

Last week we saw in Luke's version of the Lord's prayer that God wants us to ask for good things. The prayer is full of requests, but the requests are all things God wants to give us. Jesus followed the prayer with an example of persistence in prayer.

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'?" ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. Luke 11:5-8

Jesus gave a real-life situation to which the listeners could relate. In Jesus' day most people traveled on foot and had no way to communicate over distances. That could cause you to arrive late and unexpected at a relative or friend's home. The traveler in the parable arrived at their friend's home at midnight. Jews believed in the importance of hospitality. There weren't restaurants along the road, so the guest would have arrived hungry from the journey. It was incumbent upon the host to provide a meal.

In this illustration the host had no bread. That was not unusual in those days. Labor covered your daily need for food. They had consumed all they had. So, the host went to a friend whom he knew had extra and asked for a loan of three loaves. That is three small loaves the size of a large muffin. One was considered enough for a meal, but he asked for three so they could break bread together. It maybe that Jesus said three loaves because He called Himself the bread of life, and the teaching that follows teaches us to ask for the Holy Spirit. He could have said three to represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The friend he had woken told him he was in bed with his family. The door was bolted. In other words, "Not now!" But the host knows the heart of this neighbor friend. He knows if he keeps asking, he will get up and loan him the bread or anything he needs and not hold it against him. He persistently kept knocking, asking, and seeking the help of his neighbor. Keep in mind that this is not a selfish request, but rather to be hospitable to the friend who showed up at his door. That is why the host could be shamelessly persistent in asking for the need at hand.

This was Jesus' way of illustrating that God loves us and will give us our needs if we are persistent in prayer. Scripture teaches us of God's heart. As holy and righteous as He is, He calls us friend (John 15:15ⁱ). We know He will not hold it against us. He doesn't just loan us our need, but graciously gives it to us in abundance.

God never sleeps, so we don't need to worry about that (Psalm 121:4ⁱⁱ), but it may not be the best time for you to receive that good thing for which you are asking. Jesus is telling us not to give up. Keep knocking, asking, and seeking from God the good things you know He wants to give you.

If the thing you are asking for is not God's will, such as some carnal desire, God will not answer your request (James 4:3ⁱⁱⁱ). If it is a good thing that is His will, God will

give it to you - when it is the best time for you to receive it, so don't give up. You can be sure He will answer in His perfect time (Philippians 4:19^{iv}).

⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Luke 11:9,10 What a promise based on the previous parable! I claim this for the lost, though I know they have free will to reject Jesus' love for them. We should claim it when searching the Scriptures for answers to our questions. And how about for knocking on doors of opportunity to share the Gospel? We know of many things that Scripture reveals are God's will. John told us, *¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* 1 John 5:14 May God help us do more asking, seeking, and knocking with confidence and persistence. What things does God want you to partner with Him in by praying His will regarding those situations?

To ask means you recognize your need and that the One you are asking is able to meet the need (Philippians 3:3^v). It means we know it is not in us but in another. I don't have what I need. God does have what I need. Therefore, I must humble myself to make a request. Seeking is to look for that help outside ourselves. It is an effort. The answer or supply is not always obvious, so we must make an effort in faith to go looking for the answer from God. Knock is to persistently keep calling out, though the door seems closed. We keep knocking until someone opens that door.

All of these actions are in the Greek tense that means to keep on doing it. We can picture the man in the parable knocking and knocking until the door finally opens. When persistence is necessary, the fulfillment of the request is even more appreciated (Proverbs 13:12^{vi}). It is not that so many knocks are required to be enough, for God is not asleep or inconvenienced. It is that the **continued knocking expresses faith that the request is God's will and that the need is genuine**. It is an expression of sincerity of the one making the request and his or her faith in the ability of the Provider. Jesus said, *²² "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."* Matthew 21:22

Do we realize what great things could be accomplished through prayer? I think that too often what I ask for is limited by my lack of vision for how great God is. What great things could be wrought through prayer if we saw more clearly the love, majesty, and power of Almighty God! Is revival possible in the USA? Ask God! Is the salvation of that obstinate person possible? Can God work through you and me for more fruitful things? Let's ask God.

As I was working on this message, I was convicted to ask for a deeper daily experience of the love of God and loving Him more in response. Some of that will come out in a future class on Song of Songs. We can ask for greater things within His will and expect to receive them, sometimes right after we ask. The Sunday after praying that prayer was the Sunday the Holy Spirit gave us that message on the love of God. That surprised me, but it shouldn't have. I asked. I should have expected to receive.

