

A Jesus Who Listens To Us

Luke 11:1-13

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I. Learning To Pray (v1-4)

II. Learning To Honor (v5-8)

III. Learning To Receive (v9-13)

Good morning everyone. How are you guys doing today? Pretty gnarly week huh? My head has just kind of been spinning lately. I can't remember a year in my lifetime that has been as gnarly as this year in terms of how much crazy stuff has gone down. I mean in one year in the US we've had multiple mass shootings, multiple racial shootings and multiple hurricanes.

It's a lot to take in. And we're not very good at that. And I think that's because we're not made to. As human beings we are not meant for a world like this and our human person is not meant to be able to take and handle death and especially these kinds of deaths.

As a church and on behalf of our pastoral team we want to care for you and lead you well. So just so you know, we're here for you if you would like to meet with one of our six pastors. And then I wrote a blog on our church website this week titled, "How To Respond To Tragedy" just to give us some biblical handholds on how to process some of this stuff.

Well, about a year ago now we laid out the entire calendar year for what all the sermons would be in 2017 and providentially the sermon we planned for this Sunday is all about prayer. I could help but smile a bit at God's sovereign hand at work in our church when I saw and heard all the media stuff everywhere saying, "Pray For Vegas."

As most of you know here, and if you couldn't tell by this massive backdrop, we're reading through and studying the Gospel of Luke in the Bible this year, just going through it chapter by chapter. And the next section we come up on today is a whole discussion with Jesus and His disciples that gets sparked because one of them is hearing Jesus pray and after Jesus finishes he says to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Pretty cool huh? We really believe here that in some mysterious way, that's beyond our full ability to comprehend, that Jesus really is the head pastor of our church who leads us by His Spirit and through His written Word. He seems to be doing a pretty good job.

Practically the way it works is we've got our six "under-pastors" (under-Jesus pastors), where we all serve equally under Jesus the head pastor. My role is to serve as the mouthpiece, mainly in preaching and casting vision for our church. So if you're new and don't know me, my name is Duane and that's what I do here.

If you are new we're really glad you've come and we hope and pray that your time here today is a blessing and that you experience the goodness of turning to and worshipping our God.

Okay you guys ready? Let's all stand and read this passage. I'll read it, acknowledge what we have as words from God for our good and then we'll thank Him for it and pray for a second for our time studying it.

Luke 11:1-13

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

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, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 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'? 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. 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. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!"

- Pastoral Declaration: This is the Word of the Lord.
- Congregational Response: Thanks, Be To God.
- Pastoral Prayer

"A Jesus Who Listens To Us." Being heard and acknowledged is important, isn't it?

More than a few times in our home I've come home from work, excited to see my kids and my wife...and usually hungry. So after saying hi to everyone I'll often call out, "Hey babe, what's for dinner?" To which I rarely seem to get response.

So I'll call out again, "Hey Aime, what's for dinner?" Still no response. So finally, because I'm so hungry and can't wait to eat, I'll walk in the kitchen and say, "Hey Amy what's for dinner?" And then she turns around and says, "I told you. For the third time, we're having chicken for dinner!"

I'm often the one who has the problem listening.

When it comes to God, one of people's biggest questions is if He's really there, if there's really a God, does He really hear our prayers and does He really care?

The message throughout the story of the Bible is that God is there, that He does hear and that He does care.

One of the most famous stories in the Bible is a story about racism and slavery, where the Jewish people were held captive in Egypt for about 400 years and then God delivered them by doing all these crazy miracles. The book's called Exodus in the Bible tells the whole story and it gets kicked off at the beginning of the book saying this,

Exodus 2:23-24 "The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning."

God heard. God hears. Last week we talked about "A Jesus Who Is Worth Listening To." This week we're talking about "A Jesus Who Listens To Us." It goes both ways with God, we listen to Him and He listens to us. Today we're looking at what Jesus said about our God who listens to us and I've got three points for us from it, "Learning To Pray", "Learning To Honor" and "Learning To Receive. And if

there's one thing I hope you walk away remembering from today it's that "God hears us and cares for us."

