

TITLE: Parable About Prayer

TEXT: Luke 11:5-13

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 11. Last week we studied those verses that are commonly known as the "Lord's Prayer" from Luke chapter 11 verses 1 thru 4. A wonderful teaching by Jesus on HOW TO PRAY. Now, today, we come to a wonderful PARABLE ABOUT PRAYER. LUKE Chapter 11 beginning with Vs 5.

(Read Luke 11:5-13)

Prayer

This particular parable in my opinion is greatly misunderstood. And I hope to show you why. Some of you might be a little surprised at what I believe is really being taught here in this parable. Because there is a standard Christian interpretation of this parable that goes something like this: In order to really see God answer prayer, you need to keep at it. That the real issue is how much do you really want God's answer. So, the teaching in this parable is how much do you want something and whether or not you will persist in prayer. Whether you will keep at it or not. To find God's answer to a prayer, you just need to keep knocking on God's door just like this man kept knocking on his friends' door at midnight. So, if you persist long enough, then God will answer your prayer.

Now, some of you are going to be surprised because I do not believe that is the teaching of this parable. This parable is not telling us that only super saints who really keep at it are the ones who get answers. That is not the teaching of this parable.

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And I hope you understand that before we are through. I believe this is for all of us. I believe this is an encouragement to every believer, no matter how long you have known the Lord. Here we find encouragement to pray. That God really wants to answer our prayers.

But I do believe that a lot of us, whether through the influence of radio or television or whatever, a lot of us have heard so many messages about how great this matter of prayer is and how disciplined one must be, and how much effort is needed, and how we need to be dedicated to it...all of which is true...BUT, we get the impression that only a few super saints really know how to pray. And that is completely false.

Another example: Sometimes we call a few of the saints in the church... usually the elderly...We call them PRAYER WARRIORS.

Now, I simply do not believe that. I have an idea that perhaps some of the children in our children's department are the real PRAYER WARRIORS.

Do you know what I mean? I hope you are a prayer warrior. But, I really don't know what that means. That sort of gives me the impression that the average person cannot pray. That some how you have to be a super saint in order to pray. Dear friends, I don't believe that is taught in the Bible at all.

Do you see what happens? There is too much emphasis on man in prayer and not enough on God. The issue is WHO GOD IS. And that encourages everybody to come to Him in prayer. It isn't who man is. As though his great ability to believe is the issue. That is not the issue. It is a great God we need to focus on. A God who is a loving heavenly Father who wants to answer our prayers. God is not reluctant. God is not unwilling. God loves to answer prayer.

So, with this in mind, let's come to the passage and see what it really says. I want to divide these verses into two parts.

- (1) First of all, the basic parable about prayer in verses 5 to 8.
- (2) Then, secondly, in verses 9 to 13, Jesus gives what I believe is the promise of prayer...A wonderful promise that should encourage the hearts of all here today.

In verses 5 through 13 we have a parable about prayer. Now, what is this parable about prayer? I think the key words that I would like to share with you that might help us understand it, is that this is a parable of contrast.. not comparison. If you compare this parable to the heavenly Father, then you are going to see God as reluctant. That what you have to do is pound on the door. And you must do this all the time. You must have persistence or God will not answer your pray. That is what a lot of people believe. The only way to get God to answer your prayer is to really pound on the door of heaven until God finally says, "O.K., O.K. I will give you what you want."

Now, friends, I have a real problem with that. I do not believe that is the character of God taught in the Bible. God is a good God. He is a gracious God. He wants to answer our prayers.

So, this is a parable of contrast. Not comparison. You see, the request of this man does demonstrate the need for prayer. He need three loaves of bread. Look back at the pattern of prayer that Jesus taught in verses 3-4. "Give us each day our daily bread."

And the reason why his request was granted was: persistence or importunity: which literally means, "no shame". SHAMELESS. He was so shameless that he sat there at midnight pounding on this guys door and screaming, "I want the bread."

Now, some people says that that is what you have to do in prayer. And of course most of us would give up quickly.

I don't believe that at all. And let me just show you.

The word "friend" is contrasted with "our heavenly father." He came at midnight. But we can go any time to God in prayer. Very interesting.

He came with a vaery small request in terms of the three loavaes. But we are invited to come with high expectations for all of God's good gifts.

The man gave him excuses. But I don't read in the Bible that God ever gives us an excuse. He only gives us promises. This is a contrast. You say, "How do you know that, Bill?" By the last few verses. Verses 11 ti 13. WE are seeing a contrast, here, between what this person did and what God will do. Do we really believe that is the way God will answer prayer/...NO!!!

Is God the "friend" in this parable? NO WAY. All that the friend was God is not. And that is the point.

In contrast to that, Jesus said, "You ask, and it shall be given." Some folks say .."Well, it is present tense." Meaning "keep on asking". As though you have to beg. That is not what it says. To keep on asking means that it is a daily habit of life to ask God. The promise is there, It will be given. Seek..you will find. Knock...it will be opened...God is not reluctant..God is not giving excuses..God is not waiting for your persistence. God simply ask you to ask Him. Knowing who He is...The character of God. That He is the heavenly Father who loves you. Beleive that and ask him. And God will answer....

Boy, that is an encourager to prayer. That is not putting up a barrier to pray as though I have to be a super saint in order to pray. It is an encourager to prayer. Which brings me to the PROMISE OF PRAYER IN VERSES 9 to 13. And I believe this promise to prayer is based upon three things.

Please recall what is happening here. It says if a son ask Bread from a father will he give him a stone? If he ask for a fish, will he give him a snake? If he ask for an egg, will he give him a scorpion?

You say, NO! That is ridiculous. And then Jesus said, "If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."

God is not reluctant. He is not trying to trick you. God wants you to come and ask and seek and knock and it will be done. There is a wonderful promise here based upon three things.

