

**August 1, 2010**  
**Pentecost 10**

*“Lord, Teach Us How to Pray to Our Heavenly Father”*

---

**LUKE 11:1-13**

---

**1** 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.”  
**2** He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread. **4** Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’”  
**5** 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, **6** because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ **7** “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ **8** 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. **9** “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. **10** For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? **12** Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** 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!”

Think for a moment about the different positions and places that we use when we pray. You may fold your hands and bow your head and close your eyes. You pray when you eat. You pray at night when you fall to sleep. You pray in the morning when you wake up. You pray when you come to worship. An elderly man once told me that even in his old age he kneels down every night to pray at his bed just as he did when he was a child.

How we pray and where we pray are not as important as what we pray. The disciples wanted Jesus to teach them what to pray. They watched him and heard him as he prayed to his heavenly Father. When Jesus spoke about his heavenly Father or prayed to him, it was always with great love and devotion. Remember his prayer in the Garden, “Oh Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will, but yours be done.” When Jesus’ enemies heard him speak about his heavenly Father, they wanted to put him to death, because of the intense closeness Jesus displayed in every word he spoke about his Father. It was Jesus who told his fearful followers, “Fear not, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

I am sure that you will agree with me when I say, “We need to improve our prayer life.” We need to have our prayers more focused on the important issues of life related to our heavenly Father and his kingdom. We need to become even bolder in our prayers. This morning we want Jesus to teach us how to pray to our heavenly Father.

**We want Jesus to teach us how to pray bigger prayers**

First we want Jesus to help us pray for the bigger and more important things in life. There is nothing wrong with praying for a parking space in a crowded parking lot, or simply praying, "Lord help me make it through this day." If we listen to what Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer we will discover that we can go to our heavenly Father with more important issues about the kingdom of God.

First, Jesus teaches us to pray to the creator of the universe as our dear Heavenly Father. "He said to them, 'When you pray, say; "Father, hallowed be your name.'" Here I am, so foul and full of sin and undeserving of God's love, and yet I get to go to God, the creator of the universe, and talk to him as if he were my heavenly Father. That privilege is mine and yours, only because Jesus has broken down this huge wall of sin that separates us from our God. Listen to how this is described for us in Galatians 3 where it says, "But God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba Father.'" The Hebrew and Aramaic word, "Abba" is similar to our word, "Daddy" or "Dad" or "Papa."

A few weeks ago we were hiking in Lassen National Park. On the trail was a Jewish family from Israel. Their youngest girl was so excited when she saw the first snow field across the trail, she kept saying in Hebrew, "Abba." She wanted her daddy to come quickly and see the snow that was still on the trail. When I heard her say "Abba," I was reminded of what a privilege it is for us to say, "Abba Father." My wife would end her conversations with her father by saying a prayer that he had taught her in German, "Abba, lieber Vater, erbarme dich, uber mich, kleines Kind." This simple, but beautiful prayer, asks our dear heavenly Father to have compassion on us as his dear children. Think of the closeness that you have with people you love. Jesus teaches us that we have the privilege of being much closer to our heavenly Father when we pray.

And so we pray that our heavenly Father's name might be hallowed or kept hallow. What a truly large and important prayer this is! You want people everywhere to know the heavenly Father the way you know your heavenly Father. You want them to know and believe in the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made to make us children of our heavenly Father. With this prayer you are asking your heavenly Father to help you live a life that glorifies him just as Jesus glorified his Father with everything he said and did. Jesus once said, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." And so we are constantly praying that we might hallow our Father's name as we go about our work, interact with people in the community, and especially with our family members. This includes a spirit of thanksgiving and joy in everything we do as Christians.

