

Part 40: Kingdom Prayers

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In a summary of the state of the Church in 2020, the Barna Group's study revealed that 69%, that's roughly 7 out of 10, Christians pray weekly.

For most of us, we would find that to be good news. C's get degrees, as one of my professors used to say. But if you think a bit more on that statement what seems to prove as a passing grade, slips away into a state of deep concern.

They didn't find simply that 7/10 Christians pray. They found that 7/10 Christians pray *weekly*. Not "daily," not "frequently," but weekly. As I shared at our mission's night last week, my hotel in the Middle East earlier this month was right next to a loud speaker which starting at 5:00am broadcast one of the four Islamic calls to prayer that faithful Muslims recite *daily*.

How often do you pray? Even if you pray at every meal, you're still not praying as much as Muslim's pray to a false God.

In contrast to this statistic, the average American spends 147 minutes a day on social media platforms. Every minute, 35 million people update their status offering and opening up their lives, their thoughts, their aspirations, needs and concerns to a watching world.

The inverse directions of these two trends are pretty telling. It's not that we don't want to be known anymore, it's not that we are any more private than we've been in the past, it's not that we are more self-sufficient or don't like to make requests. But instead it calls into question to primary places of consideration: What are you seeking and to whom are you speaking?

It was these very issues which prompted Jesus' largest teaching on prayer in the gospel of Luke. Central to his message, and the text we have today, is an assessment in each of us as to what we are seeking in life and to whom are we speaking to that end.

Our main point today is going to be this: **Christians should pray eagerly, trusting the Father to meet our needs and to display his love.** We are going to look at this in three parts today. First we are going to look at Luke's rendition of the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:1-4. In this we are going to see **The Form of Prayer** examining the content of our prayers. But Jesus is then going to move on to the motivation behind our prayers and we are going to see in verses 5-10, **The Fervor of Prayer**, and in verses 11-13 we will see **The Father of Prayer**.

Let's begin by examining our context today: **Luke 11:1.**

If there's one thing Luke seems to emphasize more than any other gospel, it is Jesus' prayer life (see Luke 3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:28-29). Even though Jesus was himself fully God and fully man, as the perfect man he knew that he needed to live in absolute dependence upon God the Father in prayer.

As readers of this gospel, Jesus' prayer life shouldn't be lost on us because it certainly wasn't lost on the disciples. This one disciple, who isn't named, noticed that Jesus' prayer life isn't like the prayer life of anyone else. The disciples are learning a theology of prayer by simply watching Jesus pray. So too what your roommates, your community group members and your kids see about your prayer life reveals your theology.

John's disciples prayed like John and this is because John taught them. But what this disciple observed about Jesus is that his prayer life was different and that it would be their privilege that just as John taught his disciples to pray, that Jesus would teach them how to pray.

We should listen to this text today not only because it is God's word, but here we see world's greatest pray-er tell us what we should know about prayer. In fact it's so intimate that he opens this section: "When you pray." Jesus is not merely telling us how he prays, but he is after your experience in prayer.

While church history has called this the Lord's Prayer, it is in the plainest sense, the disciple's prayer. It is the sweetness of our savior stooping to our level and caring for our needs. This is what Jesus wants you to pray and here we find our first point this morning: **The Form of Prayer**.

Let's read together this passage of scripture: **Luke 11:1-4**

I grew up in a Christian home and around the church, so for me I've always heard people praying. It wasn't until I was in campus ministry where I would often ask a student to pray, and I'd get an answer like this, "I don't know how to pray."

Given the statistics I mentioned earlier, it's probably not just those who have no background with the church who have this problem! But take heart because here Jesus tells you how you can pray.

A great starting point is to memorize this prayer. Together in our corporate confession after the sermon we will have the opportunity to pray these very words as a body. This text is here as a template. When you don't know where to start, start here—36 words of infinite value.

As I prepared for the sermon this week, I made it a goal to pray every day, this very prayer. But the more time I spent with it, the harder it was to limit myself to these 36 words. Why? Because I realized what this prayer was doing to me. It was aligning my heart and my words with God's heart and God's words.

The goal is not to have wrote, memorized and scripted prayers. But the goal is that this prayer would serve as the seedbed for a diverse prayer life. And if we examine this template we find three categories which should cause our prayer life to soar to new heights.

