

10. The Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:1-13)

The parable of the friend at midnight instructs to what degree that we can expect the Father to answer our prayers. It begins with a dramatic situation where the disciples ask the Lord to teach them to pray:

Luke 11:1: *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."*

Jesus responded to them by teaching them what many now know as the Lord's Prayer. A more apt designation might be the disciples' prayer, since they were the ones instructed to so pray.

The Prayer that the Lord Taught His Disciples

Luke 11:2-4: 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"*Father,*

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

3 *Give us each day our daily bread.*

4 *Forgive us our sins,*

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation."

The grammar of the prayer is what connects it to the parable that follows. The verbs are in the imperative mood, which makes them direct commands, requests, and prohibitions in the most straight forward form. *Hallowed be, give, forgive, and lead* are all verbs in the imperative mood. "How can we command God?" one might ask. Speaking of prayer, Paul included *requests* in 1 Tim 2:1, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone." The word here for *requests* was translated *supplications* in the NKJV and the ASV. *Supplications* is, perhaps, stronger and more direct to the point. Webster calls it a humble *entreaty*. The entire meaning of these requests depends on the attitude of the one asking. All the commands relate to what God has in mind for us. That we should hallow his name, that his kingdom come, that he provide for us only day by day, that he forgive our sins, and that we not be tempted—all of these lie at the heart of our obedience as children. The meaning of the direct commands has a direct connection to *the seek, the knock, and the ask* commands in the parable that follows.

The Friend Who Came at Midnight

Luke 11:5-8 5 *Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'*

7 *"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.*

Has someone knocked on your door at night, and you said, "I just wish they would go away!" But you went to the door. Or has your phone rung, and you said, who can that be?

For God to give us what we need and ask for, we must go before him with boldness. This is the truth of this parable; and the truth of the parable of the widow and the unrighteous judge. In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus taught:

18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

The attitude illustrated in these parables is explained by Paul in 2 Tim 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." One who is not a disciple cannot go to God, the Father, with this spirit, for as Paul says, God gives it. An interesting counterpoint is that the cowardly join other evil workers—the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, etc.—in the fiery lake in Rev 21:8: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Ask, Seek, and Knock

Luke 11:9-10: 9 "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. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

The key to this verse is *boldness* from the parable. With the spirit of power and love from God, we must ask, seek, and knock. The context limits the power of receiving, finding, and opening the door to the disciples. Matthew's account of this same teaching has an abiding principle stated in the immediate context in Matt 6:33-34: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Conclusion

Luke 11:11-13: 11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!"

Just as a father does not deny his son a fish and give a snake or deny an egg and give a scorpion, the Father in heaven does not deny us; but He gives us the Holy Spirit—the most valuable of all gifts. The use of snakes and scorpions, as unspeakable as they are, has an interesting scriptural parallel. In Luke 10:19-20, the Lord said, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." This power of the enemy is fully explained in Rev 9, as the lusts and sins which beset us. In the end, the disciples are victorious, for they have the gift of the Holy Spirit of God:

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory. Eph 1:13-14

Study Questions

1. To whom are the parable and this teaching directed?
2. Will one out of harmony with the Father have his prayers answered?
3. How does the father/child relationship illustrate the meaning of the parable?
4. How does the parable explain the prayer, taught by the Lord?
5. What will be the fate of the timid and cowardly?