

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
July 28, 2013**

Luke 11:1-13

Lord, Teach Us to Pray; Know the Father

- 1. The disciples watched Jesus . . .**
- 2. Easy to Relate**
- 3. Prayer: Knowing the Father**

Hymns: 582 – 409 – 412

Closing: 408

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Luke 11:1-13

When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

² He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.’ ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ”

⁵ Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’

⁷ “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

⁹ “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in

heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

It’s easy to see where the disciples were coming from with their question. Just think about all that they had been privileged to see prayer accomplish in their short time as Jesus’ followers. It began with the first miracle, when Jesus prayed and changed water into wine. Another time, Jesus prayed and was able to calm a squall that threatened their lives on the Sea of Galilee. Even more impressive, there was a time when Jesus prayed and a young girl was raised from the dead. And it wasn’t just those instances. Many, many other times, the disciples witnessed the familiar scene: Jesus prayed....and the remarkable, the impossible happened.

So, it really is no wonder that they came to Jesus with a request. Jesus, despite his overwhelmingly busy life, had again disappeared in the early morning hours to a solitary place to spend quiet time in prayer. When he returned to the disciples, they finally asked the question. They had seen so much time spent in prayer, they had seen so much dedication, and they had seen so many results from prayer so they asked simply, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

You have to wonder what the disciples were expecting to hear in response, don’t you? I mean, it wasn’t as if these life-long Jews had never heard of prayer or been taught to do so. They knew how to pray. So, what were they really asking? Well, with prayer after prayer from Jesus, they saw immediate answers, they saw powerful results. They saw prayer that seemed to work better than the prayer they had grown up using. Their prayers seemed to fall on deaf ears. Their prayers seemed to never get an answer. Their prayers seemed to be useless. So they wanted to know the secret. When they made the request, “Lord, teach us to pray,” they were really saying, “Lord, tell us how to make prayer work.”

I think that every single one of us can probably relate to how the disciples felt. As we look through the pages of Scripture, not just at Jesus’ life but also in many other lives, we see example after example of the amazing power and effectiveness of prayer.

In fact, we just read this morning how God was determined to bring judgment on those overtly wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was marching on his way to carry out the death sentence, when something caused him to stop.... the prayer of Abraham. “Lord, would you spare the city if you found 10 believers there?” The Almighty Judge stopped his march and reconsidered his righteous judgment... because a man asked him to. That is powerful prayer. That is effective prayer.

We also just read this morning how God held back the rain from heaven for three years. He had faithfully provided rain in its seasons for thousands of years until something caused him to stop... the

prayer of Elijah. "Lord, show the wicked King Ahab your power." The Creator changed his weather patterns.... because a man asked him to. That is powerful prayer. That is effective prayer.

Think about what we hear in Scripture. God reconsidered outcomes. God changed the order he set up in Creation. God gave back the breath of life. And it was the result of prayer. We can't help but marvel at prayer. But we also can't help but wonder why prayer seems to be so different for us. After the examples that we have looked at, it isn't like our prayers are over the top. Is asking for mom's cancer to be miraculously cured too much for a God who raised people from the dead? Is asking for a change in financial struggles too much for a God who changed the weather for three years? Is asking God to work faith in a family member's heart too much for a God who was willing to change an entire cities' judgment

The requests that we often bring before God could be considered small based upon what we see in the Bible, and yet, it seems that those impossible requests that were made in the pages of Scripture were granted more often than the simple requests that you and I bring on a daily basis. Abraham's prayer seems to work better than ours. Elijah's prayer seems to get quicker answers. Jesus' prayer seems to produce more power. Conversely, our prayers seem to fall on deaf ears. Our prayers seem to not get answers. Our prayers seem to be useless. So what gives? Why does prayer so often leave us feeling discouraged? Why does prayer so often leave us asking questions instead of getting answers? It can certainly lead us to feel like we are doing something wrong. It can certainly lead us to utter the same request as the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" "Lord, tell us how to make prayer work like that! Tell us the secret! Tell us the trick!"

Here in Luke, Jesus does just that. To sinners whose failures have separated us from God, Jesus tells us how to pray as powerfully and effectively as the Son of God himself. As we look at these three points on prayer, a theme jumps out about prayer. Prayer is all about knowing the Father. If you do not know the heavenly Father, you cannot pray effectively and you cannot pray powerfully. Unfortunately, there is something in each of us that keeps us from knowing the Father. Sin separates people from God. It puts a barrier between God and people. Isaiah tells us that our sins have hidden God's face from us so that he will not hear us (Isaiah 59:2).

But what sin tore apart, Jesus restored. He came to this earth to reconnect what had been disconnected by sin. And he did so with his life and death on the cross. He restored our relationship with the Father.

He made it so that each of us can know the Father and go to the Father.

Yet sin still cuts into our lives and damages our connection with the Father. We see those effects in our prayer life. When we doubt whether prayer is a viable option, that is sin affecting our relationship with the Father. When we fill our prayers with selfish requests and "I know best" demands, that is sin affecting our relationship with the Father. When we give up on prayer because there has been no answer, that is sin affecting our relationship with the Father.

So when we, the disciples of Christ, go to Jesus and request that he teach us how to pray, Jesus points to that relationship that makes prayer possible. If we have a prayer problem, we need to examine our relationship to the Father. In Luke 11, Jesus helps us to know the Father in three ways.

Through familiar words in verses 2-4, Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer. And through those words, Jesus gives us insight into what is important to the Father. Look at those words, or think about the full version that we say each Sunday. What is the focus of those words? What is important to the Father? Very clearly, the spiritual is more important to the Father than the physical. Is that what is important to us? Does the spiritual receive our focus in prayer? As we get to know the Father better, those things that are most important to him will also become most important to us and the results will be seen in our prayers.

In verses 5-8, Jesus tells a story about a man who needed help. He needed help from his neighbor late at night, and though the neighbor did not want to help, this man was persistent to the point of being bothersome. Yet, in the end, that man's request was answered. His bold persistence got him what he wanted. Through that story, Jesus allows us to know what the Father looks for in prayer. And Jesus tells us very clearly in verses 9-10 that the same bold persistence will produce positive results for our prayers. Our Father wants to hear bold persistence. Ask, seek, knock; and keep on doing so. It is what your Father wants from you.

Finally, Jesus let his disciples know what the Father gives in verses 11-13. When we know the Father, we know that he is not a distant and angry Judge, but a loving and merciful Giver. He cares for us in a greater way than any earthly father has ever cared for his children. We know that because of what he has given to every one of us, even without our asking.

If we want to improve our prayer life, there is only one way to do so. You have to spend time with the Father. Through time spent in his Word and being fed by the Sacrament, we will grow in our knowledge of what is important to him, we will become more

bold in persistently going to him, and we will become more confident that he wants to give to us when we come before him and ask.

For Jesus, the answer to his disciples was simple. What is the secret to prayer? It is all about knowing the Father. Spend time with the Father, and you will see the results in your prayers. Amen.