First when we pray, **We pray for God's supremacy**. The first two requests Jesus teaches us to offer are these imperatives: Hallowed be your name, come kingdom of the Father.

What does it mean for God's name to be hallowed? To be hallowed means to be consecrated, to be set apart, to be reserved as distinct and special in contrast to everything else. As a sports fan I know there are hallowed places in sports: Augusta National, Fenway Park, Lambeau Field. They aren't just places, they are special places, unique places, supreme places.

Experientially we sometimes get this backwards. We assume that prayer starts with our needs or our experience. But everyone in the world has a need. It's not a need that makes us pray. But instead it is a God so supreme, so distinct, so infinitely hallowed that he and he alone is able to handle and honor our requests. Prayer starts with a big God—and Jesus assumes we need to remind ourselves of this.

The verb "hallowed," is a passive imperative. In other words it's not us who make the Father's name great. God is not great because he is praised. Superstars are great because they are praised. Celebrities are great because they are praised. God is praised because he is great. God is supreme because he alone is supreme. We are not asking God to be more set apart, for he cannot be. But instead we are desiring for our own perception and affection towards the Father to be better aligned with the glory of who God already is.

Jonathan prayed just last week the song of the Israelites after God delivered them out of Egypt: **Exodus 15:11**.

Who is like our God? No one.

Why do we need to remind ourselves of this? Why is Jesus' first word of advice to pray that the Father himself would continue to set apart his supremacy above all things?

Because if God's supremacy is not the motivation to our prayers then someone else's supremacy will be and this will lead to chaos because no one else is holy like our God. Look at how James puts this: **James 4:1-4**.

What does this mean? It means that prayer primarily driven by the supremacy of self produces only strife and pain. It puts us at odds with God himself and therefore at odds with those around us. Our greatest need is the supremacy of God.

Therefore, to align the whole of our hopes with God's glory, to remind ourselves that he and he alone, his passion, his friendship, is key, then we find grounds to pray profound prayers...kingdom prayers.

That's the second request: Your kingdom come. If God is so radiant in and of himself, then our greatest hope is not only that God would be seen as distinct, but that his kingdom distinctions would invade more and more into our daily existence. To pray for God's kingdom to come is to align all of our hopes with the greatness of God's glory and his plan to renew all things.

Start your prayers where Jesus calls you to—pray that as the Father is magnified above all things, that he would be magnified in our own heart and life.

Second, ***We pray for God's provision.***

Read with me **Luke 11:3-4a**.

Now after reading that I want us to consider another prayer, one from the book of Proverbs and I want you to notice what he is asking for: **Proverbs 30:7-9**.

What is the prayer of the God-fearing wise man? That he would always be in hungry reliance upon God. Why? Because to be full is to wrestle with the temptation to forget.

If you drive around Missoula it won't be long before you see a bumper sticker with says, "Know your Farmer." It's a movement by people to call us to be more mindful of where our food comes from. Even though we are in an agricultural state we live in a city. If I asked my kids where our food comes from they would probably say the grocery store. And that's true in one degree, but not in another.

The point is that we ought to be mindful of what we are eating by knowing who is growing our food, what care they are giving to it, and what chemicals, hormones or quality of feed they are getting.

Brothers and sisters, if it's that easy to forget that our food comes from an earthly farmer, how much more prone are we to forget that our food comes from our heavenly Father.

With our calendars planned out through the next year, our grocery orders pre-programmed into our phones, and our lives tracked out from graduation, to internship and beyond, we often find ourselves as the ones who say, "Who is the Lord?" Instead of hallowing God's name, we are the ones who profane it by forgetting it entirely. We think that we are able to earn, to keep, and to sustain our own lives in our own times and this produces not only the comfort of arrogance but the paranoia of sobriety.

When things are great, we forget. But when food is scarce, when the praise of man dries up, we find ourselves eating the bread of anxious toil. But here is the heart posture of prayer—everything we need is given to us by God our Father and our prayer is to have it *daily*.

This is the difference between *weekly* prayer and *Christian* prayer. Christians pray daily because their needs are daily. Weekly prayer stems from a weak God. Daily prayer sees a God hallowed enough to provide.

