

GOT CLOUT?

LUKE 11:1-13

M.I. CHRISTIAN PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE BECAUSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CHILDREN.

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Got Clout?

Luke 11:1-13

Before we get into this morning's text, I want to remind you that I'm not very creative and for the most part, not very original. Most of my sermons come from a lot of reading and studying. The chances are that whatever I preach or teach, I have read in a book or heard someone speak on the topic. This morning Jesus is going to tell another parable and I want to remind you that I am drawing heavily on Klyne Snodgrass' book *Stories With Intent*. I think he does a very thorough job on the parables. I am going to take a little different track than most Bible commentators but I am going to draw heavily on Dr. Snodgrass' studies. I'm sure I won't do him justice. He will deserve the credit when I'm on track and I'll take credit when the train goes off the track.

This morning we are going to study a passage of Scripture that contains the Lord's Prayer. People could preach weeks and years just on the Lord's Prayer. But in order to get Luke's full force I want to preach it within its immediate context. Luke places this incident on Jesus' march towards Jerusalem, right after leaving Martha and Mary's house. I'm pretty sure that in this morning's passage, Jesus' intent is to give us more information about the One to Whom we pray more than the mechanics of prayer. Jesus wants us to know that it is safe to pray because we have a loving Father.

I have come to think that prayer is more dangerous from a human perspective. Back in the day, our church belonged to a group that consisted of three churches. We often held joint services together and we did family camp together. One day, a deacon in one of the other churches called me and asked me to come over and pray for his sick wife. She had been very ill with the flu.

I knew the family so I immediately went home with him to pray for his wife. She was hacking and spitting and looked really bad. I took some time with her, laid hands on her, and prayed for her recovery. On the way out the door, the deacon warmly thanked me for coming. I asked the deacon if his pastor was out of town. He said, "No, I just didn't want him to take a chance in coming over here and catch whatever my wife has."

Sometimes prayer can be dangerous when dealing with human beings but Jesus wants us to know that when we pray we have a loving Father on the other end waiting to hear from us.

The main idea of this morning's text is this. **CHRISTIAN PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE BECAUSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CHILDREN.** In other words when it comes to prayer, we have real clout. The Bible makes the following observations about prayer. First of all we have a loving Father Who is waiting to hear our prayers. Secondly, we are invited to use Jesus' Name in prayer. Jesus

and the Father are One. Jesus invites us to use His Name in the throne room of God. And thirdly, God has given us His Holy Spirit. As we pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and translates our prayers into heavenly language. The only way we can fail at prayer is simply not to pray.

GOD'S ROLE IN ANSWERING PRAYER (VS 1-4)

In verses 1-4 Jesus teaches us God's role in answering prayer. He emphasizes that GOD IS OUR LOVING FATHER. In this section we will encounter the Lord's Prayer. I know it has a real depth of meaning. However, because of where Luke placed it, I think Jesus is teaching us more about God's love than He is teaching us the mechanics of prayer.

In verse 1 Luke informs us of the importance of prayer. I want to remind us what we have been saying through our study through Luke's Gospel. Whenever we see Jesus or the disciples praying in the Gospel of Luke or his historical book of Acts, something big happens when they are praying. It seems as if Jesus was alone with His disciples and He was in prayer. When He finished, the disciples asked Him if He would teach them to pray. I want you to look at their reasoning. They wanted to learn to pray just like John taught his disciples to pray. Almost all religious schools had particular prayers they taught and used regularly. In other words, they wanted everything that disciples of other teachers had. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel wanted a human king. Even though they had God for a King, they wanted a human king so they could be just like the other nations. That turned out pretty badly for them.

However, in this case, it will turn out good for the disciples and for us. Some of these types of prayers survived the centuries and have become powerful prayers for even us today. For example, one prayer that I particularly like and use is the "Sinner's Prayer." It is a prayer I like to use in meditation. It goes like this, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." I like to say it in phrases, emphasize one particular phrase, and then another.

Another prayer that has come down to us is the Lord's Prayer. The church has primarily formalized Matthew's version of the prayer. These are all good tools that help us draw near to God but there is nothing magical about the prayers. And further, I think Jesus is trying to focus not so much on the words of the prayer as He is focused on the recipient of our prayers, a loving Father.

