

## Luke 11B

- Chapter 11 began last week with those well known verses on prayer, the Lord's Prayer
  - We spent all our time last week on those verses, because the Lord's prayer is so familiar and because it's important we understand what Jesus was teaching about the nature of prayer
  - But I suspect our lesson may have had the undesirable consequence of leaving you wondering why to pray or even whether to pray
    - And I say this because so often our motivation to engage in prayer to the Father comes from a misplaced desire
    - Said another way, the more we have need of something from God, the more likely we are to give ourselves over to prayer in hope God will give us what we desire
- So last week, as we broke down the model that Jesus gave the disciples for how to pray, we found ourselves confronted with a dilemma
  - Jesus instructed His disciples to pray that God's will and God's plan be done
    - We shall seek His name to be declared holy, His kingdom to be established, His will to be accomplished – things that are already destined to occur
    - We are told to ask for only our daily needs, yet He has already promised to provide our daily needs
    - And we are to ask for our sins to be forgiven, as we know they already have
      - And we are to pray that we be reminded to forgive others
  - In summary, Jesus' model instructs us to pray for things that are destined to be so and will never change according to God's word
- And here in lies the dilemma:
  - Jesus' model for prayer teaches us to pray with God at the center of our petitions rather than ourselves,

- Does this model diminish your interest in praying?
- Didn't Jesus realize his teaching might have this effect on our motivation to pray?
- Well, I think it's clear from what Jesus says next that the answer is yes, He understood this was a risk
  - In fact, He anticipated it among his disciples
  - Which is why He moves from presenting the model of prayer in verse 1-4 verses to reinforcing our motivation for prayer in the next series of verses

[Luke 11:5](#) ¶ Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

[Luke 11:6](#) for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

[Luke 11:7](#) and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.'

[Luke 11:8](#) "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

[Luke 11:9](#) ¶ "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.

[Luke 11:10](#) "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

- This is a remarkable picture Jesus presents of the Father
  - Jesus gives us a window into the character of God and the purpose of prayer even as He offers motivation for why we pray
  - Jesus uses an interesting comparison to everyday Jewish life
    - In the story, there are two men, neighbors
    - And on one night, one of the men receives an unexpected visitor
    - And as it turns out, the man does not have enough bread prepared in his house to offer the surprise visitor a decent meal
  - In that culture and time, there was tremendous honor associated with performing the sacred duty of hosting a guest in your home

- But this man has a serious problem because it was considered a great dishonor to fail in caring for a visitor in your home
  - Ex: Remember the extent to which Lot went to care for the angels that visited him in Sodom?
- So it's natural that the man would rush next door in the middle of the night and wake his neighbor begging for a loaf of bread
  - You couldn't drive down to local HEB
  - Most bread was baked at home
- Now the neighbor isn't the least bit interested in rising at midnight, opening the door, searching for bread and helping his neighbor
  - He's in bed, the children asleep, and he's not about to disturb the entire family for the sake of the neighbor's problem
    - One-room house where everyone, including animals slept together
  - It's interesting to note that the sleeping man is a friend to his desperate neighbor, nevertheless he isn't willing to get up and help him on that basis – friend or no friend, he's not getting up
  - In other words, a simple request between friends isn't always enough to achieve the desired outcome
    - If that desperate neighbor had been willing to take no for an answer the first time and walked away, he would have walked away with nothing
- But the man doesn't give up
  - Jesus says that if this man continues to knock, and bang on the door and yell for the neighbor to help him, he eventually gets what he wants
    - This story works so well in communicating the need to be persistent in prayer because the situation makes so much sense to us
      - There is probably no time of day when we are more willing to give in to persistence than when our sleep is at risk

- When something is keeping you awake, you'll do practically anything just to restore peace and go back to sleep
  - If my kids ever discover this fact, they'll start asking me for their allowance at 2 am in the morning
- Jesus uses this simple, well-understood fact of life – that some things can be achieved only through persistence – and He uses it to build a beautiful picture of how God wishes us to approach our prayer life
- But there are a few points to consider as we attempt to fit this into the teaching from last week
  - First, you'll notice that even though the neighbor wasn't willing to help his friend merely on the basis of his friendship, yet without that friendship, there would have been no possibility of gaining assistance
  - These men were friends – Jesus says so in verse 5
  - If these men had been total strangers, if they hadn't known one another at all, then it would not have been possible for the man to make any request of his neighbor
    - The man's persistence would have simply resulted his neighbor getting angry and driving the man away
    - It was because they were friends in the first place that it was even possible for one man to impose upon the other
  - It would have taken a close relationship to withstand such a great imposition
    - The strongest friendships are the ones upon which we can make the greatest imposition and expect success
- So the man at the door knows his friend well
  - And he knows that with persistence, he can motivate his friend to action
  - And he also trusts that his friendship is strong enough that his persistence won't anger his friend
  - It will instead result in his friend eventually agreeing to his request