I. Learning To Pray (v1-4)

Let's jump into this first point, "Learning To Pray." This whole episode happens because the disciples here are doing what they are supposed to do as disciples, and that's to try and learn. The word disciple literally means "one being taught" So they are going around following Jesus, listening to Jesus and trying learn from Him.

It's hard to say how long it's been at this point, probably at least a year or more and throughout their time with Jesus they frequently see and hear Him praying. And on one of those occasions, one of the disciples in listening to Jesus pray, realizes that they actually suck at praying so they ask Jesus to teach them.

That's actually one of my favorite things about this scene is, the acknowledgment that they sucked at prayer. You can be terrible at praying. You can be a bad pray-er-er. A lot of us are. It's the truth. But it's also true that you can get better. You can learn to pray and get better at it.

One of the best ways is to have someone teach you about it and then pray with you. And there's opportunity for that here at our church. This is Bill Freese. (pic)

He leads our Prayer Ministry. And if you want to learn to pray, come here at 9am and for 30 minutes every Sunday Bill prays for our church and our city. He'll help you get better at praying. Some you are more introverted, like you're not the stand at the gate and welcome people in type person. But you can pray and you should think about joining Bill in our church's prayer ministry.

So Jesus' disciples ask Him to teach them to pray and what they get is what has hands down become the most famous prayer in all of history, what's known as "The Lord's Prayer." There's a couple different versions of it in the Bible, which probably means Jesus talked about it and or used it with the disciples on more than one occasion.

It can be used verbatim, like literally praying the actual words of it or it can be prayed in principle, which the different versions of it help point out...that there is a pattern and purpose to praying to God in this manner. There's basically six different parts to it. Six key ways to address God and what to talk to Him about.

Each of them are loaded with depth and meaning. We could easily spend this whole sermon on it and spend a number of week's on it. Which would be fun to do sometime, to do a whole sermon series on the Lord's Prayer. But we want to keep moving through the book of Luke so what I want to do is just walk through the prayer and say just a few short things about each of the six parts. Sound good?

Father.

God has lots of names in the Bible, any one of them are appropriate and some of them are especially helpful and appropriate at different times. For example, sometimes it's good to pray to God as the great "I AM" who has existed eternally and has power over all. Sometimes it's good to pray to God as the "Holy One" who is good and perfect and does all things well.

All the different names God reveals in the Bible for Himself are good. However, it's significant that Jesus says, it's really important to remember and pray to God as Father.

We'll talk about God as Father a bunch in our third point today. For now I'll just say that in this scene Jesus tells us that God is both Father, whom He is showing to us as the Son, who together dwell with the Holy Spirit. It's what we as Christians call the Trinity, that God is three in one. Three persons: Father, Son & Holy Spirit who together exist as one God.

Hallowed Be Your Name.

With this line Jesus reminds us to remember who we are talking to when we talk to God. It's not a flippant thing. It's not a just a breathing or meditation thing. In prayer we are talking to a real person. God. The Creator of the world, who is perfect and holy in every regard to the nth degree.

That's what "hallowed" means. It means holy or perfect completely. God throughout the Bible calls us to respect and revere His name. It's the third of the 10 commandments that we are not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain. It means that anytime we use God's name we are calling attention to His person and His character.

So really anytime anyone uses God's name it's a form of prayer, either of belief and dependence or disbelief and dismissal. It matters a lot how you say, "Oh God!"

Your Kingdom Come.

The Bible from beginning to end presents God as the King over all, all of the heavens and all of the earth. He is the supreme King who has all the power, all the money, all the land...He owns and orders everything.

Thing like shootings, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, cancer...are not God's vision for the world. And He as the King has promised a day when He will make all things new and abolish sin, sorrow and suffering forevermore.

So Jesus says we should pray for an in-breaking of that future, that it would come soon and that we might experience foretastes now of the goodness of that kingdom that is coming.

Give Us Each Day Our Daily Bread

Here Jesus is making a connecting between the physical and the spiritual, the heart and the body. They are not disconnected. Jesus as much as we need physical food to live we need spiritual food to live.

We need God each day. We are to be in prayer each day. And that doesn't have to be just five minutes each days that we sit down to pray and get spiritual food. It can be ongoing conversation with God in our hearts and minds throughout each day.

