

**Pastor Madelynn Lindsey**  
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All You Have To Do Is Ask – Luke 11:1-13

Let us pray: Gracious God - bless now the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts. Breath your Spirit into us and grant that we may hear and in hearing be led in the way you want us to go. Amen.

Do you ever compare our primary teacher of prayer like a vending machine? Think about it. We put in the correct change, make our selection, and get what we want.

"For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." So, we offer the coins of our wants and needs, our beliefs, and our good behavior. We tell God what we want and expect to get what we asked for.

All that works fine until it doesn't. How many times have you put your change in the machine with expectation that you are going to get exactly what you selected?

Look how we respond when that happens. We get mad. We push the button again and again. We hit or kick the machine. We tip it side to side. We did our part and expect it to do its part. Eventually we walk away totally frustrated with nothing to show for our efforts.

It's not so different with prayer. Some will get angry. Some will feel hurt or betrayed, lose faith, even leave the church. I don't have a lot of people coming to ask me, "Why was my prayer answered? Why did I receive exactly what I asked for?" I know my prayer is answered.

Sometimes we ask and receive, search and find, knock and the door opens, but then there are times that our prayers are not answered. Then you want to know why you asked but did not receive, why you searched but did not find, why you knocked but the door never opened. We all wonder why sometimes.

You say, "I prayed hard and constantly. I prayed with words, silence, and tears. With each phone call and update my prayer became more desperate. More coins. I Pushed the button again and again. Please, please, please Father, hear my prayer."

I don't know why some prayers seem to be answered and others seem to go unanswered. I don't have any good answers or explanations but I have heard some really bad ones. "You didn't pray hard enough." "You didn't have enough faith." "You were asking for the wrong thing." "It's all a mystery and

someday we'll understand." "Everything happens for a reason." "Something better is coming." I can neither believe nor accept any of that.

As Jesus' disciples came to him asking them how to pray, he not only gave them the words that has become known to us as the Lord's Prayer, but he gave them the attitude with which they should pray. You and I, when we pray to God, we should come confidently and persistently because we know that God is not going to reject us, but he will hear and answer our prayers in a way that is best for us.

Jesus made a habit of praying, and doing so in a way that people knew that's what he was doing. He set aside time in his day to speak with his heavenly Father in the way that we might schedule time to touch base with our spouse, children, or coworkers. For Jesus, prayer was vital, not just in difficult times, but always, for keeping his perspective set where it needed to be.

After he was done praying, Jesus' disciples came to him with a request. "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John the Baptist also taught his disciples." They knew Jesus knew how to pray, so who better to teach them? After all, even John the Baptist taught his disciples. Why couldn't Jesus to teach them?

And so, Jesus obliges. He gives them a model prayer that keeps things in perspective. The beauty of the Lord's Prayer as it's recorded here in Luke's Gospel or elsewhere in Scripture, or the collection we use regularly in worship is the wonderful balance it has. It addresses every true need we have and does so in the right proportion.

Our inclination is often to pray about the here and now the things we feel like we need to survive in this life. The Lord's Prayer does not neglect physical blessings, but requests it in just one of the petitions as it asks our God for our daily bread. Along with the physical blessings of daily bread, God has us pray for much more important spiritual and eternal blessings—

that God's name continues to be respected and kept holy; that the kingdom of his grace be established in the hearts of many people; that we see our need for forgiveness from God for continued sins and find the strength to forgive others like we've been forgiven.

All of these things help us keep that eternal focus. The Lord's Prayer focuses us in on those things that make up a healthy prayer life. Notice what is absent from Jesus' model prayer. There is no petition that pleads, "Please do not hurt us!" In Jesus' direction on prayer there is the presupposition that God always has our best interests in mind.

That's why we pray for daily bread, not yearly bread, because we can assume that each day he will provide for what we need and we don't have to hope we've caught him on a "good day" and then get all that we think we'll need for a long while.

Even the very address, "**Father,**" speaks volumes about our relationship with God. He is our Father in the most perfect, flawless way possible. That wasn't always the case, of course. There was a time where we couldn't pray to God or have any notion that he'd ever listen to us.

