

Why you should come and pray

Luke 11:5-13

March 29, 2020

Well, we have the joy of turning to Luke's Gospel, again. This is our ongoing study of this profoundly rich teaching, in the life of our Lord. You can find your way to Luke chapter 11 and verse 5. Luke 11:5. One of the notable features about Luke's Gospel is his emphasis throughout the gospel on prayer. He, more than any other of the gospel writers, Luke records various parables and teachings from our Lord that center on the habit of prayer, and then teach us how to pray, and encourage us to pray. And that's what we're looking at today.

Having learned how to pray, in the first section of this: Luke 11:1, 1-4. Jesus is now interested in encouraging us to go ahead and do it. To pray and to pray as a habit. To pray regularly and often. To come near and draw near to God. We couldn't find, probably, a more timely text to study during these uncertain times and the parable that we're going to start out with this morning is one that we don't find in any of the other Gospels. This is peculiar to Luke. It's unique to his Gospel.

So, with that, take a look at Luke 11, and starting in verse 5, we'll read to verse 13. "And Jesus said to them, 'Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; he will answer from within, "Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything"?'"

"I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be open to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish, give him a serpent; or if he asked for an egg, will he 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!'"

Now that even the, even as we read just the surface reading of that, that has got to be some of the most powerful motivation in all of Scripture to pray. To pray regularly, to pray with joy, with zeal, with rapt attention and utter abandon. But we have to ask: Having just come through what's called the Lord's prayer, or maybe more accurately, is the disciples prayer. It's the Lord's prayer that he's given to us as disciples to pray.

We have to ask after hearing that section and its encouragement: Why is this whole section we've just read necessary? Why does our Lord take the time almost to press us, here, into praying with such forceful words of encouragement? I mean, didn't he just say in verse two, "When you pray, say, Father?"

"When you pray, say, Father." That is the most important encouragement to prayer that there can be; that we can call God "Father" and come to him as children with, with any need. With any desire. Any, any concern. And, then, Jesus, after telling us to call God "Father," he taught us a very simple and

straightforward pattern of prayer. It's clear. Isn't that encouragement enough?

Well, evidently, such is our encourage. Such is our, I should say, our condition. That more is needed to persuade us to, still, to come and pray. Such as our sinful state, and so deep has been our fall, that we tend to doubt the goodness of our God. Still, after all that he has done, we tend, really, to mute the volume on the promises of God. Promises that have secured our very justification. That have secured our eternal salvation. That have made us adopted sons and daughters of God.

And so, our Lord uses these several verses, that we've just read, to overcome any obstacles that may remain in our hearts to encourage us to the regular habit of prayer. And I think that there are many of you who understand this, as you struggle, probably struggle, like many Christians do to make prayer a regular habit. You're going to struggle, because as time goes by, that is the nature of the Christian life in this fallen flesh and this fallen world that we live in. It is a struggle.

Life is now a struggle to grow in holiness. It's a struggle in our fight against sin. It's a struggle in resisting temptation. It's a struggle to be watchful, at all times, and never let our guard down, lest temptation should entice us and deceive us. It's a struggle to put all of our thoughts and priorities in the right place. Seek first his Kingdom. To seek first his righteousness.

So, you'll need to return to texts, just like this, again and again, in your Christian life, to find encouragement when you struggle to pray regularly. And let's face it. Some of you struggle with prayer just simply because of laziness. Because you're spiritually immature. You don't need to remain that way, beloved. It always adrift in a sea of spiritual mediocrity. It doesn't need to stay that way.

If you have a new nature from God and if the Holy Spirit of the living God it lives within you, you can still grow. You must grow. Growing is the only way forward. And what we learned from the Lord today is going to help you immensely. So, pay close attention and just obey what you hear. Obey what you learn today.

Others of you struggle with prayer because there is a thorny theological question that nags in the back of your mind. And when you bring that question to the forefront, it's this question: If God is absolutely sovereign, if God does whatever he wills, no matter what, and nothing stands in his way, well then why pray? We can start answering that question with, maybe, what we might call a brute force answer. Which should settle it for us?

Why pray? Well, because Jesus said so. Pray because he told you to, and there should be no other question. Down in verse 9, you need to realize, in verse 9, those are not recommendations. Jesus does not say, "Here's a little, little, suggestion for you. Here's a little tip to spice up your daily devotions. Why don't you try praying? Asking, seeking, knocking: Give that a go." No. Jesus says, "And I tell you." And he's emphatic about that.

And then what he says after that emphasis involves three imperatival statements, three present tense commands, ask and ask continually. Keep on asking. It's continually, keep on

seeking, knocking. Keep on knocking. Not suggestions here at all, but bold imperatives, commands from the one who we call Lord.

All that to say. You don't have to have all your theological questions answered before you obey. You just need to obey the Lord and devote yourself to prayer. Even if you don't understand how it works, and in time, if you believe and obey, you know what the Lord often does; as he grows us in understanding. He develops our maturity of our understanding. So just obey.

He's got a very good reason for you to pray, namely that it's one of God's chief tools to promote your sanctification. To bring you near into the throne room of grace. That grace upon grace overwhelms you and covers you. This is a tool: This gift of prayer, that you neglect to the detriment of your spiritual growth. So just, just, obey. Just pray.