And in both, physical and spiritual food God is the provider. He provides for and gives us what we need. There's food, He keeps our body working to ingest it and there's God's Word and He keeps our hearts working to receive it.

Forgive Us Our Sins, For We Ourselves Forgive Everyone Who Is Indebted To Us

With this line, what Jesus is pointing out is that forgiveness is the currency of spiritual life. There's likely not a day that goes by where we don't need to use the currency of forgiveness either toward

someone that wrongs us or even toward ourselves where we apply God's forgiveness to our own faults and failures.

A life based upon us doing everything right and everyone treating us right is a bankrupt life. It never works and never will. What we need instead is the currency of forgiveness.

We all need forgiveness from God. We have no right to be able to talk to Him. That He allows it comes from His gracious character. Believing God is gracious is really the foundation of prayer. His forgiveness is already at work in His allowing us to pray to Him. Because of that Jesus says we should pray that we might be forgiving to others. As God is towards us so we ought to be to others.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Now God never leads anyone into temptation. The Bible is really clear on that in James 1:13. What Jesus is saying is that we ought to recognize that there is a devil and that there is a spiritual battle we wage toward Him in our hearts and minds and that we need to fight and with His help we can win.

Jesus is calling for us not to fall under temptation. None of us have the strength not to fall, which is why we pray for Jesus' strength. He resisted the devil in the wilderness and because He did can give us the strength we need to resist Him as well.

And that's it! A 120 mile an hour drive by at the Lord's Prayer and the principles it lays out for us.

You want to learn to pray? Start praying through the Lord's prayer. I promise you, you will be blessed by it. It's the prayer Jesus gave us. It's so good.

I'll end this point with a quote from the unofficial protestant pope, Tim Keller. In his book simply titled "Prayer" he says this about The Lord's Prayer,

"Jesus Christ gave it to us as the key to unlock all the riches of prayer. The whole world is starving for spiritual experience, and Jesus gives us the means to it in a few words. Jesus is saying, as it were, 'Wouldn't you like to be able to come face to face with the Father and king of the universe every day, to pour out your heart to him, and to sense him listening to and loving you?' We say of course, yes.

Jesus responds, 'It's all in the Lord's Prayer.' Everything we need is in it."

In and through this prayer we learn and experience that God hears us and cares for us. God hears us and cares for us.

To see how important it is to God that we know that, let's move on to our second point for today, "Learning To Honor."

II. Learning to Honor (v5-8)

This point is from verses 5-8 in our text where Jesus tells this kind of bizarre story about a guy knocking on a person's house at night asking for bread.

It sounds crazy. If a guy is knocking on my door at midnight, I'm probably answering the door with holding some kind of weapon behind my back.

So at first glance this story sounds crazy, especially when realize we live in a totally different time, culture and context. So I didn't get it at first and had to read a bunch about it.

Here's what's going on. This guy apparently lives in a small house in likely a small village. A lot of the towns in the lands of the Bible had small villages. And usually in each town had a lot of town pride and in that town there would be a guy who was the town baker.

I experienced this recently when I was in the Basque country. We were staying in this little village of farm houses named Ea and in Ea there's a guy who bakes the bread, so every morning he would roll up and drop off a baguette of bread rolled up in a newspaper.

So this dude's friend shows up at night after a long journey, he's probably late and hungry and tired. What Jesus is saying is there's no way this guy's going to turn him away because it would make him and his village look really bad.

That's what that word "impudence" is all about in verse 8. Impudence is a fancy word for shame. If he didn't get up and make some food for his friend it would bring shame on his family name and his village.

Now, remember the parallel here is God. So what Jesus is getting at is that God will hear and answer our prayers because of the honor of His name. God cares a lot about His reputation. Nobody likes looking bad in front of others and God doesn't like looking bad. God cares about the honor of His name.

Here's the point, when we pray to God we are honoring His name. In prayer we acknowledge that God is and that He is good and powerful and holy and kind and gracious and caring and all kinds of other things and that brings God much honor. It makes Him happy.

Psalms 79:9-10 expresses this well. It has this prayer, "9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake! Why should the faithless say, 'Where is their God?'"

So one way to pray is pray and ask that God would act so that others we see and experience how good and great He is, that others would come to honor and revere His name. I'm continually amazed at what a powerful tool prayer is.

