

20th March 2022

Bible reading: Luke 11:1-13

Prayer for the Spirit's Power

Kay sends her apologies for not being able to share the word this morning, but we will reschedule. Please cover her and the family in prayer.

This morning I will address the theme of prayer, but concentrate on verses 5-13. After Jesus responds to the disciple's request to teach them to pray, He continues his teaching on prayer with a parable to motivate us to freely and boldly approach God in prayer. I believe this parable is meant to teach us to not be hesitant in approaching God, but to boldly and shamelessly approach God because God is not only our king but he is also our father.

1. God is inviting us to pray boldly and shamelessly (v5-8)

Jesus starts with a question, '*Who would go to a neighbour at midnight and wake him up to get some bread for an unexpected visitor?*' The answer is no one wants to be in an awkward situation like that.

Let me remind of the context in the Ancient East culture. It was common to travel at night to avoid the heat of the day. Bread was made daily so it would not get stale in the desert heat. It was custom in that day that house doors would open in the morning and remain open all day. If the door was shut, it was a sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed.

A poorer Palestinian house consisted of one room with one little window. In one corner a stove burned all night with the family huddled around it sleeping on mats to keep warm. On top of that, it was common to bring their animals and livestock into the house at night. For the friend to get up would wake up both the family and the animals.

Yet the one seeking bread was not deterred. He kept on asking; he kept on seeking; he kept on knocking. Because of the boldness and the shamelessness of the one asking, the friend gives him what he needs. The word translated boldness or persistence means boldness over a long period of time but it also means shameless, almost audacious. Think about the situation. It is not acceptable to knock on the neighbour's door when it is shut, it is in the middle of the night, the whole house will wake up, yet the guy won't give up. The point is, that the one who is bold and shameless in approaching God, is the one who will get answers to prayer.

2. God is inviting us to pray persistently (v9-10)

Jesus drives home his point. He gives them three commands: keep asking and you will receive, keep seeking and you will find, keep knocking, and the door will be opened.

The first, ask, is an invitation to pray. He is inviting us to pray when we do not have the resources for ministry. James tells us that we do not have because we do not ask; we have to ask to receive. His point is that since this man asked his reluctant neighbour and received, you can be sure that when you ask God, who is generous and gracious and loving, you will receive.

The second command, seek, is an invitation to seek God and his kingdom. This word is commonly used of seeking God. The thought is that if you will seek God, you will find him, and he will pour out his blessing on you. Seek and do not give up.

The third word, knock, is an invitation to gain entrance into God's presence. It is an invitation to come into God's presence. All three words are present active commands, meaning we are to continue asking, to continue seeking, and to continue knocking.

3. God is inviting us to pray expectantly (v11-13)

Jesus not only invites us to pray boldly and shamelessly; he not only invites us to pray persistently; Jesus also invites us to pray expectantly. '*If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will God give you good gifts to those who ask.*'

Father God, who is loving and gracious, only gives good gifts. Jesus is challenging us to be 'believing believers', or "faith filled followers of Christ". This whole passage is to get us to be radical prayers. It is to get us to pray shamelessly, persistently and expectantly.

Do you live with the expectation that your Father loves to give you the kingdom? Don't just pray once and give up, or don't just pray and be passive. Too often we are waiting for an answer and God is waiting for us to act to answer our prayers. Pray and go for it, believing God will answer you.

So, how do we live with expectancy in prayer that Jesus gives us here and deal with unanswered prayer? One reason is that our heavenly Father only gives good gifts. If our child asks us for something that is not good for them, will we give it to them? I hope not. Sometimes God delays because it is not good for us now; or he says no because he wants to give us something better.

Jesus closes his teaching on prayer with a practical example. So how much more will God give us the Holy Spirit for those who ask him? He is talking about the coming of the Spirit, empowerment for life and ministry.

I want to talk about my heart for us as a body. My heart's desire is for us to be a people who experience the fullness of the power of the word, and the fullness of the Spirit's power. I want us to be a people who expect God to answer prayer; that God moves when we pray; that we will be bold and audacious in our prayers.

Concerning the Holy Spirit this is what I envision. I am praying for that God the Spirit so moves in our hearts that we have compassion for lost people, and the boldness to step out believing God will meet us there in the moment when we speak.

I envision us praying that God will open doors for us and then stepping out believing He will back us up.

I envision that we pray and then live with the expectation that he will open the door and that when we are presented with a door, we will knock and see if the door opens. We can pray and ask but at some point, we need to take advantage of the opportunities God presents before us. Boldness does not just fall into our laps so that we speak; boldness comes as we exercise our wills and start asking questions, believing that God will provide in the moment. Nothing will happen unless we step out; boldness fills the void between the first step of faith and the act of sharing. I am praying that God the Spirit will not only move on us but that He will move in Montrose so that we see hearts that are soft and responsive to the gospel.

I am praying that God the Spirit will move more powerfully in ministry towards each other. I want us to see God heal people more regularly, I want to see the oppressed freed more regularly, that God answers prayer as we pray. If we do not pray; we will not see God move. If we do not avail ourselves to ministry, we will not see God move in our lives?

I am praying that God the Spirit will shape us more powerfully. I want to see us hungering for the Spirit's power in righteousness and holiness. I want us to be sensitive to our sin and seeing God shape and change those things that have hindered us for so long. I want us to see people overcome long standing struggles.

It is no accident that Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit when he was praying. It is no accident that the disciples were empowered when they were praying. One of Luke's constant themes is that God moves in response to prayer.

Jesus did not die for us so that we could come here and celebrate week in and week out and not be impacted or impact our world.

Jesus died for our sins, rose for our sanctification, and he empowered us with the Holy Spirit so that we would impact our world.

Do you long to be clothed with power to impact Montrose? Brothers and sisters as authentic followers of Jesus, this is where the rubber meets the road:

Will you step out and pray boldly and shamelessly?

Will you pray until something happens?

Will you pray with expectation?

Prayer: