



Prayer
Luke 11:1-13
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There was a day, some years ago, when doctors recommended which brand of cigarettes to smoke. Cigarettes. They're good for you. Recommended by doctors. Just ask your doctor which brand they smoke.

It's good that this has changed...

But vegetables... they've always been good for you. And still are.

How many of us remember his conversation:

Parent: "Eat your veges".

Child: "why?"

Parent: "Because they're good for you."

Now, I have to admit I've always liked vegetables. Lettuce. Tomatoes. Broccoli. Even brussels sprouts.

But some people really don't like vegetables. Maybe because they're boring. Or because they don't like the taste. Or simply because there are more interesting things to eat! Why fill up on vegetables when you can fill up on dumplings or chocolate or chips!

Because they're good for you.

So today, we come to the vegetables of the Christian faith. Something we KNOW is really good for us. But something we don't always jump into.

1. Prayer. It's good for you!

It's recommended by Jesus.

But it's not something that always comes naturally. Even the disciples needed to ask Jesus to **teach** them to pray. They didn't know how to. But they knew it was good. Probably because they always saw Jesus doing it!

And when they ask Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus teaches them what we know today as the Lord's Prayer. It's a prayer Jesus uses to TEACH his disciples to pray. It's not the only way to pray. They're not magic words. But this is an example prayer DESIGNED to teach us 3 things:

- How to pray.
- What to pray. And most importantly
- Who to pray to.

Let's have a look at it.

2. Prayer – it's for US.

What you might notice first of all is that this is a prayer for us TOGETHER. Everything we pray in this prayer isn't just for ME or YOU. It's for us. We hear those words "US", "WE", "OUR".

We pray together for our community. All the things we bring before God, we do as a community. As a church. So...

We hallow his name – that means we honour his name. Together.

We pray for God's kingdom to come. **Together** we pray for that.

We pray for **our** daily bread, **our** daily needs – together we pray that God will meet **OUR** needs. **We** ask for forgiveness **TOGETHER**. We forgive others, together. We pray for help to keep **US** away from temptation.

This is a prayer for us. To pray together. For our community. For our church.

It's also a prayer that covers pretty much everything. Honouring God. Asking for needs to be met. Asking for forgiveness. Asking for help to forgive others. Waiting for God's kingdom to come.

It's a prayer that basically covers everything, for everyone.

I got this multipurpose tools for Father's Day last year. It goes in my wallet. And it has all this different stuff on it like screw driver and stuff. Obviously it can't do everything. I can't cut a tree down with it. But it's fairly useful. Multi purpose.

The Lord's prayer is a multi purpose prayer. It's great. VERY useful. Covers a lot. It's not definitive. But it's really, really handy and helpful. And worth remembering. Remember it. It comes in handy.

But what Jesus is teaching us with this is that prayer is something we can take part in for ALL things. Prayer is for all people and for every circumstance. There is never a time when prayer is not available, useful and helpful.

But it's also a teaching prayer. A prayer Jesus taught his disciples to help them understand one important thing:

3. Prayer – is about a relationship with your heavenly Father.

And that's why Jesus starts with the word "Father".

And that's why in the rest of this passage, Jesus expands on that aspect of the prayer. Coming to your Father.

An unforgettable childhood image:

One of the most powerful images I remember growing up was my Father praying each night at the side of his bed. Every night, around 7pm, my Father would go into his room, close the door, and pray. Sometimes I'd be looking for him, calling out "Dad!" and I'd find him in his room, and I'd start talking to him. Asking him stuff. But he wouldn't answer. Then I'd realise he was praying. And nothing would distract him. Even if I stood there saying "Dad. Dad. Dad. Dad..."

The impact that had on me as a child was very strong. Because it taught me that my Father's relationship with his heavenly Father was not to be interrupted. His relationship with God was more important than his relationship with me. Talking to God his Father, was more important than talking to me. He would not be distracted from that conversation with God.

Now, I didn't talk about faith much with my Father. We talk more about it these days. But that was an important image for me as a child. When we pray, we come to our heavenly Father and there is no relationship that is more important for us.

And what Jesus teaches us in this passage is that we, as God's *children*, have a special privilege in being able to come to God as our heavenly *Father*.

God is a good father...

- He *allows* us into his presence.
- He actually **invites** us into his presence.
- *And he **wants*** us to come into his presence.

He does not give us scorpions or snakes when we ask for fish or eggs. NO half decent father would do that. So how much more can we expect from God when we come to him?

God says: Ask. Seek. Knock. I want to give to you.

I remember one day as a high school teacher, one of my year 8 boys was really upset after lunch. I asked him what was wrong. He said he saw his dad driving his truck past the school at lunch time. He waved to his dad. His dad waved back and kept driving. He was upset because his Father didn't stop. I said maybe he couldn't stop because he was working. And he said to me "Yeah, I know. It's just that I haven't seen him for 6 months. He stopped coming over for visitation. And I was just hoping he might stop so he could see me.

It was upsetting. Because we all want a Father who wants us, right? A Father who loves us. Not every Father is like that. Not every Father wants their child around. But God does want us around.

Here's the comparison God makes:

Verse 8. Even a grumpy neighbour will give in to persistence.

Verse 11. Even a bad father will not give stone instead of bread.

God says:

You're NOT bothering me.

And I actually WANT to give you good things.

Please come.

Please ask.

APPLY:

- **So when God hands us this invitation to come to him, what is our response?**

Prayer is a bit boring.

I don't have time.

I don't know the right words.

It doesn't work for me.

Prayer meetings are the least attended meetings.

The Prayer "roster" is the one least offered to be filled.

Prayer "ministry" is often the least thought about.

And nothing a church does can MAKE people take prayer more seriously. Let me tell you why...

Prayer is often difficult because we think of it like a vegetable. It's good for us. We should DO it.

But prayer is not about DOING. It's about BEING in a relationship.

It's not about words we say. It's about the Father we come to.

It's not about finding a moment. It's about **every** moment.

I love the way verse 5 sits in there... Jesus says: "Suppose you have a friend... and you go to him at midnight..."

He's our Father, but God also compares himself alongside the friend you come to at the most inconvenient time.

But unlike any earthly friend we have, God offers to give us one thing in particular when we come to him in need... verse 13:

“How much MORE will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit...”

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit that God gives us? The Holy Spirit is the **presence** of God when we are alone. He is the **direction** of God when we are lost. He is the **counsel** of God when we are confused. He is the **comfort** of God when we are afraid. He is the **gift** of a personal relationship with God himself.

God is the perfect father. But he is also the perfect friend who comes to be with us in life. This is what makes him our most important relationship.

Prayer will only be more important in our lives, in our church, when our relationship with God is more important.

So how important is your prayer life?

Well, how important is your relationship with God?

Karl Barth prayer number 1?

25? 8am