Our sins separated us from God so that he wouldn't listen to us and he wouldn't answer us and he wouldn't even hear us. That sin separated us from God and would lead to us to be separated from him eternally in hell. It was a situation that we couldn't fix. No matter what we did, we couldn't fix it. Jesus did.

He lived and died to fix our problem and restore this relationship between mankind and our Creator. In his death and resurrection, he paid for sin, endured our hell, and gave us the unwavering confidence of eternal life. Our sins are gone, which now means that God is no longer deaf to our prayers nor are we mute before him.

We can approach him, not as an employee approaches his employer, nor as the servant approaches the king, but as the young child approaches their daddy. As we approach our Father, Jesus tells a story about man coming to his friend's home in the middle of the night to give a picture of *how* we should approach God.

As the man comes to the house of his friend, his friend's reaction is not the best. But notice the persistence that this man shows. He knows that his friend loves him and would do anything for him. But this request to get out of bed and get him what he needs is one that is difficult to overcome.

But the man knows his friend's heart and knows that really he wants to help him so rather than just slinking away after the initial rejection, he presses on. And thus, his friend doesn't just get out of bed and help him because he's the man's friend, but because he is relentless in his request and in his need.

When I worked for a bankruptcy lawyer, he taught me a very valuable lesson. When people would call the office for a status on their case, my boss would sometime say he's too busy to talk to them. But the person who called several times a day would get his attention and my boss said, "a squeaky wheel gets attention." That was a good lesson that I use myself at times.

You do not pray to a God who will brush you off because he's warm under the covers and doesn't want to get out into the cold. You do not pray to God who will become irate with your requests because you keep asking for things he cannot provide or do. You do not pray to God who is selfish and hard-hearted. You pray to the God who loves you. You pray to the God who has your best interests in mind.

If God didn't withhold his own Son for you, but sacrificed him to take away your sins, is there anything that he won't do that will be good for you? Surely he will give you everything you need for this life and the eternal life to come! That confidence means that you can be persistent.

We saw an example of that in Abraham's pleading with God in our First Lesson from Genesis. He did not relent but kept confidently coming to God knowing that God would answer in a way that was to everyone's best eternal good. That's the kind of confidence and persistence you can and should have when you pray to your heavenly Father.

You know that when you ask for bread, or a fish, or an egg, he's not going to give you a rock, a snake, or a scorpion. He's going to give you what you need, even if you don't recognize immediately that you need it.

Be confident and persistent in your prayers, knowing that no matter what you ask God for, he's going to answer according to his will. Be persistent, knowing that God wants you to trust that he's going to work for your good. Be joyful, knowing that come to a God who loves you, has forgiven you, and will provide for you now as he's provided for you eternally—perfectly. Thanks be to God!

I remember a time that another man prayed on a Thursday night. He prayed with words, sweat, and blood. "Please, please, please Father." They crucified him the following afternoon. Ask. Search. Knock. I don't understand how prayer works but I know this. It is not about the coins. It is not a mechanical process. It is not a transaction. It is not the transmission of information to God.

In the midst of not knowing or understanding maybe the most and the best we can do is to echo that disciple's request, "Lord, teach us to pray." We are always beginners, always learning to pray. Jesus' response is not an explanation of prayer or how it works. He does not offer a formula or magic words. He does not give us the correct change for the vending machine. Instead Jesus teaches about who and how God is.

God is holy and we are his divine children, holy sons and daughters. That's a given, a reality, before we even open our mouths and before we ever offer our coins or make a selection. The relationship already exists. That's how Jesus begins his teaching. Prayer is about relationship and

presence. We're not telling God something that God does not know. We are reminding ourselves of what already is, always has been, and always will be.

If prayer, as Jesus teaches it, really is all about relationship and presence then there is only one answer to every prayer. God. I don't just mean God answers our prayer but that God is the answer; God's presence, life, love, beauty, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, wisdom, justice, mercy. God gives God's self as the answer to our every prayer. All we have to do is ask. Amen.

Let us pray: God of infinite horizons, by your Spirit you are opening new places for our journey as your people. Give us a newborn's eyes to see your kingdom. Touch our lips to be the voice of grace and forgiveness. Use our hands and our feet with a passion of your testimony till in harmony we grow together into the fullness of your Christ. Amen.