

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Luke 11:1-13

Key Verse: 11:2

"He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.'"

Study Questions:

1. Read verse 1. Why was prayer important to Jesus? What request did one disciple make of Jesus? Why were they suddenly interested in prayer? What did Jesus teach them? (Memorize verses 2-4.)
2. What did it mean to Jesus to call God "Father"? What does it mean to us? What difference does it make to have an Everlasting Father? What does it mean to hallow God's name? (Jn 17:1; Ro 2:24) How do people dishonor God's name? How did Jesus glorify God?
3. What does it mean to pray, "your kingdom come"? (Lk 17:21) (See footnote.) Why pray for "daily" bread? (Ex 16:14-21; Pro 30:8b,9a) Why "our"? Why is forgiveness so necessary? Why pray for forgiveness every day? How can we forgive others? (Mt 18:21-35) Why do we need to pray about temptation? (1Pe 5:8)
4. Read verses 5-8. What is the main point of this parable? Read verses 9-10. How do these verses reinforce the lesson of the parable? What must we learn from this, practically?
5. Read verses 11-13. In what respect are all fathers alike? How much more is our loving heavenly Father likely to give us the best gifts? What is the best gift?

The prayer in this passage is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." Ever since our Lord Jesus taught it to his disciples, the Lord's prayer has been repeated during the past 1900 years by millions of believers in over a hundred languages and in an endless variety of circumstances. This prayer has been a source of comfort to all pilgrims on earth traveling toward heaven. In verses 5-13, Jesus teaches the basic attitude of prayer.

First, "Father..." (2b). "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place"

(1a). Jesus' prayer manifests his personal love relationship with God and his absolute dependence on him. When he finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." In the past, whenever the disciples saw Jesus praying, they shrugged their shoulders and said, "Here he is praying again!" To them, Jesus' prayers appeared to be unproductive, and the sign of a weakling. At that time the disciples were spiritually harebrained. But ever since they saw Jesus praying on the Transfiguration Mount, ennobled and glorified, they realized the importance of prayer. Also they realized that they were not superior to John's disciples in regard to prayer. There are basically seven prayer topics; three are connected between God and mankind. The other four are related to our neighbor.

Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer. Let's read verses 2-4. *"He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.""*

One of Jesus' disciples asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Jesus teaches his disciples to call God "Father." This opening word of the Lord's prayer, "Father," teaches us what our basic relationship with God should be. In the past, the Hebrew people had thought that God was so holy they should not speak God's name with their unclean lips. So, whenever they had to speak God's name, they used substitute words such as El Shaddai or Adonai. In the Old Testament times, their relationship with God was remote and legalistic. Therefore, Jesus' teaching his disciples to call God "Father" was quite revolutionary. Jesus, the Mediator between God and man (1Ti 2:5), taught us the most important spiritual secret that God is our Father. A man is happy when he has a good father. And man's happiness is determined by what kind of relationship he has with God. No one is happy until he can call God "Father." No one is happy until he has a love relationship with God (Jn 15:5). St. Augustine, as an African boy, had received sufficient financial support from his father to complete his education in Rome. Despite all this, he was not happy. So, in search of the meaning of life, he devoted himself first to a religion called Manichaeism, which advocated an extremely ascetic lifestyle based on dualism and Gnosticism. Next he devoted himself to the highest scholarship of the

time--rhetoric, oratory and Platonism. But these things only made his soul restless like Cain. But through St. Ambrose' influence, Augustine studied the Bible. Finally he met God personally and could call God "Father," and his soul could rest.

To call God "Father" teaches that man needs two fathers. When we are young we need a human father whom we trust and admire. One day, two boys were fighting, claiming that, "My father is number one in the world and your father is number two in the world." When we were young we desperately needed human fathers. But when we grow up, we need the Heavenly Father who can give us God's peace, eternal life and the kingdom of God.

Historically, all true human beings have aspired toward the universal brotherhood of mankind; but human effort could not achieve this ideal. However, it is possible for us when we call God "Father." In our Father God, we are all brothers and sisters. When we call God "Father" in earnest faith and with holy reverence, we can accept others as our own brothers and sisters. We have the true concept of the universal brotherhood of mankind. When we call God "Father" all people are not our enemies, but they are our dear brothers and sisters.

The Hebrew people had a habit of using the plural form. For example, they said, "the heavens," instead of "heaven"; "our father" instead of "my father." One young man made an excuse, saying, "Our wife is sick with appendicitis." We don't know whether he used Shakespearean English or Konglish. But his universal brotherhood of mankind was well expressed. To call God "Father" is not easy because we cannot see him with our own eyes. But we must grow spiritually until we can call God "Father," and until our spiritual eyes are opened and we are satisfied with the truth to the degree we can call God "Abba" Father (Ro 8:15).

Second, "...hallowed be your name." Hallowed be your name means God's name is adored from our hearts as the holy God. Our inmost desire should be that God's name may receive the right respect, honor and praise in our personal lives, as well as in society. In order for his name to be respected, we must recognize God as God in any circumstance.

Whatever problem we may face, we must consider it as a chance to win a spiritual victory and glorify God's name. As the children of God, if we cause God's name to be dishonored, we should be most sorry (Ro 2:24). On the other hand, if we can honor God in some way or other, we must rejoice, even if we suffer loss to do so (1Pe 4:13). We remember how much Jesus wanted to glorify God. John 17:1b says, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." Here, the word "glorify" means "reveal." In order to reveal God's saving grace for man, Jesus died on the cross like a criminal. May God help us have "Hallowed be your name" in our hearts.