There are very few people in this world who will reject prayer, regardless of what your belief is. And when you pray, especially pray out loud for someone, or even like text a prayer, people get to hear what you believe about God. And I'll tell you what, that's attractive.

I'll give you one piece of advice. When something comes up, don't just tell a person, "I'll pray for you." Ask if you can pray for them right then and there. And if it's a text conversation, type up a prayer and put it in quotes for someone. God will use that. It honors His name.

God hears us and cares for us. God hears us and cares for us because He cares about His name.

Alright, let's move on to our third point for today, "Learning To Receive."

III. Learning To Receive (v9-13)

In this third point looking at verses 9-11 Jesus really unpacks the heart of God as Father toward us as His children.

First, let's look at verses 9 and 10, "9 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."

The picture here is of a child coming home. Home is a place of safety, it's a place of provision and protection. Which is what being a dad is all about. It's the father's job to provide for and protect his family.

One of the things we tell our kids is that we love them and will always love them no matter what. Home is for our family. It's where we live. Where they have access to the fridge and where they know they are safe at night because I protect them.

Only to my kids is the door to my house always open. Only to them am I committed to caring for all the time.

I might let you stay at my house a night or two if you need it or give you some money if you really need it. But only to my kids am I committed to providing a roof over their head, regular food on the table and clothes on their backs.

A kid who seeks out their parents for help, if they are good parents will never reject their kid but will do whatever they can for them.

Jesus is saying that's what God the Father is like. If we seek Him out as Father, even asking Him to be our Father, especially if we've had a bad earthly Father...He will be Father to us. If seek Him and truly seek Him, we'll find Him.

I was having a conversation the other day with someone who has been having some questions and doubts about God. I was telling them, one that having questions and doubts is natural and can be healthy. But I told them that there is two kinds of seeking.

There is a kind of questioning God where you don't really want answers, so you're not really seeking Him out. The questions are just kind of smoke screen so you don't have to deal with God and can just continue doing what you want.

But then there's the kind of honest heart questioning where you are really looking for truth and really do want to know. That kind of questioning is good and healthy and I believe God welcomes those questions and promises that if we truly seek Him out we'll find Him!

If we seek God out and knock on His door, He will open it to us because He's a good Father.

The Lord's prayer begins with Jesus introducing us to God as Father and then He concludes this teaching session on prayer by illustrating the generosity of Father God in His heart toward His children.

Look at what He says in verses 11-13, "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? 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!"

These are interesting kids. I've never known any kids to ask for fish or eggs. They want things like ice cream, candy, popcorn, toys, clothes all kinds of stuff. I don't know about your kids but my kids are always asking for stuff.

So we've been trying to teach them not to have wanting hearts. But can I tell you a secret? I always want to give them everything!!! Anytime they ask for something I always just want to say, "yes." And I probably would if I could. I just know that part of my job its to provide for them and if I always say yes to toys and candy then I won't have enough money for fish and eggs, the stuff they really need to live.

Some of you don't have kids so it's hard to know what this feeling is like, but my kids have never asked me for something and I think in my head, "I don't want to give that to you!" No good father wants anything bad to ever happen to his kids, that's why you'd never give them a snake or a scorpion. Because those things would bite or sting them and hurt them!

What Jesus illustrating here is God's heart of generosity toward His kids. God is a very very generous Father. He always hears our prayers and He always cares. In truth God always answers our prayers, it's just that sometimes He says "no" because He knows what we're asking for won't be good for us.

Now, there's one more line here I want to talk about and then we'll address a few misconceptions about prayer and how people have twisted Jesus words here.

In the last line, Jesus says, "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!"

Kind of sounds harsh in saying we're evil huh? That's not really what Jesus is getting at though. In Matthew 5:45 Jesus says that God gives sun and the rain to both evil people and good people. He's generous towards everyone, even to those He shouldn't be.

Because of that, because of God's grace and mercy even to those who hate Him, it ought make us turn toward Him and have Him as our Father. And when we do, He promises adopt us as His kids.

