

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."'"

Today Jesus teaches his disciples "The Lord's Prayer." This prayer has influenced Jesus' people throughout history to pray in a way that pleases God and obtains God's answer. America's history, as a Christian nation, has been influenced by this prayer. For example, General Douglas MacArthur, after winning the battle of Inchon, Korea, in 1950, publicly recited the Lord's Prayer to begin his press conference. However, America's Christian identity has weakened. In the last few months, President Obama hosted both an Iftar for Muslims, and a Passover Seder in the White House. In addressing Christian leaders at an Easter prayer breakfast last week, he regarded them as just "one of" the religious groups. He did, however, share a personal Christian testimony. In the past decade, Muslims have occasionally prayed to open sessions of Congress. This was not what Benjamin Franklin had in mind when he suggested that the Founding Fathers pray before their meetings. In many ways we see that these are times of religious pluralism. We can no longer assume that the word "prayer" refers to a Christian prayer. Many are confused about what to pray and how to pray. It is time to return to the Lord's Prayer and master it. In verses 2-4, Jesus taught his disciples what their prayer topics should be. In verses 5-10, Jesus taught them what kind of attitude they should have as they pray. In verses 11-13, Jesus taught them how God answers prayer. Let's learn prayer from Jesus today.

I. "He said to them, 'When you pray, say....'"

Verse 1 says, "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.'" Luke especially notes Jesus' prayer. Let's summarize Jesus' prayer thus far in Luke's gospel: As Jesus was praying at baptism, he received the Holy Spirit, and the Father said to him, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (3:21-22); Jesus prayed to find and follow God's direction for him (Mk 1:35; Lk 4:42-43); Jesus prayed to receive power to preach, heal, and do miracles (5:16); Jesus prayed for wisdom to choose and raise his disciples (Lk 6:12; 9:18,29). Jesus prayed to start a new day and before doing anything significant. Up to this point, Jesus had not said much to his disciples about prayer. But Jesus had done a lot of praying. Jesus set a living example of prayer for his disciples. Finally, they must have realized that prayer was the source of his spiritual power. They were further motivated by the example of John's disciples who were praying. Perhaps they had noticed John's disciples praying while they were eating and sleeping. So they came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." Educators call this a "teachable moment." Jesus made the most of this opportunity.

Jesus first taught them the contents of prayer. Let's read verses 2-4 together: "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.''" This prayer is not long, boring and repetitious; it is short and to the point. It can be finished in 20 seconds or less. But it contains all of the essential topics that we should include in our prayers. I would like to divide this prayer into three parts: "Father, hallowed be your name" (2a); "your kingdom come" (2b); and requests for our needs (3-4).

First, "Father, hallowed be your name." This part of the prayer regards God himself and our relationship to him. Calling God "Father" would have been revolutionary for the disciples. God whom

Jesus was referring to is the God of the Old Testament--the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all peoples. The Jewish people regarded this God as most holy. They would not speak his name publicly. They believed that those who approached God irreverently would forfeit their lives. But Jesus taught his disciples to call God "Father." In Aramaic, "Father" is "Abba" (Greek: "Pater"). This indicates a relationship of intimacy, marked by affection on the part of the father and honor on the part of the child. Jesus is the Son of God, who is in very nature God (Lk 1:35). Jesus was pure and sinless. He always pleased God and was never separated from God (Jn 8:29). Therefore, it is understandable that Jesus called God "Father." But here, Jesus teaches his disciples to call God "Father" as well.

How can we sinful human beings call the holy God "Father"? Jesus made this possible for us. After his resurrection, Jesus instructed Mary Magdalene to tell his disciples, "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17). Those who receive Jesus by faith are given the right to be children of God (Jn 1:12-13). Through the cross of Christ, and his shed blood, our sins are forgiven. Through his resurrection we receive eternal life and a living hope in the kingdom of God. Through faith in Christ we also receive the Holy Spirit, who makes us new inwardly and who dwells within us. The Spirit testifies with our spirits that we are children of God. The Spirit enables us to call God "Abba, Father" (Ro 8:15). Jesus gives us the right to call God "Father." The primary characteristics of this relationship are love and honor. God loves us as his children, and he wants us to honor him as our Father. Prayer begins with trusting the love of God, coming to God as we are, and having the assurance that he receives us. Prayer also involves honoring God who made us, saves us, provides for us, protects us, guides us, and disciplines us for our good. Prayer is not a burdensome ritual, but meeting God personally and enjoying his presence.

However, there is a problem for many contemporary people. Their image of a father may not elicit feelings of love and protection. Instead, it may bring to mind pain and wounds. Frankly speaking, the behavior of some fathers has damaged their children. These children may think that if God is like their father, they don't want a relationship with God. But God is not like human fathers who are weak and sinful. God is perfect in love, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and all virtues. God always loves his children in a way that brings them life and blessing. God's children enjoy a deep sense of security and happiness in him. We find the love to fully satisfy our souls, the peace that passes understanding, joy unspeakable, the solution to any problem, the resources to meet any need, and healing for all our wounds and sorrows in our Father God. Let's call God, "Father," even now!