But if I can scratch that theological itch here just for a moment, just briefly, and answer the question: If God is sovereign, God does whatever he wills and nothing stands in his

way, why pray? Well, first, think about it this way. If we pray to a God, who is not absolutely sovereign. Who is not immutable. Who is not in pursuit of his own glory, by this relentless, unstoppable execution of his own perfect plan to always bringing to pass his eternal decree. If we pray to a God who is, other than that, that is holy, sovereign, immutable, always pursuing his own glory. Then we pray in vain. Prayer only makes sense if we pray to a God who is able to do whatever he wills.

Second way to answer that theological, maybe, conundrum in the minds of some, is that in bringing to pass God's eternal decree, God has chosen to use the prayers of his people. The prayers of the saints, that is, us Christians, just regular Christian people. Our praying is one of God's chosen means to accomplish his perfect sovereign will.

That is a gracious act for the holy, eternal God to involve us, limited creatures, in the execution of his plan. He brings us near. He wants us to pray as his servants. He's involving us in what he's doing, by prayer, as we learned from God's word, as we continue to grow and mature in our understanding of scripture, while our sympathies grow and mature

as well, and that it aligns our hearts with things that pertain to God and his holy name. God and his glorious, eternal Kingdom. God, and his perfect righteousness.

We learned to sympathize with what concerns God first and foremost in our lives, and the more we grow in sympathy with God and his interests the more our prayers align with his will. The more effectual our prayers become. Because his will is working through our prayers. He puts his will in our hearts through the scripture, through the spirit. We pray in accordance with the will that's in our hearts and then God acts. Our hearts aligned with God's heart. Aligned with God's purposes.

We pray he acts. That is how our prayers are one of God's means to accomplish his perfect sovereign will. What an honor. What an honor to be involved in his work that way. So, our struggles in prayer, they are very real, and they can involve a lack of maturity. Maybe a laziness on our part. That's very true. All of us are dust, flesh, fallen.

We all struggle with laziness and immaturity. It could be because of an incomplete understanding of theology that we

struggle, as well. We've got unanswered questions and, the, those unanswered questions, then become doubts that cause us to doubt the goodness of God, and and, work our way out of obedience by faith.

But I think there's, maybe today, maybe in our world that we live in, an even more common reason that we struggle to pray regularly. Many today, I think, struggle to pray fervently, regularly because they are taught to see the modern world and to see the modern God of progress as the Savior and the sustainer of life. Even many Christians have become used to that kind of thinking. Putting faith in the government. Trusting in the systems that we have in place. Trusting in the stability of a capitalist economy and in the principles that an American Society.

We trust that when we go to the store there are going to be bread and other items on the shelves. And we, don't we? We've learned to take that for granted, so we don't pray. We shop. That is the American way. Whatever it is, many Americans believe, and I think many Christian Americans believe, that if we have the right people who are getting the right information,

they are going to make the right decisions, and thus we can solve any problem together. We can overcome any obstacle. Conquer any foe. We've become all too confident in that.

I think this current situation in our world, with the coronavirus. It's humbled us in some of that regard. Hasn't it? You may have heard this, kind of overcoming, solve any problem, language. It comes from our President and his administration as they're trying to serve the nation and lead us through a crisis. You hear that language coming from our Vice President, who keeps saying things like this. And this is a quote from his Twitter feed. Quote, "Every, we have every confidence that the American people will continue to rise to the challenge as we slow the spread, protect our most vulnerable and heal our land." End quote.

"Heal our land." It's an interesting phrase, isn't it? You need to remember that we are not the ones to heal our land: God is. And that little phrase "heal our land" comes from, as many of you know, from 2 Chronicles 7. And the promise that it contains, we need to be clear here is, is, for Israel. It's Israel as a nation not for America as a nation.

But it is a wonderful promise, that when God sends pestilence, plague, epidemic, a pandemic, this is what Mr. Pence is reminding us, really, in a subtle way. That God says this, when he sends that pandemic, that pandemic, that pestilence, "If my people who are called by my name, humble themselves, pray, seek my face and turn from their wicked ways." Here's the promise to Israel, "Then I will hear from heaven. And will forgive their sin. And I will heal their land."

It's not us that can solve any problem, overcome any obstacle, conquer any foe. And we need to realize that, we're seeing that, aren't we? That human power is an illusion. The promise of progress is a mirage. We keep chasing it, and the mirage disappears and all we see is more desert, more sand. "It's not by might. It's not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts." We need to remember that.

And we need to see that. It is that spirit. To whom we pray and whom we enlist when we pray the Lord's Prayer. It is that spirit that we, that is enlisted to our aid when we come. When we come in humility. When we come in prayer. When we ask, and

seek, and knock like our Lord has commanded us to. We come, expressing our concern for God's glorious name, to see his kingdom come, to see his will be done on Earth, as it is in heaven.

In humility, we request our daily bread. Always coming to him. Knowing that he's good. Knowing he'll provide. We come to him turning from our wicked ways, repenting of sin. Praying, forgive us our sins, and lead us not into temptation. God listens to that prayer. He listens to humble prayer. He will be found by those who seek him., those who repent of their sin. He will forgive. He will heal. This is the essence of true prayer.