What do we need? What should you be praying for every day? Physical provision and spiritual provision.

We pray that God meets our needs: food, shelter, relationships, security. Apart from God's gracious hand we have none of that.

But we also pray that God would meet our spiritual needs—our need for daily forgiveness. It's not only what we lack that causes us to pray, but what we possess—the presence of sin.

Now, remember who Jesus is talking to here. He's not delivering an evangelistic sermon to lost people on the shore of Galilee. He's talking to his disciples, he's talking to those who already are through faith call God "Father." He's talking to believers.

Christian prayer is humble prayer—humble in need for God's grace to save us daily from our sins. That by the merit of Jesus and his abundant provision on the cross that my sins no longer define me. Repentance is the daily breath of the believer.

Perhaps many of us doubt God's goodness to provide for us because we fail acknowledge how he has already provided for us. We cannot eat apart from God's provision. We cannot even approach him as Father apart from the promise of the forgiveness of our sins through the work of the Son. Pray, because our God alone is supreme enough to give what we truly need.

And lastly, on account of God's glory and on account of his rich provision in the gospel. ***We pray for our transformation.*** Read with me: **Luke 11:4.**

When was the last time you prayed for your own growth in forgiveness? When was the last time you prayed to sin less? Here we are asking the Father to perform a surgery on our hearts and to actually rend our affections. Here the person who is consumed with the glory of God's fame, who understand the provision of God, prays actively that our lives will look more like Jesus.

If God answered every one of your prayers who would you look like? Would you look more like the perfect Instagram family? The master provider by worldly standards? The put together and pain-free friend? Or would you look more like Jesus?

Are you frustrated with your growth in following Jesus? Are you stagnant in your worship? Are you paralyzed by anxious anxiety or distracted in worldly comfort? Consider again the words of James: You do not have because you do not ask.

This is where Jesus transitions from the form of prayer to our motivations in prayer. This brings us to our second point this morning: **The Fervor of Prayer.**

Read with me **Luke 11:5-10.**

We were introduced to the theme of hospitality last week in the story of Mary and Martha. Martha was not only serving because she was a "Type A" person, but she was serving because that was the cultural expectation.

If someone knocked on your door from out of town, you became their hosts and it would have been incredibly shameful for you to not take them in, feed them and shelter them. Moreover, the guest would have been the guest of the whole community. We see this in a dangerous and wicked sense in the book of Genesis where after Lot takes in some guests, the whole town shows up at his door.

So here's the parable Jesus gives. There once was a man named Dave, who traveled to meet his friend Kyle. Unable to communicate in a pre-technological age, Dave shows up unexpected at Kyle's door at midnight. Having journeyed far, Dave was hungry, and Kyle realized he had nothing with which to feed Dave. So Kyle gets up in the middle of the night and goes to his friend's house and knocks on the door.

This friend is a father, who has locked the big bolt on the door in place, laid down, done the bed time routine forever with his kids, finally got them to sleep in bed, quietly talked with his wife about the dinner they were going to have tomorrow with their fresh baked bread, made some plans to get up early in the morning and walk the camels, and just as he drifts off to sleep, gets a knock on the door from Kyle which threatens everything. "I need three loaves of bread!"

Jesus asks a hypothetical: "Who of you if in this friend's shoes would say to Kyle: 'Go away, if I get up I'm going to wake up my whole family! I'll have to light the lamp, open the door, and then I'll have to give away the bread I worked hard to make for myself!'"

Culturally the hypothetical answer is: "No one would say that."

Why? Because of the burden of hospitality. Even though Kyle shamelessly showed up (that's what that word impudence means) at midnight knowing that this man had a family, but also knowing this man had bread, it would have been completely out of place for the man to not make Kyle's problem his problem.

How many of you have been in a situation like this middle friend? Knowing you need something but too worried to ask for help? You wonder if you'll be seen as silly. Maybe Kyle knew Dave was showing up and totally forgot to bake his own bread. Maybe you are worried that you'll be seen as an inconvenience because to answer your request would involve a whole series of other events. Maybe you're worried that you'll be turned down because of the nature of your request? Or maybe you send Dave away because you know you don't have what it takes.

