

**Text: Luke 11:1-13 (Pew Bible pg.1029)**

**Title: “Bold Praying”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Jesus told stories not just to tell stories, but there are teachers and preachers today that do. Someone on Facebook posted a picture of their pastor entering the service on a zip line. And what was the point he was trying to make. YOLO ... You only live once. Jesus never told stories just to tell them. In sermon preparation there’s a stage in which we begin to think, “How can I illustrate this?” At that point we have a sermon in search of a story. There are other times when we preachers will hear or see a story and we will say, “That’s a story in search of a sermon.” In other words, it really doesn’t fit; it’s just a great story.

The word “parable” means “to set alongside.” And Jesus would set these stories alongside a specific truth He wanted to communicate to His followers or to others who were listening to Him. And in this series of messages we’re looking at some of the life stories of Jesus recorded by Luke in his Gospel account. Open your Bibles to Luke 11. As you’re turning I want to remind you that on Sunday evenings our A2C groups meet. This is a small group experience designed to build on what happens on Sunday mornings, and to develop Christ-centered relationships. See your SMBS leaders for more information. Read v.1.

**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.”**

Now we’re like Jesus’ disciples. There’s nothing that makes us feel more *inadequate* than praying; and yet there’s nothing more absolutely *imperative* than praying.

**ILLUSTRATION** – When my father was diagnosed with terminal cancer several years ago, I honestly didn’t know how to pray about it. On one hand I wanted my dad to be healed and to live for many more years. On the other hand I knew that God sometimes chooses to do His work in us and through us through prolonged exposure to suffering. I struggled with this, but I finally concluded that God wanted me to pray that my dad would live for as long as God had a purpose for him to live, and then God would take him to heaven. After all, that’s all any of us could ask of God in life. But I struggled with knowing how and what to pray.

So we have something in common when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. And the Lord is faithful to do that. For the first thing we see is that...

### **1. JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY (Luke 11:1).**

**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.”**

Notice the disciples didn’t ask Jesus to teach them to preach or work miracles. They realized they needed help with praying. And there was something about the way Jesus prayed that caused His followers to yearn for more in that area of their life.

And Jesus taught His disciples to pray by His own experience and example. He was a man of prayer. He depended on the strength that came through prayer. The Bible says that Jesus would often escape to places of solitude where He could pray. Our text indicates that it was after one of these regular times of prayer when He was “praying in a certain place” that the disciples saw something powerful they were missing. Jesus prayed alone, and He prayed in the presence of others.

Jesus prayed in the crisis moments of His life. He spent 40 days in the wilderness praying and fasting before He began His public ministry. He prayed before making important decisions like the choosing of His 12 apostles. He interceded for His followers as we see in John 17. Sometimes Jesus would take His inner circle

of Peter, James, and John with Him to pray as He did on the mountain of Transfiguration, or in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed. Jesus even prayed while He was hanging on the Cross.

And the Bible tells us that Jesus prayed with urgency.

**Hebrews 5:7 - During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.**

Just knowing this about our Lord should deepen our hunger to pray as Jesus prayed. It should cause us to long to experience the kind of intimacy that Jesus enjoyed with His heavenly Father in prayer.

It is one of the great themes of the Bible ... teaching us to pray.

**Romans 12:12 - Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**

**Ephesians 6:18a - Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.**

**Philippians 4:6b - In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

**Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.**

Jesus taught His disciples, and He teaches us to pray by His example and by His instruction.

**Luke 11:2a - He said to them, "When you pray, say...**

And with that ...

## **2. JESUS TEACHES US WHAT TO PRAY (Luke 11:2-4).**

Notice that Jesus says "*when* you pray," not "*if* you pray." And He teaches us what to *say* when we *pray*. And we have Luke's version of the Model Prayer:

**Luke 11:2 - He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.**

**Luke 11:3 - Give us each day our daily bread.**

**Luke 11:4 - Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "**

Now I'm not going to spend much time on this. Most of us are familiar with the Model Prayer. Luke abbreviates the prayer from how Matthew records it in his Gospel. The most important thing about the content of this prayer is the fact that it is so God-centered.

So Jesus teaches us *to* pray (the importance of prayer), and *what* to pray (the content of prayer), but also...

## **3. JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO PRAY (Luke 11:5-13).**

The disciples may have wondered, "Can we be so bold as to ask God for His name to be hallowed and for His kingdom to come? Can we be so bold as to ask for our daily needs to be met? Can we ask God to forgive us? Can we ask God to lead us?" So in response to that Jesus tells this parable about boldness and confidence in our praying. Read Luke 11:5-8.

Jesus begins this story with the words "suppose one of you..." That was a common way Jesus introduced His parables. So as Jesus often did, He set this life story alongside His teaching to His disciples about prayer. It was an

image that they could easily identify with. Remember that these life stories were such that when people heard they would think, “Oh, that’s what that means.” Well this story is no different. It involves a man who is awakened in the middle of the night with the sound of someone pounding on his door and shouting something. Now this is not something that any of us would look forward to. It generally means that there is bad news.

**ILLUSTRATION** – One night a few months ago our doorbell rang in the middle of the night. We went downstairs to answer it and it was one of our neighbors. She had a panicked look on our face and tone to her voice. Their little baby was having difficulty breathing and they needed to get him to the emergency room quickly. And she was there to ask if we would watch their other little preschool son until the grandparents could get there. Well, of course we were ready to help.

But in this life story Jesus tells about a man is awakened by a friend who needs to borrow some bread. He’s had an unexpected visitor in the middle of the night, and his pantry is empty; he has nothing to feed his guest. Now it’s one thing to have your neighbor ring your doorbell in the middle of the night to ask for help with an emergency like a sick child. You might be a little upset, however, if your neighbor woke you up in the middle of the night to borrow some bread.