Third, "Your kingdom come...." To the children of God, this world is like a motel room; our ultimate destination is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God does not refer to a geographical location; it is where the reign of God is (Lk 17:21). So "Your kingdom come" might be better rendered if we say, "Let your divine rule come." "Your kingdom come" is prayer that God's divine rule may more and more attain its rightful place in the hearts and lives of fallen mankind, who are otherwise bound under the rule of Satan. There are so many kinds of people, each with their own culture and characteristics and more than 76 nations. But in reality, there are only two kingdoms: the first is the kingdom of God; the other is the kingdom of Satan. And we belong to one of them. When we deeply meditate on the words, "Your kingdom come," they have a deep spiritual meaning. This world is like a battleground between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. So we must fight the good fight to destroy the kingdom of Satan through one-to-one Bible study.

Fourth, "Give us each day our daily bread" (3). The second half of the Lord's prayer turns to our personal needs. In the early centuries, under the influence of Plato, many people thought that soul is good and that material things are all evil. They considered the physical body as part of the material realm, which is evil. This thought permeated into the Christian world until the Gnostics arose. But Jesus honored man's physical life. In this prayer, "Give us each day our daily bread," we learn two important things. *First*, Jesus taught us to ask for daily bread, not one or two years' portion of bread. It's because fallen man's greediness is endless. For example, God led the Israelites into the wilderness to re-

ceive daily bread training before going into the promised land. God told them to go out to gather enough bread for each day. But some gathered much more and kept part of it until morning. The next morning they found that it was full of maggots and beginning to smell (Ex 16:14-21). Daily bread training was training to depend on God daily. It was basic faith training. God wanted to finish their daily bread training within a week. But it took 40 years due to their greediness and slave mentality. Proverbs 30:8b,9a says, "...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you..." *Second*, "our daily bread." Look at verse 3 again. "Give us each day our daily bread." Jesus did not teach us to pray for "my" daily bread, but for "our" daily bread. The children of God cannot be selfish individuals; instead, the children of God should be sensitive to universal brotherhood.

Fifth, "Forgive us our sins." Look at verse 4a. "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." We are all incorrigible sinners. We commit sin again and again. We need God's forgiveness every day. The phrase, "forgive us our sins," may well mean "clothe us with your grace of forgiveness of sins." Sin separates man from God. Sin poisons man's soul. Most of all, sin makes man the enemy of God. This is the reason Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of sins. We must always remember that the one and only Son of God was despised and rejected in order to forgive our sins. Finally the one and only Son of God shed his blood as a ransom sacrifice for many. The forgiveness of sins is God's highest love for each of us.

The last part of verse 4, "...for we also forgive everyone who sins against us," compels us to forgive those who sin against us. To fallen man, the most difficult thing to do is to forgive everyone who sins against us. In Matthew 18, there is the parable of the unmerciful servant. A king canceled his servant's debt of ten thousand talents. But the one whose huge debt was cancelled by the king went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii. He grabbed him by the neck, choked him and said, "Pay my money back." This parable teaches that fallen men cannot forgive others' sins. But when we remember God's unfailing love and the immeasurable grace of Jesus, we

can forgive others' sins.

How many times should we forgive others' sins? Once Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Mt 18:21,22). It meant that Peter should forgive others' sins endlessly. Most people think that one who sins against them must first come and repent, and then they can forgive him; otherwise, they cannot forgive him. Such relativistic forgiveness is not right. We must forgive others' sins unconditionally because we received God's grace of forgiveness of sins unconditionally. Mark 11:25 says, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Sixth, "And lead us not into temptation." No one can withstand Satan's temptation, not even the best man, Adam, for the world is full of devils who prowl around like a lion, looking for someone to devour (1Pe 5:8). Therefore, we must pray moment by moment, "Lead us not into temptation."

Seventh, persistent prayer (5-13). We must pray persistently. Read verses 5-8. This parable teaches us persistent prayer. In this parable, a selfish person wanted to enjoy a good night's sleep with his kids. But a certain friend came in the middle of the night to beg him for some bread for his unexpected guests. The selfish man tried to turn him down by saying, "Don't bother me!" But finally he gave in to his persistence and arose at midnight and gave the friend what he needed, not because he was generous, but because he surrendered to the friend's boldness which came from a clear conscience when he determined to feed the unexpected guests. Here in verse 5, the word "boldness" is the same as "persistence." This teaches us that when we pray, we must pray persistently and to the end. Prayer is the expression of our faith. Let's read verses 9-13. The main point of these verses is to pray that God may give us the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we pray for many things. We pray because we need the help of our Heavenly Father. But it is very easy for anyone to pray for his success, easy life and wealth. These days there are many people who have obtained fame and wealth. They have no more

hope. So they despair. Despair is the way to spiritual death. Those who have obtained fame and wealth want to buy happiness with money. But usually they buy with their precious money the fleeting pleasure of sin, or the poison of Satan. Especially those who are elders of the churches, or worldly Christians, want to buy eternal life with their money. But with their money they buy the fear of the devil instead of eternal life. So they despair. But our Lord Jesus taught us to pray for the Holy Spirit to be given. The Holy Spirit drives out the fear of the devil and gives us the love of God, the joy of God and the peace of God. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance.

In this passage we learn many things. But we must learn that we must grow spiritually until we can call God "Father," and until we can have the universal brotherhood of mankind in our hearts. Especially we must grow spiritually until we can forgive others' sins unconditionally.