**Prayer Series – Breathe: Prayer is to Approach God**

**Luke 11: 1-13**

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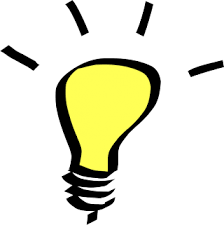
One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: “‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’” Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. “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. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!” (Luke 11:1-13)

# Introduction

Prayer undergirds everything that we do. We are unable to do anything without prayer. It becomes essential like breathing. If we do not pray, we can consider ourselves dead.

The disciples saw how Jesus prays. Something was different about the way Jesus prayed; compared to how they had been brought up. So, Jesus told them this parable. Hospitality was a serious matter in those days. People help one another.

Jesus taught the disciples on prayer by approaching the Heavenly Father boldly and with confidence.

**BIG IDEA Prayer is approaching God.**

It is by prayer we approach God. The understanding of God will always be nurtured by prayer. The more we pray, the better our understanding of God.

The disciples wanted to learn how to pray like Jesus and therefore Jesus told them this parable - **The Friend at Midnight**.

**The nature of prayer:**

# No unusual time for God. Any time is a good time!

Then Jesus said to them, “**Suppose you have a friend**, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ (Luke 11:5-6)



Jesus asked a hypothetical and rhetorical question … the master storyteller leading the people to answer an evident question concerning prayer. He gets the people to listen to him.

In the context of the parable, arriving at someone’s house at midnight was highly unusual. In some parts of the Middle East, people did travel at night because of the heat in the daytime. However, certainly not in Israel and Lebanon as these hill countries are cooler. This was therefore definitely unusual to travel at night in Israel. Thieves travelled at night. Even Jesus and His parents escaped by night to flee from the soldiers.

Here Jesus has caught the attention of the people. Jesus is trying to tell the disciples that they have a God who is not like that. The story is going from the lighter to the heavier. You can go to God anytime. Seek the Father anytime and all the time. You do not need to have an appointment to see this God.

# No unusual request for God. Any request is a good request!

Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ (Luke 11:5-6)

You cannot turn people away from your house. This is not Oriental hospitality. Here the guest comes to the house in the middle of the night. The host realises he has no food. In those times, they only prepare bread for the day. There is hardly any extra; except perhaps some olives or preserved fruits. The host realises he has to go to his neighbour to knock on the door and ask for loaves of bread.

Why three loaves of bread? The host wants to ensure that the guest has adequate food to eat. Three helpings would be more than enough for the friend who has come. As an earthly person, you can think of hospitality as a host. How much more your Father in heaven!

God’s help is unconditional. His generosity far exceeds what we ask for. The host knocked at a bad time because he had an emergency on his hands. He had an unusual request. In these situations, Jesus says, “Pray. Ask”.

# No unacceptable excuses from God. God addresses every request!

And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. (Luke 11:7-8)

The objective of prayer is not to get an answer. Sometimes you do not get an answer. But God addresses every request. The answer may not be in the right time or you may be asking for something that brings pain and difficulty upon your own self. God’s generosity far exceeds any earthly generosity in this world. He will not give you something that will bring you down, destroy you and your family or that you cannot handle.

The neighbour replies that the door is locked and the children are asleep in bed, sandwiched between the parents. When someone knocks on the door, the whole village will be awakened. When someone comes to the house, he is not just a guest of the house but the guest of the village. The other neighbours are awake and listening.

The Greek word anaideia, is better translated as “shamelessness” or “the avoidance of shame”. Hence the neighbour will get up to avoid being shamed because the next morning, the whole village will say he did not do what he was supposed to do.

The request cost the neighbour something. He had to get up, open the door and give the loaves of bread with some dishes. The other members of the family may also have to get up. The emphasis here is on the integrity of the neighbour, on his noble and honourable qualities, not on the persistence of the host.

When God hears our requests in prayer, it costs him something. It cost Him His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for us. It costs Him pain to see you going around in circles before coming back to Him.

God will never deny His integrity.

We have confidence when we pray. Even in unusual circumstances, or in times of emergency, he will answer because of His character.

As we approach God and make known our requests, anytime is a good time and any request is a good request. God has no excuses and addresses our every request. Our objective of prayer is not just to get an answer that pleases our heart. Our objective of prayer should be to know our God and walk in intimacy with Him. If you have a close relationship with God, you would know what request He would answer and what He would not answer. When we approach God, we come with shameless audacity knowing who He is. Jesus’ life and ministry are always anchored on prayer. He would not do anything without first going to the Father.

Conclusion

1. God is our Father in Heaven who loves us to approach Him with our requests. This parable contains deep truth about the nature of prayer. God is loving. We need to learn to know how to approach Him with our requests.

2. This parable on prayer told by Jesus is to encourage us to go on praying because of the kind of Father that He is. He is a good Father!

We have a Father God who is greater than the friends that we have. Why are we not going to Him? Jesus is encouraging the disciples that God is a good father who wants to give you more than you could ever ask. Jesus finishes off his teaching by saying:

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!” (Luke 11:13)

This reference to asking for the Holy Spirit was before the Cross but Jesus was already talking about His death, resurrection and the Holy Spirit. He was bringing the disciples to the point that they can do far better than all these because we have a God who thinks about us more than we think about ourselves. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He will give you the Holy Spirit to empower you so that you can enter the Holy of Holies and approach the Father with your requests boldly and confidently. There is no need to worry about sacrifices because Jesus has done it all. The greatest need for a child of God is the Holy Spirit. Before Pentecost, it was about having Jesus. After Pentecost, the important thing is submitting to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is important but we do not do it. We approach all other resources before we even think about God.

What a makes a bicycle move? It is the tires that make it move. Some of us are riding bicycles with punctured tires. No wonder we are not going anywhere and struggling in our prayer life. We are stagnant. We are so slow in our response and in giving our requests to God. We lose lots of energy because we need to pedal the bicycle with the punctured tire. Eventually the bicycle rim will be damaged and the whole bicycle needs to be thrown away. Some of us are procrastinating to replace the punctured tire and procrastinating in addressing our requests to God. God’s heart is to allow you to enjoy the ride of your life and to make a dash to the finishing line. We cannot afford to use a punctured tire to make a dash to the finishing line. We cannot finish the race. This is why prayer is breathing. God is asking us to be bold and to replace the tire. God the Father wants to give you new tires for your bicycle. God wants to give you good gifts enough for you to make a dash to the finishing line.

ere I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Revelation 3:20)

As we look to God the Father, we also see Jesus at the door knocking. If you hear His voice and you open the door, He will come in and have a relationship with you. The condition is that you open the door of your heart. Sometimes you refuse to open the door of your heart and Jesus will not force Himself in but wait at the door. Open the door of your heart and allow Jesus in.



Sermon summary by Zhenli.