But Jesus' point is this: Be shameless like this friend. Do not worry about knocking, but knock. Seek the bread. Ask for it. Throw regard to the wind and seek the Lord. Ask of him!

Three times Jesus uses three different verbs. "I tell you ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." Then in case we miss the point he says them all over again, "to the one who asks, it will be given, the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

Dear Christian, do not delay, do not hesitate to run in the most inopportune times to God in prayer. Jesus wants you to pray with fervor. Why? Because living life in this world means that there will be lots of days with Dave. Because we are limited, we are often asked for what we don't have. We are often anxious of what we don't possess. We often feel like everyone needs something from us, expects something of us, and demands something in us. But there is a house where we can go and find exactly what we need.

There were 10,000 things that could have kept the friend from knocking on that door but he was shameless. He didn't just knock on the door and stand sheepishly, but he sought out the man and asked boldly. Many of us want to find God trustworthy but the only way to do that is to put your trust in God. Ask for it all. Seek him, humble yourself and knock and the door and you will find him.

The beauty of this teaching is in the one who teaches it. We aren't meant to read this story and think, "Man, God might find it inconvenient to answer my prayer but because he's sufficiently annoyed with me, he'll do it." Instead it's by contrast we see the beauty of our God. He didn't just wake up his children in order to meet the need of others, but he sent his son in the flesh who willingly gave up his own life in order to meet our needs.

The man in this story gave up his bread and had less. But the supreme Father we pray to is infinite in his glory. He is never diminished in what he gives for he is endlessly blessed in and of himself. In fact because our God is Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, before he even created someone who was able to ask, he existed in generous eternal fellowship in himself.

Our God is a giving God because as Trinity the Father, Son and Spirit gave themselves to each other in joyful eternity. We have to learn to be generous, we have to learn to share. God never does. It is in his nature.

Which is where Jesus lands the plane here in our final point: **The Father of Prayer.**

Look here, **Luke 11:11-13**

Jesus uses an absolutely outlandish hypothetical here doesn't he? Who, what kind of Father, would treat their child this way? No Father would.

But if we, who are evil, if we who are imperfect, if we who are sinful, know how to care for our children in need—how much more does the Heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

So in Jesus' teaching right now he has reminded us of three things about ourselves: We are sinful, we are needy, we are evil. And yet, Jesus doesn't end our prayer life in showing up like a friend at another friend's house appealing to his generosity. But instead he teaches us to end our prayer life like children appealing to the Father out of his own love for us.

We pray not only as shameless friends, but as favored children. What a transformation!

Look at how James describes this back in **James 4:4-10**.

What does God give to our many needs? What does God give to our adulterous hearts? What does God give to our clenched fists and bloody dispositions? He gives more grace! Why? Because he sent his son. And his son is going to give us access to the Father that only he has. In prayer we draw near to a God who loves us fully on account of his Son.

The provision of grace, the promise of forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit himself—from where does this come? It comes from the only Son of God who gave up his life for us.

This prayer begins and ends not merely with a prayer towards God, but a prayer towards our Father. We cannot pray apart from being children. And Jesus opens not only the path of prayer, but the Father of it. He restores us to a God who is delighted to hear from us and wants to give us exactly what we need.

But what if it feels God isn't giving us what we need in prayer? Remember, Jesus himself prayed to the Father in Gethsemane and his prayer wasn't answered. But does this mean his Father didn't care? Does it mean he was evil, presenting a scorpion when Jesus asked for a fish? No.

In fact, have you ever wondered if God doesn't answer prayer? Look at this image John gives us into heaven in **Revelation 5:6-10**. What happens to our prayers? They are stored up in heaven and answered in full in the final day of glory. They are answered in full in "your kingdom come."

This is why Jesus ends with the promise of the Holy Spirit as the Father's greatest gift he can give. When we pray to the Father, we always and only pray in the Spirit, which Paul calls "the guarantee of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). We pray not only because Jesus teaches us, we pray not only because the Father loves us, but we pray because the Holy Spirit reminds us daily of all that is ours in our redemption. That in this life we will have many needs, but we have one God who delights to hear and help those who are his.

He reminds us in our want that one day, the bowl spills over.

So waste not the opportunity to pray daily. Seek the Father with an impetuous fervor because he has loved us with an eternal, supreme, and gospel love.