One of the good outcomes, I believe, of this time in our country is to reveal the fragility of the world. To show us the cracks and the flaws that are inherent in any human system. Because it is a human system. To portray men and women for what they are; men and women, creatures who are unable to predict the future. They are powerless to actually fix anything. To effect true change. And that is no slight against men and women.

I'm so grateful for the leaders in our country for the Epidemiologist, for the public health experts. I'm grateful for the economists, for those who are cautioning us, and those who are persuading. I'm grateful for all those different voices, and the, the, give and take, and the flex, and the, and the tension there that exists, because there's a concern for the good of our country. There's a concern for the good of the people of the world.

This is not a slight against men and women. It's just an acknowledgement of what we really are; creatures. We're limited. We're frail. We're weak. We must walk before God in humility and with one another in meekness. The Lord knows that this pattern of prayer, that he just taught us, the Lord's Prayer verses two to four of this chapter. This pattern. It's inherently good. This pattern is effective to sanctify us.

But listen, beloved. It is only effective if we use it. If we actually pray the words or pray the pattern. The words are good, but they'll only be useful to us, if we actually pray them, and if we actually get into a habit of praying them. So to encourage us, to encourage us, as his disciples, Jesus, he taps

into the very marrow of our lives. He gets to the root and the heart of our nature and identity as Christians; as born-again believers.

And it's this identity we have, by God's grace, a relationship with the God of the universe. We are beloved children of a kindhearted Father. He's become a friend to us by his grace and a Father to us by his adoption. And like our older brother, Jesus, who is, by the way, completely secure in the affection of his Father, our older brother, Jesus, treats us like adopted brothers and sisters. He is thrilled to have us in the family. He's thrilled to introduce us to the Father. To bring us into the treasure room, that, the storehouse of his glorious riches. He tells us about this newfound privilege we have of access to the Father, by virtue of our adoption as sons. He loves to show us around.

So, in the verses that are before us today. Jesus wants to remove all obstacles from us. Anything that exists in our hearts that make us reluctant to pray. And reluctant to pray regularly, eagerly, zealously. He gives us here two reasons for assurance in this text. Two reasons for security in our relationship with

God that will motivate a regular habit of praying. Encouraging us to take advantage of the access that we have to God. Two reasons in this text to motivate us to regular habit of prayer.

First reason: For our security, for our assurance. The first reason that motivates us to come to God in prayer, as a lifelong habit, that grows richer and richer by the day. We are to number one, number one, come and pray on the basis of friendship. Come and pray on the basis of friendship. That's just a summary of what we find in verses 4 through 10. We'll start looking at, looking at, Jesus' parable there in verses 5 to 8. And then we'll make sure we understand the meaning of that parable. And then we're gonna see how Jesus applies the parable in verses 9 and 10.

Let's start with the parable itself in verses 5 to 8. I'll read that again. "He said to them, 'Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him"; and he will answer from within, "Do not bother me; the door is now shut, my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything"? I tell

you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.'"

As we know through our recent study of Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been traveling through the towns and villages of Judea. Visiting all the communities, that has, that have received his 72 messengers, and he's proclaiming to them the good news of the kingdom, and he's healing left and right. He's eradicating disease and anything out of every community he comes into.

This parable then, is set in the familiar scenery of one of these small villages that he's encountered along the way. A small hamlet, as, as it were. The imagery, the setting, the characters, even the need, all of this would be easily imaginable in the minds of the original hearers and the readers of this parable. As Jesus begins, we are invited along to imagine this situation. And Jesus, by Jesus saying this, introducing it this way: Which of you? Which is another way of saying: Can you imagine? Or imagine with me for a moment that you're in this situation.

What Jesus wants us to imagine here is the tension that we would certainly feel, if we ourselves felt caught like this person does, between two responsibilities of neighbor love. The arrival of a friend at midnight is never convenient, even in our day. But when there is a shortage of supply, those who are the first century hearers and readers of this little scenario, they would, they would understand immediately that this presents a problem at a whole another level, because this is rubbing with the tension, of the demands, of hospitality.

For first century middle easterners, hospitality was an immensely important duty. It was a great responsibility that they felt. It was, it was for them, a matter of shame and honor that was embedded into the very fabric of culture. It's what they were raised with. It's what they were raised to tend toward all the time. Bad hospitality meant disgrace. Good hospitality meant esteem. So, a weary traveler arriving at a very inconvenient time, with a shortage of supply, this is, this is a challenge to them.

It's not like that in our day, is it? Twenty four hour grocery stores, restaurants, hotels we can check into. Worst comes to worst, like stores aren't open, hotels don't have any vacancies, we can all sleep in our cars. If we're on a long trip and where there's nothing available to us, lock the doors, get behind the tinted windows and we're feeling safe, right?

Someone traveling in the first century didn't have those options available to them. And that's why showing hospitality for travelers is such a matter of common courtesy, that it became worldwide in every single culture. A matter of expected duty. Not offering hospitality, not only was that a mark of incivility, it was an insult when someone didn't offer hospitality. It sent a message to that person: You are not welcome here. Could even put a traveler in a life-threatening situation.

Because journeying in those times, on many unimproved roads, and then navigating some rough terrain, preparing for uncertain weather, there were no weather apps on their smartphones, nobody could look and see what tomorrow's weather is predicted to be. Jesus here is portraying the man traveling

and arriving at midnight, which means he's traveling in the cooler hours of the evening. He's avoiding the extreme heat of the day.