In verses 2-4, Jesus describes the God Who we pray to. First of all, in verse 2 Jesus makes it clear that our Father is the King. Jesus starts out the prayer, "Father, hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come." Matthew uses "Our Father." I'm sure you have heard tons of sermons that talk about the Aramaic word Jesus uses for God Abba. It is an endearing term. Jesus wants us to know that He is dearly loved by the Father and because Jesus dearly loves us, so does the Father. Jesus wants us to approach prayer as a little boy or girl approaches a gentle and loving father. It is a trust relationship. God is never too busy or too preoccupied to

hear our prayers. The Father waits for and cherishes the times His children jump up into His lap and speak their hearts to Him. It is a beautiful picture Jesus paints.

But our loving Father is not just any father. He is the King of the universe. Everything that exists has been created by Him. And He is holy. That means there is no other god like our Father.

In praying for God's kingdom to come to earth, what we are praying for is that God work out His will and His way through our lives, just as He was bringing His kingdom of love through Jesus.

One day, He will come to earth, reward the righteous, punish the evildoers, and create a new heaven and a new earth. The God we worship is fair, just, holy, and dangerous. But Jesus invites us to call Him Abba Father.

In verse 3 Jesus reminds us that the God we worship is our provider. The sense of this verse is, "Father, day by day, give us enough bread for the day." The picture Jesus wants us to have in mind is when God took Israel through the desert to the Promised Land. There was no food in the desert but God provided manna each day for them to eat. They were only to pick up enough bread each morning for the day. They were not to save any for the next day.

The more technology we have, the more we forget Who really provides for us. We don't often pray for our daily bread because we usually have two or three loafs in the freezer or we could go to the neighborhood store and buy a loaf. But Jesus wants us to know that if God chose not to provide for us for one day, we would starve to death. He could take away our jobs, our bank accounts, our houses, our resources, and our health in a moment. We should periodically take time to think about that and actually thank God for His provision and ask Him to continue to provide for us in the present and in the future. But God really does want us to think about our relationship with Him on a day by day time frame. Then we should view our relationship with Him on an hour by hour basis, and a moment by moment connection.

In the first half of verse 4, Jesus the One Who redeems us reminds us that the God we worship is our redeemer. He is the One Who sent Jesus to redeem us. In the first part of the prayer, we acknowledged that God our Father is absolutely holy and perfect. Everything that comes in contact with Him must be holy and perfect. And when we come into God's presence, we immediately realize that because of our sin, we don't belong there. This could frighten us but Jesus simply tells us to ask for forgiveness. It's that simple. The Bible says that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of all our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And because our Father is loving and forgiving, He expects His children to be likewise. God redeemed us at great personal cost. He sent His One and Only Son

Jesus to die for our sins so that we could be redeemed. Our lives are also to be dedicated to sacrificial love for God and for one another.

And in the second half of verse 4 Jesus reminds us that God is our protector. In other words, God will never tempt us to sin. He will however, lead us to places that will test and build our faith. Our confidence is that He will never put us in a place where we cannot succeed. He will never allow us to be tempted or face any problem that is beyond our ability to conquer it. In this section, Jesus has portrayed God as Someone Who loves us, waits for us, and provides for us. We are welcome into God's throne room any time we wish. It only takes bowing our heads and pronouncing the Name Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that GOD IS OUR LOVING FATHER.

Here is where I am going to differ from many of the commentators, even the ones I like a lot. Almost everyone wants to talk about this parable in terms of being persistent in prayer. However, let's build on the theme that God is our loving Father. I think this parable in verses 5-8 is all about God's willingness to answer prayer. In other words, Jesus is teaching that GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS WILLINGLY BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE FOR US.

GOD'S WILLINGNESS TO ANSWER PRAYER (VS 5-8)

Let's just review. The disciples asked Jesus how to pray. The first word out of Jesus' mouth in the prayer was Father Abba. In verse 5, Jesus starts out with the question, "Which one of you has a friend?" The answer is that none of us will have a friend like that. In verse 11 Jesus will ask, "Which of you fathers?" And in that case the answer should be none of us. I think the primary thought here is that God's love is much greater than any kind of love we could demonstrate to one another. With that, let's get into the parable.

Verse 5-6 could describe our needs. Jesus starts the parable by inviting His disciples to take the position of a friend in need who must approach a friend for help. We must keep in mind that the Hebrew culture is an honor culture like most eastern and middle-eastern cultures. Jesus says to the disciples, "Let's say you have friend who shows up at your house late at night. It's your duty to feed him, but you don't have any food in the house. Since you are duty bound to feed him, what will you do?"

Here we are invited to think about all the needs that press in on us. We have so many duties and responsibilities. We have to provide for our families and we have great amounts of pressure on us at work and at home. What will we do?

