

Luke 11:1-13
July 27, 2025

The Giver

It happened when Jesus was praying. Sometimes, gospel things happen in the course of faithful living. Jesus was caught in the act by one of his disciples. He was willing to be seen in prayer . . . rather than stepping back to avoid an embarrassment for the disciple; and we should give the disciple credit here, for he did not seek to avoid the interruption of a sacred experience for Jesus . . . Instead, the two met in that moment. It became holy when the disciple said,

“Lord, teach *us* to pray.”

The next thing that happened is what we know as the Lukan version of the, “Lord’s Prayer,” or as we say, “the prayer that Jesus taught.” It is always easier to teach when the students have asked, “teach us.” Sometimes education is a fight. I can still hear my cousin say about her approach as a teacher, “I am going to teach you, and you are going to learn.” Not so much here.

The prayer comes out a little different in Luke than in the more familiar version in the Gospel of Matthew;

“Father,
hallowed be your name,
your Kingdom come.
Give us each day, our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive everyone who sins against us.

And, lead us not into temptation.”

One notices right away what is not present. There is no;

“Who art in heaven,” or, “Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” or, “deliver us from evil,” or, “for thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever, amen.”

One also notices a difference in the line about forgiveness. In Matthew we read, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” In Luke it is, “sins,” rather than, “debts,” except that the second part of the line is different than presented here; it should read, “forgive us our sins, and we forgive our debtors.” It is a mixing of ideas. In neither text is anything about, “trespasses.”

Taken together, the issues about wording are hardly the point, as can be seen by the direction Jesus takes after he has given the specific language, the spoken lines. He seems to assume that his disciples are in agreement with those who believe that getting something good from God is like getting, “blood from a stone,” as they say, “making a silk purse out of a sow’s ear,” that it is a great imposition upon God, and a human impossibility for those not willing to beg.

He challenges them with a story about a man who is in a bit of a pickle. He has an unexpected guest and nothing to feed him. He goes to his neighbor to ask for help, but it is late and his neighbor tells him, “no,” that

he can't be bothered at that hour. The idea is that if the one who is in the pickle keeps asking, eventually the neighbor will respond generously, just to get him out of his hair.

It is implied that the neighbor is God, kind of like in an allegory, and we, the supplicants, are the pickled ones, and if we pester God to death God will relent and give us what we want.

It is true that there are some prayers that, like the Lord's Prayer, are best if they are prayed in a repetitive way, every week, if not every day. There are some questions that need continual asking, like, "what would I do to be saved?" "How much should I give?" But that is not where Jesus goes with his line of reasoning.

Rather, he says,

"ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

The suspicion that God is constitutionally set against us and must be begged to come to our aid is confronted by the conviction that reality is the other way around, that God is for us; and as Paul put it in the 8th chapter of Romans, "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

Maybe this whole issue simply involves theological and intellectual gymnastics that might enable us to see how much of our time is spent in the shadow of blessings too great to name; and that our suspicions are born of the habit of seeing the world tragically and noticing the bad while failing to see all that is good around us. Maybe.

Or maybe part of the challenge is that we do not actually know what we want, or should want. We do not know what is good for us and ask for all the wrong things for all the wrong reasons; or even the right things for the wrong reasons, or the wrong things for the right reasons. Part of a relationship with God is a learning experience, involves a renewal of the mind, a transformation of the understanding of things.

The first couple of lines from the epistle may help . . . Paul encourages us;

". . . just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue to live in Him*, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith that you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

He continues, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition, and the basic principles of this world, *rather than on Christ*." Among other things, Christ reveals God's generosity and readiness to help.

But let us not treat these essentially spiritual issues as if they are easy, by acting as if we believe that there is an easy set of intellectual gymnastics, or ritualistic behaviors, or some kind of A-B-C formula that can ensure us a carefree life without hardship or pain.

One might ask how this optimism is justified in the face of the world's pain, of unbearable hardship in the life of the world and in our own lives. It is a good question. It is one of the questions that is best asked repeatedly. Part of the answer is that it is Jesus that speaks, and he speaks on his way to Jerusalem, and knows that he and his disciples also, face the cross.

He speaks his defiant message in the face of the persistence of sin, of poverty, of conflict and war, of corruption and injustice; the human traditions of greed and anger and fear, the basic world principles.

The gospel message calls us farther in. It greets us on a level of our being and experience that runs deeper than the surface of our lives where we seek to be comfortable, look for dwelling places of ease.

The simplicity of the Prayer comes to mind again;

It reflects our deepest needs; holiness and transcendence, sustenance and mercy, a kind of groundedness in the pursuit of righteousness no matter how many times we fail. These petitions reflect the main features of our humanity.

When we pray for them, let us *believe in them, and pray them defiantly*. Let us be assured that God does not need to be cajoled and pestered, but desires to bless us with them. If anything, it is we who need to be cajoled.

Last week we mentioned that the world offers the pursuit of worldly achievements and strength pleasure sources of peace and assurance, while the gospel offers service and sacrifice.

This week we can see that the world offers us the temptation to be suspicious, even about God's love for us, and threatened in a way that triggers anxiety and shakes our faith. The gospel offers us the goodness of God as *the giver* of all things good.

In the world, the presence of negative outcomes compels us to fear the worst, but we can still ask Jesus to teach us to pray.. Biblical faith entices the awareness of blessing, and compels faith in the goodness of life and in the ever-present grace that is the foundation of our hope . . . And so we pray.

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