- Jesus leaves it to us to make the obvious comparison to our relationship with the Father in prayer
  - First, we know that without a relationship with the Father through His Son, Christ, we have no hope of our requests being heard
    - Just like the neighbors who are able to make requests of one another on the basis of their friendship,
    - Likewise we can approach boldly before the throne of God only because we first have a relationship with the Father by our faith in His Son
    - Without that relationship, we have no hope for a response to our prayer

[John 9:31](#) “We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.

- Remember, simply praying by itself is not a proof of our spirituality or godliness
  - Anyone can pray to God
    - Pagans pray to their gods
    - There are many false religions with millions of followers who spend many hours praying to false gods
    - So the ability to pray isn't by itself proof of a relationship with the Father
  - But a relationship with the Father through His Son is a prerequisite for our prayers to be heard and to result in any benefit
- So first, our prayers must come after we have a relationship with the Father
- The next thing to note is that we often approach before God's throne much as this man approached his neighbor
  - We don't seek something from Him in prayer until we reach a moment of desperation

- Until we have a trauma in our life, a desperate desire, a troubling uncertainty, a fearful crisis
- Only then is our response to seek God in prayer
- So often our initial response is to simply seek a solution in our own power
  - I imagine that man spent a least more than a few minutes searching his home for bread, racking his brain to think of some easy solution that didn't require bothering the neighbor
- But when no easy solution presented itself, the man's desperation drive him to knock on the neighbor's door
- We should be in prayer continually
- Which leads us to the issue of persistence
  - The key lesson of the story, of course, is remaining persistent in our requests of the Father
  - Now right about now some of you are probably scratching your heads
  - Last week I was teaching that Jesus gave us a model for prayer that directed us to make petitions for things already ordained by God's will
  - Now this week, I'm teaching that we keep asking God in a persistent way for our needs so that we might achieve success
    - And so you might ask me, which is it then?
    - Do we ask for God's will or do we seek God persistently for those things that are on our minds?
      - And to that question I answer yes
- Yes, pray for God's will and we pray for God's plan
- And, yes, we petition Him persistently for those things we desire from Him
  - To understand how these two ideas fit together, we must first move on in the text because Jesus Himself is working to put these ideas together

[Luke 11:9](#) ¶ “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.

[Luke 11:10](#) “For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

[Luke 11:11](#) “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?

[Luke 11:12](#) “Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?

[Luke 11:13](#) “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?”

- Often the easiest way to appreciate the character and nature of an all-powerful, invisible creator of the universe is to make comparisons to things we understand easily
  - So here Jesus compares our Heaven Father and His response to our prayers with a typical earthly father and his nature and character under similar circumstances
  - And through the comparison we gain important insight
- Jesus begins by stating that those who ask will receive
  - Those who seek something will find something
  - Those who desire opportunities of God will receive an open door
  - In other words, God will provide an answer to any of His children who seek Him earnestly
    - He will not ignore the requests of His children
    - Point #1 – God hears all prayers of His children

[Prov. 15:29](#) The LORD is far from the wicked,  
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

[Psa. 145:19](#) He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;  
He will also hear their cry and will save them.

- Secondly, in verses 11-13 Jesus teaches that no loving earthly father would ever respond to the earnest request made by one of his children for something good by giving the child something bad
  - If you ask for a fish, you won’t end up with a snake
  - If you ask for an egg, you won’t receive a scorpion
    - Palestinian scorpions can look like eggs when curled up

- And yet these earthly fathers are sinful, far from perfect, prone to doing evil – but yet they care for their children
- So consider the Heavenly Father
  - The Father without sin, perfect, all knowing – who can do nothing but good
  - Would we expect that He would fail to give good things to His children?
  - We know He will always hear our requests AND He will respond to always give us what is best
  - In fact, in verse 13 Jesus tells His disciples that the best God could ever give them is His Spirit, something that God was soon to do during Pentecost
    - Jesus reference to the asking for the Holy Spirit and receiving Him was a specific comment to the disciples
    - They would receive this gift at Pentecost, and it is the supreme gift for any believer – nothing else equals it
- So the first point to remember this morning is God hears the prayers of His children, He answers those prayers every time and He always gives us what is best
  - Doesn't that excite you just a little?
    - Doesn't that add motivation to your prayer time?
    - Do we really appreciate that when we take time from our day and devote it to prayer that we are receiving an audience with the God of the universe
      - He is hearing our every word, our every thought
      - Those requests are being entertained
      - And He has prepared an answer and He is working it out in His timing according to His will ensuring that we receive what's best
    - Can we ever appreciate the awesome privilege the Father has given us through Christ – that we might seek Him in so personal a way
  - But understand the significance of these verses, especially verse 13

- The Father always gives what is best
- What if that child had asked his Father for a snake? Or a scorpion?
- What would a good father have done?
  - Naturally the good father, desiring to do what's best for the child would have said no
  - And would the child have been happy about that answer? Probably not
- I think as a culture, we've largely lost the significance of this point, though we claim to understand it
  - Not everything our children ask for is good for them
    - Children have all kinds of desires just like we do,
  - And they are not mature enough to appreciate why some of their desires are wrong
    - They don't always have complete information, they don't know the whole picture
    - They lack the perspective that can only come with age and experience
- So they must depend upon their loving parents to make judgments about what's best for them
  - And that role is one every parent should take seriously
  - Which means sometimes the right answer to a child's request sometimes is to say no, though they don't like the answer
- I think it's fair to say we live in a permissive culture,
  - Parents look for ways to simply say yes rather than considering what's best for the child and being willing to endure a child's disappointment and anger over our denial
- But giving our children what's best for them is the true measure of a loving parent

- We don't measure our child's love for us by how much they like our decisions
- And we don't measure our love for our children by how often we can please them
- And so it is with our Heavenly Father
  - He always hears our prayers, He always answers we're told
  - And He always gives us what's best, which means many times He says no
  - Or He gives us something other than what we wanted
    - Are you beginning to see how these ideas fit together?
- Jesus taught that when we pray, we should place God at the center of our prayers, seeking His will rather than our own
  - Because the surest way to get what we desire is to pray for what the Father knows is best and for what He intends to do
  - Don't we do the same thing with our children?
    - Don't we say YES far more often to a child who asks for those things we know are best and proper?
    - Of course we do – in fact we encourage and teach our children to want the right things
      - We teach them to desire the things we hold to be best and true – to follow after our ways
      - And our heavenly Father does the same thing
      - He desires that we would learn His ways and seek them rather than our own
- But we could ask how do we know the Father's will so we can pray for it?
  - The answer is simple...by seeking Him persistently in our prayers, by asking for those things that are on our heart and then waiting for the answer
  - And through our persistence, we begin to understand His will by how He answers our prayers

- How does a child learn what his father approves and supports?
  - By repeated coming to that father and asking for things
  - Over time that child learns about his father's character and his father's values by observing the father's answers
  - If the father never approves the watching of R Rated moves, the child learns something
  - If the father will not approve staying out after midnight...
  - Over time the child learns about the father's character, his values, what He is inclined to do and what He will not do
  
- And so it is with our heavenly Father
  - In fact, let me summarize what Jesus has taught about the Father and prayer
    - Our father hears our prayers and always answers them
    - The Father will always give us what is best
    - So, sometimes the Father will not give us what we want since He has a better plan for us
    - But He asks that we seek him persistently, because only in persistence will we see our prayers answered
  - And what persistence achieves is not a persuading of God to change his mind or a wearing down of God's patience until He gives in
    - Rather our persistence gains us repeated opportunities to see what kinds of requests are granted
      - And we through those experiences we better learn and understand our Heavenly Father's will for us
      - And over time, His will becomes our desire and our prayers are more often answered yes
    - And in knowing our Father better and in understanding His will, we may pray for it and receive it
  
- In other words, Jesus encouraged persistence in prayer so that through our repeated petitions WE might be changed and conformed to the Father's image

- Because the real work of prayer takes place in us, as we seek God and grow in our spiritual maturity and begin to appreciate what He appreciates and seek His will rather than our own
- God answers our petitions and brings glory to Himself as we pray in His will
- For the power of prayer is not in the prayer or the one who prays but in the God who answers prayer