Verse 7 illustrates an unheard of response. Jesus continues with the story. Because you don't have any bread, you go next door to your neighbor to see if he has any food you can borrow. When the man gets to his neighbor's house and knocks at the door, the neighbor who is supposed to be his friend says, "Don't bother me. The door is already locked. We are in bed and I can't get up and give you anything." Here is where we have to remind ourselves that this is an honor

culture. When Jesus said, "Which one of you have a neighbor who would do this?" the expected answer is, "None of us." You see in an honor culture, the person who refused to help his neighbor would lose face. He would be publicly disgraced. But for the sake of argument, Jesus tells them to just think it through. Just let's say that happened. What would you do?

In verse 8 we see a request fulfilled. Well it seems as if the disciples identify with the man by knocking, knocking, yelling, and screaming at the guy to get up. The guy is going to get up and give him the food because he doesn't want to wake up the whole neighborhood and he doesn't want everyone to know he is a cheapskate or a bad neighbor. The guy gets up, opens the door and gives the neighbor the bread he needs.

Before we go on, I need to address a translation and an interpretation choice your Bibles make. The key word in this discussion is *anaideia*. It means shamelessness. If you are reading the NIV, it is translated as boldness. In some other translations, it is translated persistence. The NIV is saying that the friend who was borrowing the bread shamelessly beat on the door and kept calling out for his neighbor to lend him bread.

On the other hand, the NLT translates that word for shamelessness as to damage a reputation. In other words, the word describes the neighbor in bed who does not want to get out of bed and open the door. So he only gets out of bed to open the door so he won't be publicly shamed and lose face. Do you get those two meanings? I think both are in view here.

For those of you who have been the parents of little children and those of you who have watched us deal with our little children, you will get this immediately. We are out in a store with our 3-year-old and 5-year old. We are pushing the 3-year-old in the basket and the 5-year-old is sort of walking along. All of a sudden we pass the toy section. The 5-year-old takes a toy off the shelf and says, "I want this." Calmly we say, "No, you can't have that." At this point the 5-year-old escalates the argument. He starts to scream and make a public scene. This is that word shamelessness. Now the 3-year-old joins in the choir and they both start to scream, and to cry, and to make a huge scene in the middle of the store. They don't care where they are. They have no sense of shame.

Now if you're anything like me, you either buy them that particular toy or negotiate a different, less expensive toy, because you are now the center of attention. These kids are screaming bloody murder. People think you are killing them. You are now somewhat publicly shamed. There is that word shamelessness again. We give in to avoid public shame. Do you see how that works?

The friend was knocking on his neighbor's door. He is banging on it and screaming out shamelessly. In order to avoid public shame, the neighbor gets up, opens the door, and gives the man the bread he needs.

Okay, the point of this is that no one should have had a neighbor like that. Neighbors in honor societies would never make a guy resort to all that to borrow some food. The guy had to wrestle the bread from his neighbor.

Jesus' point is this. God is not a stingy, selfish, self-centered, preoccupied, or uncaring God. We do not need to wrestle blessings out of His hands. He wants to bless us. It is much easier to get a blessing from God than bread from this guy's neighbor. God is nothing like that. Jesus' message here is this. **GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS WILLINGLY BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE FOR US.**

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP IN ANSWERING PRAYER (VS 9-10)

Now if one thinks that Jesus was teaching that pestering God can finally cause Him to answer our prayers, then the next section would be teaching persistence in prayer. However, I don't think that is what Jesus has been teaching. I think that in verses 9-10 Jesus is teaching us about God's relationship in answering prayer. In other words, **GOD APPRECIATES OUR ACKNOWLEDGING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.** In other words, what this section is about is our consciously and intentionally approaching God based on our relationship with Him. He is our Father and we are His children. Children ask for what they want and need. Fathers are the ones who provide. Let's look at the petitioner. Now because commentators come to this with the idea that this is teaching persistence, they make too much of the tense of the verbs. The NLT translates the verb tenses correctly.

Jesus is saying, "So ... keep on asking ... keep on knocking." Where the commentators go wrong is the meaning. They say, based on our continual asking we will receive. Based on our continually knocking the door will be opened. It seems to me they are saying that by the number of our prayers, we can wear God down. Or perhaps God has a magic number in mind. If I pray for something 200 times I may not get it but if I pray 201 times, God may give it to me. I think Jesus teaches directly against that sort of idea in His Sermon on the Mount. Listen to what He says about prayer:

"7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:7-8 / NIV).