In the same breath that we call God "Father," we also say, "hallowed be your name." We don't use the word "hallowed" in ordinary conversation. What does it mean? It means "to regard as holy and sacred, to revere." God is "other" than his creation. God is not a created being, nor is there any imperfection in him. God is the Creator who made all things. God is perfect and so awesome and pure that even the holy angels cover their faces with their wings in his presence (Isa 6:2). God is the very source of life itself. God's holiness and power are utterly transcendent. God is "holy, holy, holy" (Isa 6:3). So we must acknowledge him with deep respect, and with awe and trembling. God delights to be honored by his children. As we admire him in praise and adoration, we enter into a joyful spiritual relationship that transcends this world. We gain our Father's ear; everything is possible.

Second, "your kingdom come." I believe that this is the centerpiece of the Lord's Prayer. It is what God wants most to happen in this world. It is our Lord's own prayer request. But what does it mean? In the first place, it means to welcome God's King into our own hearts. He is Jesus Christ. He does not force his kingship on anyone. But when we willingly invite him in, he enters our hearts and drives out all the power of sin and death. He rules us with life and peace. His reign transforms us in his own

glorious image. Then we can think and speak and act like him, doing things that make his world beautiful, orderly and fruitful for his glory. Once, religious leaders came to Jesus asking about the times and dates of the kingdom's coming. Jesus said, "...the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:21). The kingdom of God starts in our own hearts when we welcome Jesus as King.

However, the kingdom of God is much more than our own personal experience of Christ's reign. According to the footnote, we should pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Christ wants to reign over families and communities and nations as we live in this world. He wants to show us glimpses of his glorious reign in reality. When the Holy Spirit came upon the early Christians, they formed a beautiful community of love. They sought to honor and worship Christ foremost by obeying his teachings. They opened their homes to one another and ate together joyfully. They shared their material possessions with those in need so that no one was lacking. They prayed for the spread of the gospel and the salvation of the world. Their joy overflowed and many great miracles were done among them. It was a snapshot picture of the kingdom of God on earth. However, it did not last forever. The Lord allowed persecution, which scattered them. As a result, the gospel spread to many more people. Nevertheless, this teaches us that we can pray with eager expectation for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. In Los Angeles in 1906, a few women began to pray to experience God in their souls. They invited William J. Seymour, an African American pastor whose parents had both been slaves, to come and preach the word of God to them. The Holy Spirit began to work in one person, then a few people, and finally in many people. Diseases were healed, demons were driven out, and people were born again. It became known as the Azusa Street Revival. Many denominations and churches trace their birth to that revival, including the Church of God in Christ, the Assemblies of God, and the United Pentecostal Church. Missionaries were sent out to many nations of the world as well. One amazing characteristic of this revival was that whites and blacks worshiped side by side at Jesus' cross. This happened in a era of strong racism in America. It was a tangible visitation of God's kingdom with peace, justice and truth evident among men. It came through prayer.

We must pray for such tangible experiences of the kingdom of God on earth. This is why we pray for raising disciples of Christ at UIC, NEIU, NU, Loyola, Oakton, Truman, Columbia, Roosevelt, Washington, Moraine Valley, and all Chicago campuses. This is why we pray for 500 one-to-one Bible studies to be carried out in Chicago UBF. This is why we pray for American missionaries who preach the gospel in Ukraine, Russia, Uganda, Mongolia, Indonesia, Sudan, Argentina, Taiwan, China, Japan, and Belize. This is why we pray for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Let's pray for God's kingdom to come. This prayer topic came from Jesus himself.

However, the prayer for God's kingdom to come is not ultimately about this world. It is about a world to come. It looks forward to that day Jesus has promised when he will come again in power and great glory. He will destroy all evil and unrighteousness. He will cast the devil into the lake of fire forever. He will make a new heaven and a new earth. He will visibly reign over his redeemed people in loving fellowship. There will be no more tears or sorrows or pain or death. Everyone will be as loving and holy as Jesus. Only beautiful and fruitful relationships will be there. Even the animals will play well, as the lion and the lamb lay down together. This is our ultimate hope. With this hope we can always pray, "your kingdom come." Our prayer should not be self-centered, or ministry-centered. Our prayer should be God-centered. Our prayer should be, "...your kingdom come."

Third, requests for our needs. Let's read verse 3. "Give us this day our daily bread." When we call God "Father," we are no more slaves of bread who toil for three meals a day. We are children of the Creator God. Our main concern is for his kingdom to come. Then our gracious Father God will supply our

material needs generously. But he wants us to ask. So we must pray, "Give us each day our daily bread." Otherwise, we become anxious and miserable. When we trust God and pray, he supplies our needs, and our souls find rest.