There are some wonderful examples of this kind of prayer in Scripture. Hannah was so desperate in prayer for a child that Eli the priest thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:14,15^{vii}). God answered her persistent prayer by giving her baby Samuel. Ezra and

Nehemiah were both earnestly praying for the restoration of the temple and walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 9:5,6^{viii}; Nehemiah 1:4f^x). Paul mentions in his letters that he is always praying for the churches (Ephesians 1:16^x, 3:14-16; 2 Corinthians 11:28^{xi}). Epaphras was said to wrestle in prayer for the Colossians (Colossians 4:12^{xii}). There are many testimonies since these in the Bible of men and women of God who persistently prayed and saw God do mighty things through their lives.

George Mueller was a man of great faith. His orphanage in England was supplied by faith alone. He did not advertise his needs. He prayed and God answered. But one of his prayers for two particular men's salvation seemed to go unanswered. At George's funeral, these two men came to faith. It didn't happen in George's time, but George was persistent, and though he didn't see it in his lifetime, God answered His prayers in the perfect time. Our Sunday evening prayer group is doing this persistent knocking on heaven's door for the salvation of several ladies. We will not give up. We will keep knocking on heaven's door and expecting it to open when the time is right.

As always, our greatest example is Jesus who spent all night in prayer before choosing the apostles (Luke 6:12,13^{xiii}). We see Him agonizing in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44^{xiv}). Hebrews tells us that He "*offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death*" (Hebrews 5:7^{xv}). And even now He ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25^{xvi}).

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? Luke 11:11,12 The conclusion of the topic of prayer is with the same subject as it began, which is with God being a Father to us. The promise we read in these verses is for those who ask for good things, such as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is *the* example of a good thing. Jesus reinforced the idea that God is our *abba*/dearest Father and the willingness of God to answer prayer with this illustration. Only a sadistic father would give his child a snake or scorpion. Fathers want to give their children the good things they ask for. How much more does the best Father, the perfect Father, want to give us good things (Romans 8:32^{xvii})!

We often ask for things that would be harmful to our spiritual life. A good father does not yield to that request. Snakes and scorpions represent evil that harms us. God longs to give us good things, but He often waits until we ask. Billy Graham once said that the storehouse of heaven was full of answers to prayers that were yet to be prayed.

On the other hand, consider some of today's wealthy parents who give children whatever they ask instead of spending time with them. The child becomes undisciplined and unpleasable. I knew of two different men whose successful fathers gave them business after business only to see them run each one into the ground. Unlike those parents, God knows what is good for us. He answers only the prayers that are good for us, not those we will consume on our lusts (James 4:3,4^{xviii}). Do we realize that, after the gift of salvation, the greatest gift we could ask for is the fullness of the Spirit in our lives?

In this chapter on prayer we have seen what we are to pray for. We are told how to pray as well: **confidently and boldly** (Hebrews 4:16^{xix}, for we know we are praying His will), **persistently** (knowing that shows our sincerity and trust in His faithfulness),

expectantly (because we know our Abba wants to give us good gifts, especially the Holy Spirit). This passage shows the wonderful heart of God toward us, His children.

I want to add another angle on this. I was talking with a friend the very week I was preparing the sermon. He is really in need of assistance that he applied for. When I asked to pray with him about it, he surprised me. He said, "I think I just need to trust God's will is going to be done. This is a temporal thing and the eternal is more important." I can tell you that my heart leaped for joy because I knew he was hearing the message. Daily bread is a good thing, but how it comes is up to God. What is really important is our daily spiritual bread. We need to hear from the Spirit the direction we need to go, who we need to help, how we can know and show the love of God.

We do come boldly, persistently, and expectantly for the things we know are God's will, but we leave the means and the timing in His hands. We don't need to be like Martha and tell the Lord what to do and how to do it.

¹³ 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!" Luke 11:13 This is one of Jesus "much more" declarations. It was a rabbinical way of teaching called the lesser to the greater. Even an evil father enjoys giving good gifts to his children. How much more then, does the heart of our heavenly Father long to hear us ask for the Holy Spirit!