You need to know that in biblical times, this kind of thing happened quite regularly. People traveled from place to place and depended on the hospitality of strangers. Hospitality was an expected courtesy. A stranger could come to you in the night and say, “I need a place to sleep and eat before I continue on my journey.” In the seasons of the year when it was hot during the day people would travel until well into the night before they stopped. And you would be expected to help them out. In fact, if you didn’t it would bring reproach on the entire community. So this sort of thing happened regularly.

Now back to the man in the house. There’s a knock on the door. It’s his neighbor needing three loaves of bread to feed to his unexpected guest. The man inside the house said, “That’s your problem, not mine. My door is already securely locked, and my wife and children are all in bed with me.”

In biblical times houses were typically very small. There was one room that would be used during the day for living and eating, and at night it was used for sleeping. So they all slept in the same room, if not in the same bed. And to secure their house from thieves in the night the door might have a heavy beam or bar placed across it.

So you could understand why the man inside the house doesn’t want to get up, disturb his whole family, go through the hassle of unlocking the door, just so he could give his needy neighbor some bread. But the knocking and the urgent pleading continue until the man finally agrees to help.

So Jesus throws in this life story to drive home the point that our praying must be bold.

**Luke 11:8 - 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.**

What moves this reluctant man to action is the boldness of his neighbor’s request ... bold praying. The word “boldness” means “shameless begging.” It means, “I don’t care how ridiculous this sounds, or what you may think of me ... I’m desperate.”

Now you may wonder why Jesus would compare His heavenly Father to a grumpy, selfish neighbor. Well this is what is called a contrasting parable. The idea here is not that God is like the man in the house. The idea is that God is *not* like the man in the house. The man said, “Yes, you’re my friend and my neighbor, but you’re just asking a bit much. You’re stretching the limits of our relationship by asking so boldly. But because of your boldness I will give you all you need.” And Jesus’ point here is that if that stingy, grumpy neighbor is that way, how much more will our loving heavenly Father respond to our boldness.

QUOTE: Phillips Brooks said that “prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness.”

And notice that the friend will not just give him the bare minimum of bread. He gives “as much as he needs.” That means the bread and everything that goes with it. We can never ask too much of God so long as it is in His will.

Next Jesus pulls out the application of this parable about bold praying. This is what bold praying looks like.

- **BOLD PRAYING ... PERSISTENTLY (Luke 11:9-10)**

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

Jesus uses three words to describe the activity of prayer: ask, seek and knock. And the tenses of these verbs mean: “keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking.” On top of that, with these three words Jesus describes a process of getting increasingly closer to God ... pressing in on God.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Recently I had made an appointment to visit a family who was interested in becoming members of our church. They lived in an apartment complex, and when I arrived I couldn’t find the right building. So I *asked* someone on the sidewalk, “Where is apartment number 231?” They told me, and then I had to *seek* the apartment. And when I arrived I *knocked* on the door. Well there was no answer, yet I knew they were home and expecting me. So I knocked again and again. Finally they came to the door, apologizing that they were in the back of the house and hadn’t heard my knock.

That’s the picture of bold praying that Jesus has in mind here ... a process of persistently moving closer to God who is our source. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking until the door of heaven is opened. Persistence in prayer will prevail with God where giving up won’t. But also...

- **BOLD PRAYING ... SPECIFICALLY (Luke 11:11-12)**

We are to ask specifically because God desires to answer specifically.

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

When we pray specifically, God answers specifically. The man in the parable didn’t ask his friend, “Please help me and provide for my needs.” He specifically asked for what he needed ... I need three loaves of bread.

And here in vv.11-12 Jesus draws another analogy between a child asking his father for certain things. And the son may expect that when he asks specifically he may expect his father to be responsive by answering and giving specifically.

Now, does that mean that we always get exactly what we ask for in prayer? Certainly not. That’s the mystery of unanswered prayer. There are plenty of examples in the Bible when God didn’t answer exactly as His people prayed. But I will tell you this. When this life is over and we get the chance to look back over the landscape of our life, we will see that in the times that God did not give us exactly what we asked for in prayer, as it turned out He gave us something more and better.

And that’s the last thing about bold praying:

- **BOLD PRAYING ... EXPECTANTLY (Luke 11:13)**

**Luke 11:13 - 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!"**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Parents, just think of how many things our kids ask for in the course of a day. When an infant begins to cry because she is hungry, mom and dad are moved to action. And the baby is completely confident that her parents will give her a bottle of milk and not drain cleaner. Her parents will give her what is good for her, not what is bad for her.

You never have to be afraid of the answers that God gives to your prayers. Even if God doesn't respond exactly as you asked to do, or when you asked him to do it. But know this ... whatever He gives is always the best.

And that is because it's not the "what" that He gives, but the "Who" that He gives. And every provision that God makes in our life is in some way a provision of Himself to us. Jesus understood this when He answered the temptation of the devil in the wilderness to turn stones into bread. Jesus answered, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the Father." In other words, we need bread, and God knows it. But He knows we need Him more.

**Luke 11:13 - 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!"**

**ILLUSTRATION** - In 1886, the missionary Hudson Taylor was setting out to evangelize eleven provinces in China which had never been visited by missionaries before. Of those who feared for him and his family he said, "I am taking my children with me, and I notice that it is not difficult for me to remember that the little ones need breakfast in the morning, dinner at midday, and something before they go to bed at night. Indeed, I could not forget it. And I find it impossible to suppose that our Heavenly Father is less tender or mindful than I."