Jesus taught us to pray for "our" daily bread. This means that we must be mindful of the material needs of our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We must pray for Dr. Joseph and Esther Chung to have a car so they may not need to walk endlessly in Uganda in their old age. We must pray for Mike Thompson who has to pay high tuition to keep his children in school in Russia. We must also pray for those who lost their jobs or took a pay cut. As God's children, we cannot be selfish. We must be mindful of others in the body of Christ, as well as all people who are in material need.

As we have material needs, we also have spiritual needs. Let's read verse 4a. "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." To live in God's presence, we need the grace of forgiveness daily. Without forgiveness, we feel dead and trapped. We can fall into depression and despair. But when we ask for forgiveness, God hears and answers and restores our relationship with him. Then we can live joyfully in his presence. As we enjoy this grace, we must also forgive everyone who sins against us. This is hard for human beings to do. How can we forgive those who hurt us? We must remember that Christ shed his blood to forgive our terrible sins. Then our hearts become tender and we can forgive others. Those who don't forgive suffer terribly. As they hold a grudge it becomes bitter poison in their souls. The one who suffers most is not the unforgiven one, but the unforgiving one. Practicing forgiveness sets us free to live in God's grace.

Fourth, "...and lead us not into temptation." This is like preventive medicine. We must ask God's help before temptation comes. Then God remembers this prayer and helps us to avoid temptation that could damage us badly. These days the devil tempts many young people to commit sins of sexual immorality. Though he promises pleasure and excitement, he delivers great pain and spiritual death. Still, this temptation is so strong in our time that it seems no one can avoid it. But there is a way. We can pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Then God will help us find a way out. In this first part, we have learned to come to God as a child to his father. We have learned a most important prayer topic: "your kingdom come." Now let's learn how to pray.

II. "...because of the man's boldness...." (5-10)

Look at verses 5-8. As we know, it is not easy to wake a man in the middle of the night when he is sleeping with his children. He may not wake up for the sake of friendship. But he will wake up if he knows that his friend will badger him until he gets what he wants. In a word, he will get up because of the man's boldness and persistence. Jesus does not necessarily want his disciples to be rude and obnoxious, but he does want us to be bold and persistent in prayer. When we pray without giving up, he will surely answer us. God does not get tired and fall asleep. God is not reluctant to answer our prayers. God is very willing to answer our prayers. But he wants us to persist in faith. Let's read verses 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." When his children pray without giving up, God never fails to answer their prayers.

One man who practiced this kind of bold and persistent prayer was Peter Cartwright. He was one of the early circuit riding Methodist preachers in the 1800's who traveled long distances on horseback to visit people in scattered homesteads to share the word of God with them. On one occasion, Cartwright was in a town on a Saturday night while they held a dance. These dances were

marked by excessive drinking and ungodly behavior. As a joke, the townspeople invited Cartwright to join. To their surprise he agreed. Then a beautiful young lady asked him to dance with her. To everyone's surprise he accepted and escorted her to the middle of the dance floor. With all eyes on him, he announced that he always prayed before doing anything new. In a moment of silence, he knelt down and began to pray with a loud voice. He pleaded with God to bring the Holy Spirit upon them all, beginning with him and his dance partner. He prayed that they may repent of their sins and receive his grace of forgiveness. Suddenly the atmosphere of the dance hall changed. Cartwright's partner tried to pull away and run. But he held her hand tightly and she could not move. People began to speak obnoxiously to him. But Cartwright persisted. Soon the Holy Spirit began to work. First, his partner was convicted of her sin. She fell to her knees and stayed there in repentance. Others began to experience conviction of sin and to cry for God's help. In this way, through one man's bold and persistent prayer, what began as a dance became a spiritual revival that affected that town greatly. We may not be able to pray like Peter Cartwright. But the Lord promises to answer our prayers when we pray without giving up.

III. "...your Father will give the Holy Spirit" (11-13)

This part teaches us how God answers our prayers. Look at verses 11-13. Most human fathers have two things in common. We are all sinners. And we know how to give good gifts to our children. I am one of them. My son Daniel won a goldfish at the last Hallelujah Light Festival for CBF kids. He did not want his fish to die, like the previous one had. So he asked for a small fish bowl to keep it in. On hearing his request, I was so happy that he asked me for something that I bought him a nice aquarium that has a perfect environment to sustain goldfish. His fish is still living, and he is happy. Though I am a sinner, I want to give good gifts to my children so they will know that I love them. How much more will our Father God give good gifts to his children who ask him. God's love is superior to any sinful father's love, as heaven is superior to the earth. God gives his children the best gift he can give out of his love for us. The best gift is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God who dwells within us and counsels and guides us. The Holy Spirit is everything to us. The best gift is not money or a marriage candidate. The best gift is the Holy Spirit whom God gives generously when we ask.

Today we have studied the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes hearing the word "prayer" makes us feel burdened. However, prayer is sweet fellowship with our loving heavenly Father. God wants us to pray for his kingdom to come. He wants us to present all of our needs to him. He promises to answer in the best way. Let's pray with boldness and persistence until God pours out his Holy Spirit upon us. May God richly bless you as you pray the Lord's Prayer.