What do we do when we're traveling through desert part of the country? We turn on our air conditioning. That's not the same for this guy here. People traveled roads. They're always on the lookout for bandits. They had to be prepared to protect themselves. And in the event of some health emergency, some accidents, some injury, should that occur, that just delayed travel, while they're trying to care for the victim. And depending on the length of their delay, they could face the risk of running out of provisions like food, water. Co, could become very dangerous very quickly.

So, all that to say, receiving guests, showing hospitality, caring for basic needs, like food and shelter. It was an expected kindness even for strangers, even for people you didn't know. But the kindness of hospitality was especially important for friends. Those, who are the, that's who arrived on this particular night, as a friend. Jesus says, imagine yourself. This happened to you. Go to a friend at midnight. If

there were any shops in the village, they're all closed. But the village that's pictured here is probably too small for shops anyway.

Jesus has set the scene in a hamlet, a, a little farming village. It's a very humble community of some single room dwellings where people lived. Whole families, slept together in those single roomed dwellings. Either, either, slept together on a mat on the floor or on a raised platform, and some of their animals were inside the, the, living space, sharing the space indoors.

And so, he says, "Imagine you go to this friend of yours at midnight. So, next door neighbor in your little village. You try to borrow several loaves of bread." I don't, don't think, like large loaves of bread like a bakery loaf. Context makes it clear that he's just looking for three pieces of like, like, a flatbread. Like a, like pita bread for, some, something to dip into the oil or dip into the little tapenade that they would make for flavor.

There's nothing extravagant here, just a small meal for this man, sufficient to, to, feed a single guest. Satisfy the friend's hunger so that he can tuck him away for the night and let him sleep. It's not that the petitioner, the one who comes asking, it's not that he's poverty stricken here. He has, doesn't have enough money to buy bread, needs to ask because he's extremely poor. It's just that the arrival time is, it's such a time they didn't have any bread available. They'd used up their daily supply. Women made fresh bread every morning. But it's not morning, is it? It's midnight, so there's no provision for a midnight snack in this home. This is just an unexpected need, at a very inconvenient time, with a shortage of supply.

So we're to imagine ourselves in this situation. We're 21st century readers, listeners, hearers, we're to imagine ourselves caught between love for our visiting neighbor, who's weary from travel. He's hungry. He's tired. And then caught between that, and then love for our resting neighbor. At warm, at home, warm in his bed, nestled in with his family, wife and children, probably, probably, fast asleep. It's an unenvia, unenviable position that we would want, that we would be in, and none of us would want to be in this position.

Caught between these two friends. We're in an awkward spot here. We're feeling the pinch between one duty and another. Between one friend's need and another friend's comfort. So, what's the right thing to do? When you are faced with a tension like this: What is the right thing to do? Well, for any first century audience, there's only one answer to that question. For a 21st century audience: It's look, don't bother me at midnight, go to the hotel, or why didn't you call first, right?

So, we're not to think, in that, in those terms. We're to put ourselves into this tension. And for the first century reader, hearer, there is only one answer to the question, and it's: This is, this is the answer, show hospitil, hospitality to the traveler. Take care of the need of the weary traveler. That love rises to a higher priority than inconveniencing a neighbor.

Put in the same difficult spot, that is what every individual listening to Jesus hear, what every one of these villagers, that's exactly what they would do. It's a no brainer. And still, even so, they all feel the tension. They all feel the discomfort here. They can imagine being, in, caught in this situation.

So, you leave your weary traveler guest with a tub of hot water and a towel to refresh himself and you go to your friend's house. You knock on the door. You're knocking lightly at first and then harder. You can hear the snoring inside, so, you got to overcome that. You start knocking harder and harder until you hear someone stirring.

And when he ask, when he asked you what? Who is it? What do you want? You answer, as it says in verse 5, "Friend." That's a really good way to start, isn't it? Reminding him that you're friends. After all your pals. You continue your appeal and you say, "Friend, lend me three loaves." Then in verse 6, you offer an explanation for your, in your, inconveniencing him. A friend of mine has arrived on a journey. I have nothing to set before him.

If you're a friend is like some members of my household, they're completely out of it, when awakened from a dead sleep. You may have to repeat that request. You may have to repeat it over and over. You may have to repeat it rather loudly or in a way that they think is too loud for the moment. So, you keep

asking your question. Giving the same explanation until you get your friends reply.

You sort of cringe when he starts to speak. When you hear him say it, because you know what you're asking him to do and if you were in his situation, you wouldn't want to respond either. You know he's not going to like it. So, you imagine this Jewish fiddler on the roof voice responding. Oyvey! Don't bother me! The sense here is: Stop bothering me; like you're knocking over and over.

You keep talking. Shut up and go away is what he's thinking. Don't bring me trouble. Don't cause difficulty to, to me. The word here is *kopos*. It's labor. Don't make me work. I'm sleeping. Your friend, as he responds to your request, straight out.

Then he counters your explanation with his own explanation. His own reasoning. He's hoping you're gonna withdraw your request. He says, "The door is now shut. My children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything." Funny how some things never change. Right? "Cannot,"

you mean, "Will not," you mean, "I don't want to." This is not an ability. This is not a matter of ability. It's a matter of desire, right? Getting up was rather inconvenient, in this day.