In Matthew's arrangement of the events, he places this right before the Lord's Prayer and he talks about knocking and asking in chapter 7 of his Gospel.

I think what Jesus means by keep on knocking and keep on asking is that is to demonstrate our constant dependence on God. Let's talk about God the giver. Look, God has designed our relationship with Him as one of love and dependence. He wants us to ask for things. After all He is our loving Father and He wants to discuss these things with us. He is saying that not only when we are young does He want us to ask Him for things but even when we are old He wants us to keep on asking Him for things we need and want. It is all about His relationship with us. He knows what we need and what we want but He does want us to ask. I like when

we my children thank me and acknowledge what I have done for them. It's a sign of their love and appreciation. **GOD APPRECIATES OUR ACKNOWLEDGING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.**

For God, it's all about the relationship. He doesn't want us to grovel and beg for blessings. We don't have to wrestle blessings from His hand. He knows what we need and He wants to bless us.

GOD'S WISDOM IN ANSWERING PRAYER (VS 11-12)

But hopefully we are not like the 5-year-old in the store. Hopefully we trust in God's love. Jesus describes God's wisdom in answering prayer in verses 11-12. In other words **GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS WITH WISDOM.** Thank God He has not answered many of my prayers as I have prayed them. I'd be dead and so would a great deal of other people.

Again let me remind you that Jesus has been teaching us all through this passage that God is our loving Father. He started out the prayer, "Father." And now here in verse 11 He asks, "Which of you fathers?"

Let's examine the requests. A child is hungry. He comes to his father and asks him for a fish to eat. She comes to him and asks him for an egg to eat. Here we are at the crossroads. Jesus says to them and to us, which one of you fathers would give your son a poisonous snake instead of a piece of bread and which of you would give your daughter a scorpion instead of an egg? The answer is none of us! I certainly hope there is none of us that would do that. If any child came to any of us and asked for something to eat, we would never give them poison or even something they could choke on.

Now here is the punch line. Also keep in mind that in the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught that God was holy. He also taught us to ask for forgiveness of sin. Now watch this. If you and I are evil, and we are without a doubt, and we would not substitute poison for food, and if we would only give good things to our children, then how much more will our Abba Father in heaven give us good things? The key words in this passage are "How much more?" We think we are good people and give good things to others. We think we are good parents and give good things to our children. We do good things for others and give good things to others. And according to God's standards we are evil. So let's assume we are good and give good gifts. Think about how much more holy, loving, and generous God is. Can you imagine the gifts and blessings He has for us?

Let's examine God's response. Jesus says, "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" The Holy Spirit is the absolute best gift that anyone could ever receive and God is happy to give the Holy Spirit to any of us who will come to Him in faith. This is also important. Let's go back and reverse the request. Let's say your little child came to you and asked for a poisonous snake to play with. Obviously you would not give it to him. It would be

dangerous. Let's say your little girl wanted you to give her a poisonous scorpion to play with. Again, you would not give it to her because it would not be appropriate.

Likewise God is not going to give us things that are harmful to us. He is a loving Father Who wants to give us only good gifts. Let me give you a rule I live by. If I have asked God for something and I don't have it, I know that it's not good for me or it's not right for me now. I would never pester God to give it to me. If it were good for me, He would give it to me. He doesn't want me to beg. He is a loving Father Who wants to give me all good things. Listen to what James says about this:

"... You do not have, because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:2-3 / NRSVA). We must learn to be trusting children who ask our loving Father for what we want and need. We need to trust Him to answer with what will be best for us. GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS WITH WISDOM.

Jesus has taught us that God loves us and wants to bless us. Our part in the relationship is to be loving, grateful, and trusting children. Christian prayer is based on the personal relationship we have with our heavenly Father. CHRISTIAN PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE BECAUSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CHILDREN.

Our relationship with God is truly a wonderful to think about. On the one hand, He is the King of the Universe. He is huge, awesome, and holy. We look at Him and tremble at His holiness and at His power. On the other hand, He invites us to come to Him as trusting children come to a loving Father.

In the book Lectures to My Students, Charles Spurgeon said this:

"Theodorus said of Martin Luther: 'I overheard him in prayer, but good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend.'"

It seems to me that's the way it should be for us. God is awesome, holy, and dangerous. But He is our God. He has claimed to be our Abba Father. He has claimed to be our daddy. That's how we are to approach Him in prayer.