(1) One, based on the fact of your asking. Based on the fact of your seeking him. Based on these parallel statements to emphases to all of us that God wants us to ask.

When people ask, What is the number one problem in prayer? Listen carefully It is not the technics and methods of prayer. That is not the number one problem. The number one problem in prayer is not a formula. It is not a method The number one problem is not even the discipline of prayer.

6

The number one problem is that great scores of Christians never do the basic and most simple thing of all. And that is to ask.

We often give excuses. As to why God may not answer our prayers. GOD SAID..ASK ME...SEEK ME.. I am a God who loves you. I want to bless you more than to receive it. The great need is to get people to pray. The great need is to get people to ask God. Not a reluctant, hestant God. But one who wants to answer prayer.

That is why I love a prayer list. I write all kinds of things down on my prayer list. And people look at this list and say, "Well, some of those things will be answered in time." Hay! I don't care. I still want them down there. I love to write down when God answers a prayer. What encourage. Why last week God answered so many wonderful prayers.

(NEED AN EXAMPLE)

I believe God answered prayer.

You can ask him anything you want to ask him. I don't care what it is. God wants you to come to Him. And that is why the promise of prayer is so important. It is based upon a simple fact of you coming and asking.

(2) And secondly, it is based on your relationship to God. The whole point is to tell you He is your Father. He is your Heavenly Father. If an earthly father knows how to give good gifts to you, don't you understand that your heavenly Father will give you good things. It is based on your relationship to God. He is my Father. Our Father who art in heaven... Wow! Isn't that special.

God says that we have access into His presence because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can literally come into the throne room of God. And ask the cfeator of the universe to do something in my life. WOW!

It blows my mind. To realize the fact that he would be interested with millions of people to be concerned about. A universe to sustain. But, me... He loves me. And He is my father. And he will answer my prayers.

If that doesn't bless the socks off of you, you must be dead. I tell you that is a thrill. Every time I think about it, the wonderful, privilage of prayer. He loves me and I can ask Him anything. And He will hear my pray. And He will do what is best for me. What a wonderful relationship we have with God. How could it be any more wonderful.

(3) And a third thing, this promise is based upon the character of God, himself

Which again is done by way of contrast. Look at Vs 13.."If you then, being evil."

People ask me. "Is man basical evil?" Or.is he basical good. Is he good, bad or both?" Isn't it interesting that Jesus assumes our depravity? He says, "If you being evil,as you are, if you can give good gifts to children don't you understand that God who is not evil at all but who is so good."

God is so good...When Moses ask God, "What is your name?" God said, "It is abounding in goodness."

The Lord God is our sun and shield, says Psalms 84:11, The Lord will give grace and glory. And no good will he with hold from those who walk uprightly."

Romans 8:28 "All things work together for good to those who love God." GOD...SO...GOOD. It says it over and over again. The Psalms.."The Lord is good ~~His~~ mercy endures forever, his truth to all generations." THE LORD IS GOOD....GOOD....GOOOD. Not evil...But good. And God wants to bless you more than you want to receive it. It is based on the character of God.

()Now, the last part of Vs 13 says, "how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."

And people get all bent out of shape over this. They leap out of the content of this passage and start talking about what this means. For example: some folks say that this means "spiritual gifts." And if you ask the Holy Spirit He will give you the gift that you want..

Now, wait a minute. That would contradict what the Bible says in I Cor chapter 12. It says there that the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts as HE WILLS...

This is not referring to spiritual gifts. You say, "Well, it says good gifts." But the "good gifts" in the context, what is that? It talks about bread and fish and eggs. I wonder if we really understand.

I think this applies to everyone who wants to become a christian. Really. If you are not a christian, I want you to know that you must have the Holy Spirit of God in order to become a christian. And the Bible uses simply words like: ask, receive, and believe to speak about receiving the Holy Spirit. You have to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour in order to receive the Holy Spirit. No one is a christian who does not have the Holy Spirit. We find that truth taught in Romans 8:9. You must have the Holy Spirit in you or you are not a christian. He is the one who causes you to become a new creature in Christ. He is the one who causes you to be born again.

You say, "Man, I have heard a lot about religion in my life. I know a lot about the Gospel. But I want to be born again. I want to know that I am a Christian. Your heavenly Father, who is a good heavenly Father, will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. To everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, as Lord and saviour, who confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believes in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead, everyone will receive the Holy Spirit. HE IS A GOOD HEAVENLY FATHER. He will not keep it back.

But, obviously He is talking primarily to believers. So what is He talking about? I think he is talking about all the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit. He is talking about the power we need as christians to witness for him. The strength we need in our spirit to have victory over sin. "Walk by means of the spirit and you will not carry out the lust of the flesh."

The point of the parable is simple. The Holy Spirit is the giver of all the good things of God. All the points of victory and power and need in my life. Ask the Heavenly Father.

And some of us are struggling with sinful habits, some of us are struggling with problems in our lives, and God says "ASK ME!"

And when someone comes along and says, "What you need to do is pray." We think to ourselves, "That is too simple." Give me a formula...give a class on prayer...give 36 steps that I can do to get victory over this.

And God says...ASK ME! ASK ME!

Oh, I wish I had boldness to share my faith in Christ. ASK ME!
I will give you the power of the Holy Spirit.

What I am trying to say to you, today, is the most basic need in the Christian life. It is to study the Word of God. It is to know and listen to the Word of God. AND TO PRAY TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER. To pray to God because of who He is. AND HE ANSWERS PRAYER. HE IS NOT RELUCTANT.

And if you call upon Him, He will answer. "Call upon me and I will show you great and mighty things that you do not know."

LET'S CLOSE WITH A WORD OF PRAYER