The door is now shut. That refers to the cumbersomeness of opening a wooden door, in that day, with, had an iron bolt that passed through iron rings to keep the thing shut. So, the process of unbolting the door required some forced, some heft. Not to mention the noise that would occur, and that means, opening a secured door wakes up all the babies in the house. New families with young children. You know exactly what this is like.

When all the kids are finally asleep, it's just a little slice of heaven, isn't it? But when they wake up, and especially when they wake up in the middle of the night, when they are not expecting to wake up. They're confused. Some of them are whining and cranky. Others of them are immediately hungry or immediately soiling their diapers or whatever it is they think; it's breakfast time. Others are ready to get up and play. I understand why the neighbor, here, overstates his case. I cannot get up. I mean, you don't understand these kids.

So, as Jesus summarizes how this little scenario pans out in verse 8. We can see, that, the friend's reluctance here. It's not about the, it's not about the bread. It's about the bother. He says, in verse 8, "I tell you, though, he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend yet. Because of his impudence, he will rise and give him whatever he needs."

So, he has the supply to give him what he needs. He just didn't want to be bothered. You're sleeping friend whom you've awakened at midnight, whom you've asked to come to your aid and, and, by the way, the, the, request here is not dealing with a life-threatening issue, is it, this need to put a little food before a weary traveler. So, he's not, he's not immediately alarmed, [it is], as if the friend's been shot, or if, as if, as if there's some life-threatening situation here. It's, it's, just to put food before this traveler.

So, at this hour, your friend, he's not inclined to help you, is what Jesus is saying in verse 8. He's not inclined to help you by pondering the meaning of friendship at this hour, loyalty. He's not considering the principles underlying

friendship. He's not thinking about the ties that bind, at this moment. He's groggy. He's tired. He's not inclined to think about how many years you go back and how many times you've helped him and plowed his field. And you've plowed, you've plowed one another's fields. You've been there for each other. Watched each other's kids, and all the rest. It's midnight for crying out loud. Can't this guy just sleep until morning?

What Jesus wants you to see, is this. Though your friend is not going to be inclined to help you because of the principles that govern your friendship. In that hour, what persuades him to get up, to get out of bed, to unbolt the door, to wake up the entire family, to deal with all the consequences that are going to come from that. What convinces him to act against his self-interest and his own comfort, to give you whatever you need; it is your audacity. It is your shameless appeal. It is the fact that you are willing to set aside normal propriety and ask your friend to inconvenience himself for your sake.

There's a word there in verse 8. Used only here in the entire New Testament. It's translated, impudence, in the ESV, but that's not the best translation because impudence implies a

an attitude of, of, brazenness, of insolent disregard for somebody. That is not, at all, the sentiment that Jesus is portraying here. The word is *anaideia*, which takes the word *aidos* and adds an alpha privative to make that word negative.

You can get the sense of the word *aidos* from 1 Timothy 2:9. There Paul instructs Christian women how to comport themselves as Christian women with honor and dignity. And he writes this, "Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair, gold pearls, costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works." The word that's translated in that text, modesty, in the whole section, conveys modesty. That's the word *aidos*, and it can be, also, translated as propriety or decency.

So, it conveys an idea of acting in accord with what is socially appropriate. With what's acceptable. With what's modest. It's not about calling attention to oneself, when you go out in public, it's about conforming to social norms of dignity, and decency, and respectability. That's the idea. That Jesus is using a word to negativize this idea of propriety and decency.

He's used the word *anaideia*. Jesus is saying, just on a human level, when principles of friendship don't persuade a man to set his family aside and be inconvenienced, when one's friend sees the need to set aside the normal sense of propriety. The normal sense of personal decorum, social modesty, and make an appeal like this, at this time this shameless insistence is going to be the thing that makes the case. It's going to persuade the friend to get out of bed for another friend. He'll do it in the middle of the night, and he'll give him whatever he needs.

Now listen, because this is, it's really important for us to stop at this moment. And make sure that we're understanding why exactly Jesus has given this parable to us. Because this parable is, in my mind, so often misunderstood and misinterpreted. When it's not well understood, the parable can be used to persuade Christians to prayer, by telling them the exact opposite of what Jesus is trying to say here. It's, people use it to say: Keep trying harder. Keep pushing your requests forward. Make more effort, more persistence in prayer, greater importunity, insistence, even demanding of God.

No, my friends, I think that interpretation turns the parable in a slightly different direction. I think it turns this much welcomed, much needed instruction of Jesus, into a heavy burden and not into a relief. By this parable, I believe Jesus wants to lighten our load and ease our burdens. He wants to overcome our own obstacles in praying rather than to add to them.

Go back and scan in verses 5 to 8, and remember what we said earlier that Jesus is commanding us, a, wa, I should say he's calling us here to imagine ourselves facing the tension of this responsibility between loving our visiting neighbor and loving our resting neighbor. But notice that Jesus never once uses the word neighbor in this parable. He's described a neighbor, but he's not using the word neighbor. What word has he chosen for this story? What word has he repeated in this story?

