

## How do We Pray?

Pentecost 7  
Luke 11:1-13  
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LCOS  
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Grace and peace to you from the triune God: Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit.

In 22 years of ministry, participation as a youth leader at our Synod, confirmation classes, and adult Bible studies I have learned several things about prayer.

The first is that the majority of prayers are “gimme” prayers.

“Gimme” prayers are prayers for things, things like money, food, clothing, a good grade on a test, a new house, a cure from a personal bout with illness, long life, safety from a thunderstorm—remember Luther, praying to St. Anne?—, protection from a real or imagined enemy, a better paying job with shorter hours.

Like some parishioners used to say in jest, I hope, “Pastor you have it made here because you only work on Sunday! Shorter hours indeed!”

I have also learned that children pray easily with no sense of embarrassment. But most adult Christians are insecure about praying. They worry about “doing” prayer right.

They have two main concerns about prayer.

The first is, “How should I pray?”

And the second is, “For what should I pray?”

They are not alone. In today’s gospel we see again how much we have in common with Jesus’ disciples.

They surely heard Jesus’ daily prayers for he, being a faithful Jew, prayed morning, noon, and night while they were together.

And I am sure that when Jesus was with them praying, the disciples were not just stirring the dust around with their bare toes. Rather, they too, as faithful Jews, were praying.

St. Luke reveals their motivation in asking Jesus to teach them to pray: they wanted to be like John the Baptist’s disciples, having a special prayer of their own.

While this sounds juvenile, like kids wanting a club motto, Jesus readily gives them such a prayer.

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  
indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of  
trial.”

The prayer that Jesus told his disciples and the church to pray has been misunderstood by many people, especially by the very young.

For example, one parent recalls, “When my twin daughters were young, I carefully taught them to say the Lord’s Prayer before going to bed. Imagine my surprise, when one night, as I listened outside their door, I heard them say, “Give us this steak and daily bread, and forgive us our mattresses.””

When my 57-year-old son, Kevin—“KJ” we call him—, was a little boy about 4 he used to cross himself—his grandfather was Catholic—and say “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Rollercoaster.”

Another child thought the line went "Give us this day our jelly bread."

Jesus realized that not only would children misunderstand some parts of his prayer but even faithful disciples could misunderstand it.

So, in today’s text, Jesus follows up the prayer with “HOW MUCH MORE” illustrations about God’s response to prayer.

Jesus asks, if a man will get up to help a friend at midnight, not because they are friends, but because he doesn’t want his whole house awakened, HOW MUCH MORE will God answer your prayer?

Jesus asks, if an earthly father gives good gifts to his child, HOW MUCH MORE will God the heavenly Father graciously give you good gifts?

Indeed, our God—our Father—is already providing us with more than we ask for. Our Father gives us our next breath of air.

Our Father gives us the billions of blessings found in creation: blessings of sky, earth, and sea.

Our Father has given to us the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of God's only son, Jesus Christ, and the promise of eternal life.

Do Jesus' words following the parable seem to you too good to be true? "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you."

Do you wonder, "Will God give me whatever I ask for, I seek after, I knock to have opened? Does God really do that?"

Yes, God really does do that, if we understand what it is for which Jesus is telling us to "ask, seek, and knock."

Our asking, seeking, and knocking are for the things we pray as Jesus taught us: that God's name be made holy, that God's kingdom come, for each day's bread, for God's forgiveness and for our willingness to forgive others, and that we not be brought to the time of trial.

Yes, God answers our prayer for those things when we ask, seek, and knock.

Our real problem is that we are like bratty children asking for, seeking after, knocking to have opened to us many things other than those for which Jesus tells us to pray. Indeed, our prayers are an ongoing stream of “gimme” prayers.

We desire things that seem more important to us than keeping God’s name holy, like our name being held in high esteem by our family, neighbors, and employer.

We desire things that seem more important than God’s coming kingdom, like our continuing to live as do our secular neighbors which hinders the advent of God’s kingdom.

We desire things that seem more important than everyone having daily bread, like our having the choicest of foods on our table while not sharing our resources so others can eat anything at all.

We desire things that seem more important to us than begging for forgiveness and seeking to grant forgiveness to others, like insisting on our own way even when that way hurts other people.

Most of us spent our childhoods trying to get our moms and dads to grant our desires, buy what we wanted, give us what we perceived we needed.

Likewise, we spend a great deal of our spiritual childhood doing the same with God, our heavenly Father.

Indeed, we are like bratty children saying “gimme, gimme, gimme!” Nevertheless, it is with us that God desires a prayer-filled relationship.

That being said, then how should we pray?

Scripture tells us:

*“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”*

So, according to Pastor Chris Jordan, he states, I quote,

- “When you pray”—note the assumption that all Christians will pray.
- Go to your room, shut the door to distractions, and open the door to Jesus (Rev. 3:20).
- What is prayer? Developing a personal relationship with Jesus: “the secret place.”

WHAT IS PRAYER? HOW DO WE PRAY?

In this manner, therefore, pray:

- Person: Our Father in heaven, (*meditate long on the Father’s heart of love*)
- Praise: hallowed be Your name, (*we give God praise for who He is*)
- Priorities: Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
- Provision: Give us this day our daily bread; (*we ask God to meet our needs*)
- Pardon: and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; (*ask for forgiveness*)

For scripture tells us, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

- Protection: and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
  - Praise: For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.
- [End of Quote]

This text, its parable, and the “HOW MUCH MORE” sayings show divine, in teaching us to ask, seek, and knock for those things that we cannot begin to understand but certainly can trust.

The surprise of the text is in the final HOW MUCH MORE in verse thirteen. Jesus says, “HOW MUCH MORE will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

This is the heart of the text and the center of our prayer relationship with God our Father. When we ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit it will be given to us. Then, so gifted we may live forever growing in relationship with God and with each other in faith, hope, and love.

Let us pray, Father in heaven, Creator of All, for your Son Jesus’ sake stir up within us the gift of your Holy Spirit! Amen.