That's what the whole Spirit thing is about. Romans 8:14-17 describes this better than I ever could. Here's what it says:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [and/or daughters] of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Jesus is God's only Son. Through belief in Jesus as savior we get adopted into Jesus' special divine family where we get to become God's kids, we get Him as our Father and all the blessings and inheritance that comes with that.

You see, God cares for us so much He not only wants to give us what we need but He wants to give us His very self. God wants to give Himself to us as Father. And when He does that His Spirit comes to reside and work in us through all the ordinary things of life. It's not about the stuff, it's about God's heart and Spirit He gives to us in and through all the thousands of times continues to hear and answer and answer and answer our prayers.

You and I could never fathom how much God the Father loves us. He cares for us far beyond what we could ever imagine.

Everything with God is relational. The whole thing Jesus is teaching from beginning to end in this scene is that we've got to have relationship with God as our Father. It's the beginning and end to all things. God's place for us, how we function best in life is as His kids in His house.

That's why prayer isn't meant to just be this thing where God's some cosmic vending machine in the sky where you put in your prayer and out pops whatever you want. God's not into that. He into being our Father and giving us the things that are truly going to enable us to thrive in life.

Prayers is about connecting to God the Father. That's what it's about. But sadly, some people have taken Jesus's words and twisted them.

Some have read into Jesus' words where He says ask and it will be given to you and said things like, we'll then if we just have enough faith when we pray then our prayer will be answered. So sometimes people will try to go around and pray for people and perform miracles of healing and what not and if it doesn't happen they say it's either because the person praying or receiving the prayer either didn't have enough faith or had sin in their life.

You just need to know today that such an idea is heresy. It's wrongheaded thinking, twisting Jesus words. I was first introduced to such an idea at a fairly young age. I grew up with my parents taking me to Pentecostal churches where some of them were really into this guy named Kenneth Hagin.

In his book on prayer he writes, "All you have to do is ask God for the things you need and want...Then you will have whatever it is you need from God. Some people continually ask me why God won't heal them after they have had many people pray for them and have had no results. Very often I ask them if they have ever had faith."

Look, Jesus it's pretty simple, Jesus isn't trying to teach people how to do pray and do miracles here. He's explaining how relationship with God the Father happens through prayer.

Anytime Jesus ever did any miracles it was so that people would come into closer relationship with God, it was for the purpose of faith and belief in Him. Not everyone who experienced a miracle ended up believing in Him, and...every one who ever experienced any kind of miracles still got sick again and died.

The Bible has a lot to say about suffering. Part of the goodness of having God in our lives is that He's with us in our hour of suffering through prayer. Too many times we just want out of the suffering instead of drawing closer to God through it and learning what He wants to teach us in it. Our savior was poor carpenter who suffered a lot.

The main problem with the whole faith healing miracle prayers is they put the focus on the fantastic, the focus gets put on man and not God. Jesus is trying to teach here in this scene that prayer is about communing with God. The goal is walking in His Spirit and experiencing all the goodness He has to offer us.

He's trying to teach us that God hears us and cares for us as a good Father. That's the point, that's the purpose. Friends, God is such a good God and He has shown that to us chiefly in the giving of His Son Jesus, His most precious treasure.

Jesus is the best gift of all. Better than any physical healing, better than any material possession, better than anything we could ever ask for or think...because in and through Jesus we get connected to God. Through Him we get God as our Father.

I'll end this point with a prayer the apostle Paul prayed in Ephesians chapter three in the Bible.

Ephesians 3:14-19 "14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Jesus is the best gift of all from God our Father. Through Him we know God has hears our cries and cares for us.

Conclusion

Well, I know this has been a bit longer sermon. This passage is packed with rich with good stuff from Jesus.

I started out the sermon today talking about the trouble I have in listening to and hearing my wife. Today we've learned that through Jesus we have a God who always hears and listens to us.

We're going to conclude our time together by receiving The Lord's Supper as we do each week here by taking a piece of bread as Jesus' perfect life and dipping it in the wine or the juice as His blood on the cross.

On the cross Jesus paid the ultimate price so we could be forgiven of our greatest debt, the debt of our own sin before God.

Normally, we prepare our hearts to come to the table by having a words confession and then assurance. But I thought it would be fitting today to for us to simply read the Lord's Prayer out loud together. Sound good?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us each day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and glory forever and ever. Amen.