It's the word "friend." *Philos*, someone who is a close companion. Someone between whom there is a mutual affection. He's describing an intimate friend. The word, friend, *philos* is used four times explicitly in this text. And, then, if we were to include all the pronouns, of, between these two, there are

about a dozen references to these men interacting with one another as friends.

In this parable, Jesus is telling us to come and pray on the basis of friendship, and that is the point here. Think of it this way. Imagine you're in your neighborhood setting. Neighbors living on either side of you. Those who live to your immediate right and left are not exactly friends. In fact, they don't like you one bit. Your, and for whatever reason, your kids' balls have gone over the fence and fallen into their rose bushes one too many times, or your dog bit their kid, or whatever it is, but you've got a friend. Not immediately on either the right or the left, but you got a friend who lives maybe several blocks from you.

Suppose you're facing this same exact scenario that Jesus has described in the parable, and you've got all the same first century expectations of hospitality bearing down upon you. You've decided then to call upon a neighbor for help to, to fill in your shortfall. You're going to walk past the houses to your immediate right and your immediate left, won't you? You're going to go visit the friend that lives several blocks away, and

you're going to make this appeal and this kind of shameless appeal to your friend.

You do the exact same thing that Jesus described in the parable. You're unwilling to inconvenience, and trouble the neighbors who don't like you. But you're totally willing to inconvenience your friendly neighbor, aren't you? Why is that? I mean, if you're going to inconvenience someone at midnight, why not inconvenience someone who already doesn't like you? Why inconvenience a friend? Because, you know, because you have confidence, you have assurance in the fact that no matter how much you inconvenience a friend, at the end of the day, not only will he actually help you, but he'll be there for you in the end.

The friendship is the basis for this appeal. Even when it's the most inconvenient appeal, appeal at the most inopportune time. You know that even if you set propriety aside in making your appeal, because you have to, because your friend won't get out of bed otherwise. Your friend will come to your aid, no matter how you've acted in this present crisis. No matter what depths you've stooped to in humiliating yourself, and making the

appeal, doing a dance or screaming, or whatever. No matter how much you've set propriety aside and acted shamelessly in this moment and undignified yourself during the time of your need, you know your friend is always going to be there to help you, and you're assured that the bond of friendship is going to continue far after this scene happens.

It'll become a, a matter of joking down the road. Won't it? Remember that time you came to me at midnight? You jerk. Why did you do that? You know, and but they'll get, they'll get on. They'll be good friends afterwards. Listen, you don't have that kind of confidence, do you, with those immediate neighbors? Those with whom you have no friendship where there is no confidence. You wouldn't even think of going to one of them. But you will presume upon a friend because. Proverbs 18:24, "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." You will go to him in times of need.

With that in mind. Look at verse 9. As Jesus then takes this appar, this parable and applies it. To our praying. In fact, let's start in verse 8. Just get a running start. Jesus says, "I tell you, though he will not get up and give him

anything because he is his friend." Yet because of his shameless setting aside of convention and propriety, let's interpret it that way, he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

"And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be open to you." Jesus assures us of what we already know, instinctively, intuitively on a human level, that when that bond of friendship gives us the confidence to come and ask, to press a friend into service, even to be shameless in pushing our friend to help us in a time of need. We know, verse 9, that we can ask, because it will be given to us.

We can seek, because we will certainly find. We can knock, because we know, at the end of the day, it will be open to us, if we just knock louder. And so, if that's true on a human level, folks, how much more so is it true of God? If we're willing to presume upon a friend, when we know that our request is going to inconvenience him, and perhaps even irritate him in the moment, and, and, by the way, it's going to disrupt his whole family for that night, how much more should we be willing to come to God, at any time, for anything?

Some of you have experienced the joy of true friendship. Some of you have not. It seems the experience of true friendship has dropped dramatically in our hyperconnected social media world. Ironically, as connected as we are, and as socially active as we portray ourselves to be, it's all really a sham. Isn't it? Smoke and mirrors. People seem to be lonelier than ever in history.

True friendship. It's not about having the right technology to stay connected. It's not about making your life appear attractive enough to have followers and friends online. In order to have friends, you need to be a friend, don't you? You need to be friendly. And that, that is a skill that is lost in this generation, as people have become more self-centered, more self-interested. It requires you to be a friend. To be friendly. It requires you know what friendship is.

Friendship is defined biblically. It's portrayed most perfectly, when God sent his one and only son to die for his friends. As John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, than that someone lay down his life for his friends." When you

know that kind of friendship because God's friendship has been made known to you, because you're in Christ. Well then you can enjoy the gift of friendship with others because you, now, know what is at the core of it. You know what it consists of. It consists of self-sacrifice. It consists of service. It consists of, consists of, humility and meekness. A friendly dealing with one another. It consists, consists of just an intimate neighbor love.

True friendship has to do with those intangible, unmeasurable joys of things; like being able to let your guard down, being transparent, being vulnerable. You don't see a whole lot of that online, do you? You see a lot of show. True friendship is about being able to say something stupid and not being written off for it. True friendship is when you make some kind of a an unguarded and even a rash comment. Even a foolish comment. And by your friend, you're never ostracized. You're never abandoned.

