no thought, wish or hope.' (Luther's Table talk)

Jesus tells us through this text in Luke that there is a lot more to prayer than the mere words we speak. Prayer's main purpose is not for telling God what we need, what we want, how we hurt, how to do things or anything like that, although the words we think or say when we talk to God may sound of that nature. Prayer is really about obedience and worshiping God and by doing so, recognizing our need for God and seeking God, who created us, loves us, forgives us, and wants nothing more than to take care of us with what is best for us.

*July 31, 2022 - What's In a Prayer?"*

And most of all, God wants an intimate relationship with us. Do you want that kind of a relationship with God? Prayer establishes intimacy with God. Amen.