Jesus also teaches us to pray for God's kingdom to come with the simple words, "Your kingdom come." Oh, what a powerful and amazing prayer this is. We are praying that God's kingdom might fill the world in which we live and come into the lives of people everywhere. What is meant by the kingdom of God? This past week for my personal devotions, I was reading in the book of Daniel about the dream that Daniel interpreted for King Nebuchadnezzar. In the dream the king saw a statue made of gold, silver, clay and iron. And then he saw a stone smash the statue and become a large mountain that filled with the world. Daniel told the king the statue represented different kingdoms of the world, but the stone that became a large mountain was the kingdom of God that would fill

the earth.

It says of Jesus that he went around preaching about the kingdom of God. As we said earlier, Jesus told his disciples it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. Here is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and he comes to this earth and says, "Let me lay before you the greatest treasure in the world. Let me show you my love for you and what I have done to rescue you. Let me bring you out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light." When you pray "Thy kingdom come" you are praying that this kingdom of love with Jesus as your king might flow into every part of your life and ever fiber of your being. You want this love that Jesus has for people to become a mighty mountain that fills the world.

Jesus teaches more about praying to our heavenly Father with the words: "Give us each day, our daily bread." We pray for daily bread. We ask the Lord to give us what we need in life. We do not pray, "Give us what we want." Think of how often your heavenly Father gives you what you need for each day of your life on this earth.

"Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone sins against us." Think of how often you find yourself praying to your heavenly Father and to Jesus with the simple words, "Father, forgive me" or "Jesus forgive me." This prayer for forgiveness includes the pray that you might show kindness and love and forgiveness to people who have hurt you. Is there someone in your life right now that needs to know you forgive them and love them?

"Lead us not into temptation." What dangerous temptations we face each day! Did you hear about the campers who were attacked by a grizzly bear near Yellowstone National Park? A woman who survived described the horror of waking up with the bear biting down on her arm and heard the sound of her bones breaking. The dangers from temptation that face us each day are far worse than such an attack. Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." So, we find ourselves constantly praying for help and strength to fight against temptation.

Jesus teaches us to pray to our Father for these big blessings in life and to not get discouraged or lose heart. A girl named Jennifer, once came to Sunday school and was baptized. But then she stopped coming. I talked with her and encouraged her to come back to church and Sunday school. She confessed that she had been praying for a horse and Jesus did not answer her prayers, so she was not going to go to church and Sunday school. Remember the Janis Joplin song, "O Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz. All my friends drive Porsches. I must make amends. So, oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz." Who of us has not prayed for little things and forgotten the big things for which Jesus has taught us to pray. "Lord, teach us to pray to our heavenly Father. Teach us by your example and your words."

### **We want Jesus to teach us to pray more boldly**

Now we listen to Jesus teach us to be even bolder in our requests to our heavenly Father, just as he boldly prayed to his Father late into the night. He tells the story of a man who goes to a friend in the middle of the night asking for some bread because a friend of his

has stopped in the middle of the night and is hungry. The man knocks at the door 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." The man was reluctant to stumble out of bed, step on his kids who were sleeping on the floor, and get some bread. Finally, he gives in because the man will not stop knocking at the door.

Have you ever had to deal with a salesperson who calls you on the phone and won't take no for an answer? Have you ever tried to take a nap and had a fly just keep landing on you and keeping you awake? Jesus wants us to know that we are not like pesky flies to our heavenly Father. We are his dear children. He loves to have us come to him with our prayers, again and again and again. Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Ask. Seek. Knock.

Jesus wants you to know that your dear heavenly Father wants to give gifts that are good for you. He draws a comparison to what earthly fathers give their children. What father would give his son a poisonous snake when he asks for a piece of fish? What father would give his child a scorpion when he asks for an egg to eat? We know that parents don't always give their children what is best for them when it comes to toys, or food, or even their affection and love. Not so with our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father gives us the Holy Spirit who helps us see clearly all these blessings that our heavenly Father gives us. The Holy Spirit leads us to pray even more boldly and confidently. How thankful we are to Jesus for this important lesson he has given to us in praying to our heavenly Father. Amen.