

Lord, Give Us What We Need

July 24, 2022

Pastor John Mars

Good morning, Church! I want to read a passage of scripture from Luke, chapter 11, verses 1 through 13.

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."

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.'"

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.'

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are in bed with me. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"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.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

May God bless the reading of His Word.

There have been a lot of things through the years that I was absolutely convinced I needed, and I got them only to find that I did not need them. I have a garage full of stuff. We are privileged to have a three-car garage that we can barely get two cars in. Stuff. I believe it is a fair statement to say that every time I have moved, from the time I moved out of my father's home at 18 to now, I believe every time I have moved, I have needed a bigger truck to move. Can you relate to that? And I know better. I know better. I have had the privilege, and I want to say this sincerely, I have had the privilege of being forced to live very simplistically from time to time and it is a huge blessing. Stuff complicates life. In our passage, Jesus says, "Give us today our daily bread, what we need," and it is a privilege to live without the stuff we don't need. I know this. I had the privilege, in the summer of 1981, of living in the Arctic of Alaska among the Athabaskan people for a whole summer. I was in the Southern Baptist summer mission program. I had a duffel bag full of clothes and a briefcase full of books and that's it. That's all I had and it was one of the best summers of my life. Now some of you have been around me for a while and you know that you know that you know while I was in Alaska, I had to have fishing gear. I did, but that was part of my duffel bag full of clothes. But I got two illustrations I want to share with you. One is for everybody and one is just for the fishermen out there. Okay, the first one is for everyone. I had two pairs of shoes. I had a pair of boots and I had a pair of sneakers. The second day I was there the sneakers got

muddy so I washed them and put them out on the porch. I went to do something else and when I came back, a critter had gotten my sneakers. I don't know if it was a four-legged critter or a two-legged critter, but a critter had gotten my sneakers. And so, all I had was one pair of shoes for everything. And do you know what? It was okay. It was okay. And when I went to Alaska, I was supposed to go to one area. And in that area, they had a particular type of fish that I wanted to catch. So, I packed to catch that kind of fish. Well, when I got to Alaska, they said, "Oh no, no, you're not going there. That's too cushy for you. You gotta go over here." And I went to another area and when I got to that area, lo and behold, the fishing stuff that I had didn't match the fish that were in that locale. And this is for you fisherman. I had one lure that would catch the kind of fish that were in that locale. I used that lure all summer long, caught hundreds of fish, and I took that lure home with me. That's good. Yeah, that's good. But what I'm using that illustration to say is, I have closing in on forty rods and reels at home. I have thousands of lures, but I was perfectly happy with one, all summer long. I have had the privilege of being forced to live simply.

Our passage of Scripture today is about prayer: how to pray and what to pray for. God knows and wants us to have what we need. So, let's take a closer look at this passage. I love the way Luke begins this section. He says, "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he had finished one of his disciples says to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples to pray.'" The first thing I want you to note is before Jesus taught them how to pray, he modeled, showed them that prayer was important. He was in a particular place. His disciples observed him praying, and they said, "Lord, teach us to do that. Teach us to do that." And he does. And he begins teaching them to pray. In essence, he says to them, "I want you to do what I do. I want you to pray like I pray." Have you ever thought about that? Jesus doesn't give them something like, "Okay, well, you guys are not on my level. This is what you guys should do." No, Jesus says, "Pray like I pray." Now, in Matthew's version of this, it's fleshed out a little bit more. We used it just a moment ago. We began by saying, "Our Father." But when Jesus prays in this place, he says, "Start by saying, 'Father.' You can call God what I call God. 'Father, hallowed be Your name.'" In the Bible, names mean something and to know someone's name is to know something about them. When Jesus says, "Father, hallowed be Your name," he is saying, "Father, I know You. I know You." And he's telling his disciples, "You're talking to someone you know." "Father, I know You. Give us what we need. Father, I know You and You know me. Father, I know You and You know what I need. You know me. Give me what I need." (My garage is testimony that I don't know what I need.) "Father, give us what we need and forgive us as we forgive." It is not, "Forgive us because we forgive." Don't think that you can coerce God into forgiving you because you forgive your wife. (Sorry, Babe!) Don't think that God owes you anything. "Forgive as we forgive and guard us from what is evil."

And then Jesus goes into giving an example about a begrudging friend and a pesky neighbor. You know, for years I misinterpreted that story. Years. I thought, "You know, if you bug God enough, if you bug God enough, He'll give you what you want." Some of you are sitting up, going, "You mean it doesn't mean that?" No, it doesn't. So in this example he's saying, "You know, if this friend will get up out of bed and give a friend what they need at midnight, how much more will the loving Father that I have taught you

to pray to, how much more will He give you what you need? How much more will the loving Father give you what you need, if you ask?" Give you what you need; obviously I don't know what I need. But don't be afraid to ask. Jesus says, "Those who ask receive; those who knock will receive. Don't be afraid to ask." One of the questions I get asked most frequently is: "Pastor, should I pray for so and so and thus and such?" And my answer is a universal, "Yes." Why? Because God's not going to give you what you don't need. And God is not going to break God's will. He's not going to sin to give you what you asked for because you asked for it persistently. God desires to give good gifts, not bad; what we need when we need it. Now, some of you have realized this, God's timing is perfect but it can be stressful. That's supposed to be funny, but it's not. I think it's too real to be funny, because God's timing is perfect but it can be stressful. You see, God does not consult my calendar in giving me what I want. God gives me what I need when I need to have it, not what I want when I want it. Dare I say, what is true for individuals is also true for a church. There are things that I have desperately prayed for for us that I think are very urgent. And God is yawning and going, "We'll get there." What we need when we need it. And I love the way Jesus ends this discussion. He says, "If you who are evil give good gifts, good things, to those that you care about, how much more will the loving Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?" Now did you catch what he did there? "Give the Holy Spirit to those who ask." It's not stuff. Jesus says nothing less than, "If you ask, God will give Himself to you: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit." Jesus said, "If you ask, God will give His very self to you."

So, as I see it, you pray about everything because there are some things that God is going to give you whether you ask or not. And there are some things that God is not going to do, no matter how much you beg. And there are some things that God will only do if you ask. And why do we pray about everything? I don't know about you, but my garage is evidence I don't know what to ask for. "Lord, give us what we need. Lord, Father, I know You. You know me and know what I need. Lord, give me what I need." And be content with the answer. Keep asking. It's okay. But be content with the answer. There have been a few times in my life that I have been able to look back and see the whys. You ever been there? Looking back and being able to see why this prayer was answered in this manner and not in the manner I asked. Be content.

I have three axioms that I live my life by and I do my ministry by, and probably the oldest one, the one I had first, was: Trust God like it all depends on God and work like it all depends on you. So, this morning, I want to encourage you to pray about everything and trust that God will give you what you need, as an individual and us as a congregation. Let us pray.

Lord, help us to trust in Your answers. Help us to trust in Your timing. Lord, help us to be content with what You provide. In Jesus' name. Amen.