Jesus was speaking to His disciples. They were about to receive the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4^{xx}). But I don't think that is all He is referring to. Those whom Jesus is telling to ask are not limited to the disciples. Peter told the crowd who were listening to his message on Pentecost day, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* Acts 2:38 The gift is for all who repent and receive forgiveness of their sins. Peter doesn't mention asking, but of course those who repent ask for forgiveness of their sins. That makes them pure vessels for the Holy Spirit to indwell. Every born-again believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit. So, what is Jesus encouraging us to ask for?

In Acts 3 and 4 Peter and John were arrested and threatened to never speak again in Jesus' name (Acts 4:18^{xxi}). When they were released, they gathered with their fellow believers and prayed. Here is part of their prayer, *²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.* Acts 4:29-31 What they were asking of God was only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. They had received Him at Pentecost. So why did they need to be filled again? It's because we are leaky vessels. Fear resulting from the threats had caused them to lack the fullness of the Spirit. You could say that their faith was diminished and accordingly the power of the Spirit was diminished in them. They needed a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, which is what the prayer implied.

We are all leaky vessels. Whether it is threats or distractions or self-indulgence, that fullness of the Spirit we had at first seems to diminish. That fullness of His power is what I think Jesus was encouraging us to pray, like little children looking to their father for some good thing. And when we pray that prayer, we are a delight to the Father, for He longs to see us full of the Spirit and doing His will in His power. It not only pleases Him when we are in the Spirit, but it is the very best thing for us (Galatians 5:16^{xxii}). Far from being boring, it is an adventure.

It is as if Jesus is adding one more line to the disciples' prayer. "Lead us not into temptation (Luke 11:4^{xxiii}), but fill us afresh with the Holy Spirit." And when we are full of the Holy Spirit, we passionately want to praise God, be a witness to others, serve one another in love, study the Word, pray, fellowship and all the good things God has for us to do.

Dear fellow leaky vessels, are you full of the Holy Spirit like you were when you surrendered your all to Jesus? Or perhaps you prayed the prayer of salvation but you never surrendered every area of your life and so you never experienced the fullness of the Spirit. Have you placed yourself as a living sacrifice on God's altar (Romans 12:1^{xxiv}), asking God to do with your life as He pleases?

Listen to what Jesus is telling us in this passage. He is telling us that the Heavenly Father wants to give us this great gift of the Holy Spirit and all we need to do is ask. It's because He loves you and wants to commune with you (Revelation 3:20^{xxv}). He wants all our lives filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit so that we might be that pure and spotless bride whom He is coming to make His own (Ephesians 5:25-27^{xxvi}).

Whether you are half full, or only have a drop left, or never really surrendered to Jesus, we can do what Jesus is suggesting in this passage and ask for the best, the Holy Spirit. "Give me that good gift Jesus, because I want to be completely Yours. I give You all of me. Fill me up and work through me." Will you pray that with me?

Questions

- 1 How does this connect with the Lord's Prayer?
- 2 Review Jesus illustration?
- 3 How does it relate to God the Father?
- 4 What is Jesus truth summary of the parable?
- 5 What conditions do we find in other passages?
- 6 Give examples of people who persisted in prayer.
- 7 What is the next illustration Jesus gave of prayer?
- 8 What are the three words that describe the way we should pray?
- 9 What did Jesus say was THE good gift?
- 10 Who receives the Holy Spirit?
- 11 Do we need to ask for a refill?

ⁱ **John 15:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

ⁱⁱ **Psalms 121:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

ⁱⁱⁱ **James 4:3 (ESV)**

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

^{iv} **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

^v **Philippians 3:3 (ESV)**

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—

^{vi} **Proverbs 13:12 (ESV)**

¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

^{vii} **1 Samuel 1:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you."

¹⁵ But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

^{viii} **Ezra 9:5-6 (ESV)**

⁵ And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God,

⁶ saying: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

^{ix} **Nehemiah 1:4 (ESV)**

⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

^x **Ephesians 1:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

^{xi} **2 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

^{xii} **Colossians 4:12 (ESV)**

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

^{xiii} **Luke 6:12-13 (ESV)**

¹² In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:

^{xiv} **Luke 22:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

^{xv} **Hebrews 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

^{xvi} **Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

^{xvii} **Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

^{xviii} **James 4:3-4 (ESV)**

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

^{xix} **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

^{xx} **Acts 2:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

^{xxi} **Acts 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

^{xxii} **Galatians 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

^{xxiii} **Luke 11:4 (ESV)**

⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

^{xxiv} **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

^{xxv} **Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

^{xxvi} **Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV)**

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.