

Growing Spiritually: Praying with Persistence
Luke 11:1-13
Sermon Outline

Introduction: We grow spiritually through the Means of Grace, the gifts God has given that he has designed for our growth. One of them is prayer. Knowing how hard prayer is to us, the Lord urges us to pray with bold persistence and gives us an incentive for doing so by telling us that God is our Friend and our Father.

I) Jesus urges us to pray with bold persistence

v. 9: 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.

Three present imperatives: *Keep asking...keep seeking...keep knocking*
Synonyms signifying a range

Future promises: *...and it will be given...and you will find...and it will be opened*
Waiting

Jesus waited too: *Consequently, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for us.*

What does persistence look like?

II) Why can we pray with bold persistence?

A) Because God is our Friend and Father

1) God is our Friend: *vv. 5-8*

v. 8: ...in order to avoid dishonor he will get up and give him whatever he needs [tr., Joel Green]

Jesus' point:

A blameless man *swears to his own hurt and does not change* (*Psalm 15:4*). So with God

2) God is our Father: *vv. 11-13*

The best of all good gifts: *The Holy Spirit* (*v. 13*)

3) How do we know that God is our Friend and Father?

B) Final thoughts

1) Jesus invites us to join him in cleaning up our mess.

2) Anybody can pray

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) One of the means of grace is prayer. Inventory your prayer life over the past week. How many minutes did you spend in prayer? What did you pray about?
- 2) The imperatives in vs. 9 are all present tense, which in the Greek describes a continual action—“Keep asking...keep seeking...” N.T. Wright comments on Luke 11:9: “Jesus is encouraging a kind of holy boldness, a sharp knocking on the door, an insistent asking, a search that refuses to give up. That’s what our prayer should be like.” Does this characterize your praying? If not, why not? Does Jesus mean here that we should never leave off praying? Answer in the light of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.
- 3) Hebrews 7:25 reads, “Consequently Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for us.” Jesus’ prayers for us continue into the present, presumably because they are yet to be fully answered. What encouragements can you draw from this fact for your own persistence in unanswered prayer?
- 4) In his commentary on Luke 11:5-8, Joel Green writes that the practice of friendship in Jesus’ day makes the thought that the householder might actually refuse his friend ‘laughable in its absurdity.’ How does this fact contribute to the force of Jesus’ argument for trusting God to answer our prayers?
- 5) What is the point of Jesus’ comparison between human fathers and the heavenly Father in vv. 11-13? Why, then, do we still doubt that God will answer us?
- 6) Reflect on the following: “How do we know that God is in fact our Friend and our Father? Because, like the blameless man described in Psalm 14:4, he has ‘sworn to his own hurt’. Rather than deny us in our need (sinners though we are), he has borne much more than the inconvenience of rising from his bed in the middle of the night. He has borne the humiliation of the incarnation and the crucifixion. The Father, in order to keep the friendship alive, has given us much more than three loaves of bread; he has given us his Son. To such a Friend and Father we can appeal.”
- 7) The Lord’s Prayer reflects the mission of Jesus. By asking us to pray it Jesus is inviting us to join him in the overthrow of the mess that we ourselves have made of the world. Reflect on the grace of that invitation and thank him for it.
- 8) Reflect on the following: “In v. 10 Jesus says, ‘Everyone who asks receives.’ This is a world-wide invitation, open to anyone, whatever their age or ethnicity, no matter how knowledgeable or religious. It is a great leveler, the answer to democracy’s imperfect efforts at power sharing. God has promises to come to, to work in, and to work through any and all who ask him for help.”