

Let's Pray

Luke 11:1-13

Encountering Jesus Today

By Dave Urbanski

In our study together this past Sunday, Pastor Scott led us through Luke 11:1-13, during which Jesus encourages us to pray with persistence.

Pastor Scott, in fact, pointed out that Jesus in this prayer-heavy passage blends two concepts: 1) God's sovereignty, greatness, will, and coming kingdom ... along with 2) our daily needs.

Jesus offers the prayer — which partially mirrors the Lord's prayer found in Matthew 6 — as a model for our individual prayer lives. Not as a word-for-word repeat performance — but to show us what things our minds and hearts should focus on when we pray.

Here's what Jesus says: "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.'"

Jesus significantly starts the prayer with the deeply intimate, familial name addressing God — "Father" — signaling the supreme importance of God's relationship to each of us. The next word is "hallowed" — or "holy." Pastor Scott noted that "holy" means separate ... not the same as everything else ... unique and so utterly huge that the Lord himself overshadows all other things, all other values.

One of the insightful things Pastor Scott stressed to us this point is that even though we all fall eons short of God's holiness, he still invites us to participate with him in that holiness. The call to "be holy because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Therefore we are to follow the Lord whatever the cost — and along the way we can still call him "father" despite how blindingly different and infinitely more loving he is than we are.

Pastor Scott then called our attention to the Matthew 6 version of the Lord's prayer in which Jesus says, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Pastor Scott said the phrase "your kingdom come" is Jesus telling us — reminding us, pleading with us — that God's kingdom is near. That we might be missing it! When you think about it, that ought to be the very core of our message to others. In addition, the phrase "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is Jesus speaking in a prescriptive sense regarding God's will — it is how we are to live.

The positioning of the next phrase in Luke 11, "Give us each day our daily bread" is significant, as Jesus in this prayer instructs us to acknowledge God first ... and then our needs second. But while we pray that God will meet our needs — physical, emotional, spiritual — every day ... our call also is to reach out in prayer, in conversation with God EVERY DAY. In fact, no matter what we perceive our needs to be on a day-to-day basis, we need God's grace every day no matter how good or bad we might be feeling! Also, let us not look too far ahead in the future; the Lord wants us focusing on TODAY primarily, as there is enough potential trouble for tomorrow. And Pastor Scott reminded us that when we get to tomorrow, if that's the Lord's will, there will be grace available to us then, too.

The next phrase Jesus speaks is, "and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Pastor Scott said that's the best part of salvation: Forgiveness. We need forgiveness from the Lord because we cannot earn his forgiveness through our good deeds — which ultimately are "filthy rags" in God's eyes (Isaiah 64:6). Instead we admit we're sinners, trust in Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, and we are eternally forgiven.

Maybe the most poignant part of Pastor Scott's message was when he took us through Jesus' phrase, "for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us" — or the more familiar, "as we forgive those who trespass against us." It's not always easy to forgive. If we've been egregiously wronged — or wronged over and over again — taking a forgiving stance can feel tiresome, or like we're getting cheated, or even that we're fools for doing so! But that is not Jesus' view at all. As we know all too well, Jesus had every reason to NOT say, "Father, forgive them!" when he was being punished in our place for our sins on the cross. We must do no less! In addition, we should be SO relieved and grateful that the Lord eternally forgives our sins that we're always willing to completely let go of our need to hold back forgiving others due to vengeful or bitter feelings.

Finally, Jesus' prayer ends with, "and lead us not into temptation" — and in Matthew 6, Jesus adds, "but deliver us from evil."

Another profound point from Pastor Scott on Sunday was the truth that the most dangerous people in our lives ... are you and me! We're our own worst enemies. Whether it's materialism, selfishness, anger — any kind of immorality — we're all susceptible to carrying it out. Pastor Scott called it a "gravitational pull" toward sin. Which is why we must consistently ask the Lord to deliver us from evil — to deliver us from ourselves, in fact!

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 (the King James Version) ends with, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Pastor Scott pointed out that the latter words relate closely to the prophecy in Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.'"

Back to the Kingdom of God — right where we belong!

In the rest of our Luke 11 passage, Jesus talks about what Pastor Scott termed a "grumpy neighbor." But he pointed out that the description of the "friend in need at midnight" in reality is a picture showing how much MORE the Lord cares about us and greatly desires to meet our needs. But our part is continually asking of God, to be always seeking him — persistence in prayer. "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!" (vv. 11-13)

Pastor Scott also answered the age-old question, "Why should I spend time praying to God if he already has it figured out?" Simple! Again, he's allowing us to be part of the heavenly equation, to be part of the blessings he so greatly wants to pour out upon us.

So if we're feeling tired or stressed or rushed — and there's "certainly no time to pray" in the next five minutes — let us determine now to take advantage of the opportunities the Lord gives us to meet with him in prayer.

And maybe — just maybe — we'll strangely start feeling less tired and stressed and rushed, as Christ's blessings come to rest upon us.