In the terms that Jesus used here, true friendship is when you can act shamelessly in the presence of a friend. Pressing them into service. Seeking a need from them. And he or she will

still claim you as a friend. Still act friendly towards you. Still treat you as a friend. Now, to be sure, you don't want to do that too often with your friend, your human friend. Otherwise, you're gonna be the one being unfriendly, right? So, you don't want to take advantage of friendship, but I think you know what I mean by this.

God is a true friend to us who are in Christ. "God showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners," Romans 5:8, "Christ died for us." God acted the friend when we were at enmity with him. God acted in kindness when we were acting, toward, with hostility toward him. God acted with love, when we showed hatred. God, even now, as we're in Christ, God knows all. He sees all. He searches all. He considers all. And when we come to him, he knows exactly what we really are.

He knows all of our failings, weaknesses. He knows exactly what we're about. And get this, he listens anyway. He listens anyway. Unlike a human friend, even the best of friends. For God, it is never midnight. But he is always 'an ever present now.' God, who created time, is outside of time. Which means our requests are never poorly timed for God. They're never

unwelcome. We can never inconvenience him, who is all powerful. Him who never feels a lack.

Unlike our human friends, our God is never bothered. He's not even able to be bothered, interrupted from his need for rest and repose, from the demands of his busy day. "He will not let your foot be moved," Psalm 121:3 says, "indeed, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Unlike our human friends.

For God, the door is never shut. It's always open to his beloved children. He bids us to come and pray. To seek his face. To knock at the door, and that door will be opened wide. And so, because we live by such an assumption about our human friendships, since we must assume an even greater and deeper and more reliable and unchanging friendliness, in the noble character of God.

Jesus turns these actions; ask, seek and knock into commands, in verse 9. He goes beyond permitting us to ask, seek, and knock, which is a great privilege, and he commands our obedience to this. And when we obey, notice the promises he

makes to us in verse 10, "for everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened."

Each of those verbs are in a participle form there, so it is describing the character of someone who does these things. It's the one who is characterized by asking. The one who is characterized by seeking. The one who knocks. So, these verbs are indicating a characteristic behavior, a habit of living.

Just a footnote here. Are we saying that Jesus words here provide a *carte blanche* promise, that in praying like this, we get whatever we want? Are the prosperity preachers right after all? And that Jesus is, here, encouraging us to "name it and claim it." Do we owe those prosperity preachers and apology? Not at all.

We do get whatever we want. Yes. In prayer. Because what we want is already defined for us by the boundaries that Jesus gave us in Luke 11, two to four. We want the exaltation of God's name. Which is why we pray for that. We want the extension of God's dominion, his Kingdom, why we pray for it. We want God's

provision, and we come for, to him, humbly asking. Dependent on him for his provision daily.

We desire God's absolution for our sins. We long for that. That's why we pray for it. We long for holiness. So much so that we pray: God don't lead us into temptation. Make us holy. Make us holy. Make us holy. We want his protection from sin, from temptation, from falling, from being deceived. So, yeah. Pray on.

If your petitions fit those parameters, keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking. Because those who are characterized by asking, and seeking, and knocking, and get this, anyone and everyone who is so characterized, from the scholar to the simpleton, from the rich to the poor, from the old to the young, from the immature to the mature, and everyone in between, anyone and everyone who makes asking, seeking, and knocking their habit of living, they're the ones who receive the promise.

You don't have to qualify, other than being a child of God. Other than being a member of the family. And that's what,

something God did for you. To those who ask, receive the gift of God's grace. And we're going to see that described for us, concretely in verse 13. Those who seek after God as Deuteronomy 4:29 says, "You will seek the Lord your God and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul."

If you seek him that way, you'll find him. And those who knock on the door of the kingdom, guess what, Christ has already opened it wide to you. He's ripped the veil from top to bottom, torn it in two, and given you access into the Holy of Holies. That's the first reason for security and assurance. That's the first motivation for coming to God in prayer as a lifelong habit. Because of friendship.

Here's a second reason. A second reason for your outline, if you're taking this down. We're to come and pray on the basis of fatherhood. We're to come and pray on the basis of fatherhood. So first, friendship. Second fatherhood. Look at verses 11 to 12. Jesus, again, invites us to imagine a situation here. He poses two questions that expect a negative answer. "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead

of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asked for an egg, will give him a scorpion?" Answer: N, no father is going to respond to his sons request like that.

In these two examples: A servant, or, or a serpent I should say, a serpent instead of a scorpion. A scorpion, a, or I'm sorry, a serpent instead of a fish or a scorpion instead of an egg. It's not just a matter of the unexpected cruelty in return for a sincere innocent request. The issue here is the similarity between these objects. Between what's requested and what's given. It indicates a spirit of meanness, of utter malevolence, of this person toward a son's request.

To the uninitiated and the inexperienced, like a child, the feel of a serpent may be similar to the feel of a fish. And a scorpion, in this case, it would be the yellow, the Palestinian, Palestine Yellow Scorpion, AKA the Death Stalker. I looked him up online, quite deadly, quite disgusting, but when curled up, this deadly death stalker scorpion can look like an egg. So, it gives, it's giving something repulsive and deadly, instead of the food that's requested by a trusting unsuspecting child.

I mean, someone who did that kind of thing to a child, who made a request for, for food. It's like a sick sadistic joke. And you, you'd want, you'd, you'd, you yourself would call Child Protective Services. This has nothing in common with the kind loving heart of a father. No father would be so cruel, so heartless, so mean to his child's request. It's utterly unthinkable. That's the point. That's why Jesus is bringing this out.

So now that our passions are appropriately inflamed here, Jesus leads us to his final conclusion in verse 13. It's an argument of the lesser to the greater. "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!" Hmm, if human parents who are evil, looks like Jesus believes in the doctrine of total depravity, doesn't he?

The verb that's used here is a strong expression meaning being evil from the first, being evil already, being evil to the core. Jesus is referring here to the innate depravity of fallen humanity. And, and all children are born to sinful parents. You

think: I'm a parent, got a newborn baby, got a little toddlers in the home. I don't want to make all those mistakes my parents did on me.

Well, guess what? You, you're going to run from one ditch to another. You're going to make your own set of mistakes. You're going to commit your own sets of sins. Because all children are born to sinful parents and that includes, you, parent. You are a sinful parent, self-centered. We're bound to fail because we suffer the malady of a sin nature.

So, if you parents, you being evil from the start, sinful to the core, inherently evil, you can discern between good gifts and bad gift. If you know how to give good gifts to your children. What do you think is true about the ability of your father, who is inherently good, to come up with a good gift list for his children. You think he's a pretty good gift giver. I think so.

Jesus said something similar to this. When preaching about prayer in the sermon on the mount. Matthew 7:11 says, "if you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,

how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" Good things.

What Luke has recorded for us here in verse 13. Which Jesus, Jesus, taught about prayer on this separate occasion. Different occasion. It ends with an incredible promise, which is more concrete: Good gifts. That's more general. Less specific. Jesus gets specific here and concrete. He says, "How much more would heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Our Father in heaven certainly knows how to give good gifts. After our salvation, after giving us his beloved son, what greater gift can there be? The Holy Spirit is a gift on par with the gift of his own beloved son. And by giving us the Holy Spirit, giving us the son, God has given us himself. The Father has given us himself, as well.

With this statement, we see how each person of the Trinity is involved here. Each person of the Trinity performing his role. Each person doing his part. The Son reveals and glorifies the Father. The Father gives, at the request of the son, and the

spirit proceeds from the Father to us. So, whether we're talking about divine creation, or divine redemption, or this divine inspiration of Scripture, or the sanctification of the believer, each member of the Trinity is involved. Each person acting in full accord with the distinguishing characteristics of his own personhood.

Same is true even in our praying. The Father is ready to receive us. He's ready to hear when we pray. He is. He's, hears us whenever we pray. We can come to him bold, boldly with confidence. "Drawing near to the throne of grace," Hebrews 4:16, "that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need." That's the Father's role, to hear our prayer and to give us what we need from his own bounty, his own supply.

And the Son's involved as well. He's the one who executes the Father's plan. He sits at the right hand of God. He indeed is interceding for us, Romans 8:34. And the Son is there, right now, bodily interceding for us. He's been raised from the dead. He's conquered the grave and so he always lives to make intercession for the saints, Hebrews 7:25.

The Son watches over us with the interest of a good and loving shepherd. He watches every step we take, and he's shepherding us toward our sanctification. Do his perfect will. Until he shepherds us into eternal glory. Our final home. And now, here, we learn from the Son, who came to teach us about the Father, and tell us about the promise of the Spirit, that we have assistance when we pray.

The Father has given us his Holy Spirit. You, you know the text in Romans 8, Romans 8:26 to 27. He makes our weak imperfect prayer, he makes it effectual. Says there in Romans 8, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Like a true friend, he will always receive us. He'll never turn us away. Like a loving father, he wants us to succeed. He doesn't leave our success in holiness and fruitfulness to chance. Guarantees our success in prayer. And our growth to maturity and sanctification. He gives us his own spirit. He

gives us the Holy Spirit, with whom the Father shares holy, perfect, infinite knowledge. That's the Spirit who is also interceding us, interceding for us according to the will of God.

God has stacked the deck, so to speak. All we need to do is play the hand we've been given and it is a full hand. We come to him and we pray. So beloved, let this be an encouragement to you, to set propriety aside when you come to God. Trade on the friendship that he has given you. By grace, come boldly to him as a friend. Come as a dear child to a loving Father and keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking for any need, any concern. Make any petition because you're dearly loved.

Let's pray. Our Father, it is a joy to hear this encouragement from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is by your grace, our elder brother. He's the one you sent, your only beloved Son. Sending him to die on the cross for our sins. You raised him from the dead, demonstrating your acceptance of his perfect sacrifice for our sins. He appeared to many in the appearance of his, of his, post resurrection, walking around, His body, his speaking, his teaching, his eating, his drinking with his disciples, that's all recorded for us. He's with his

disciples 40 days, then ascended into heaven, according to your perfect will. That he might send the promise of the Father, which is the very Holy Spirit of God.

We thank you that Jesus himself has encouraged us here to keep on praying. Keep on coming, asking, seeking, knocking. We have every promise that you will respond. So help us to come to you in friendship. Come to you because of your fatherhood. Help us to be obedient to these, these, commands of our Lord. That we may find grace and help in our time of need. We love you and commit this to you. In Jesus' name, amen.