

The embarrassed host

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[0 : 00] We shall now turn to the passage of scripture which we read together. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 11. We shall read again verse 8.

I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

Amen. This chapter begins by telling us that Jesus was in a certain place praying.

Luke particularly likes to remind us that Jesus often prayed. Time and time again we come across these words in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus was praying. He wishes to encourage us to spend more time praying ourselves by the example of Christ.

[1 : 07] If we did spend more time praying we'd be very different Christians. Far stronger Christians, far brighter witnesses, far holier, far more godly, far more useful.

If we'd spend more time praying our churches would be different too. There would be more life, more vitality in our churches. Our churches would be growing and seeing more blessing.

Our land would be blessed also. When Jesus finished praying, one of his disciples, noticing the important place that prayer had in his life, and noticing too the delight that Jesus had in prayer, asked him, Lord, teach us to pray.

Lord, teach us to pray. As John taught his disciples. This disciple could see very clearly the great pleasure that Christ had in prayer.

The delight that it gave him. The enjoyment that it brought to him. And so he says, Lord, teach us to pray. That we might share in this good thing.

[2 : 21] That we might have this blessing too. And so Jesus says, When ye pray, say our Father which art in heaven.

Jesus gives them a prayer that they can use when they are praying. We find this prayer also in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 6.

And there it's introduced with the words, After this manner, pray ye. Jesus was giving a pattern. A model, as it were. For our prayers. After this manner, pray ye. Following this balance.

And what a balance there is in that prayer. First praying for the glory of God. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth.

[3 : 26] Your name be glorified. Exalted and adored. And then, the last three petitions. Concerned with us. And with our need. Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins. Lead us not into temptation. Sadly, that balance is often missing from our prayers. Too often, our prayers are, Give me this.

Give me that. Do this for me. And we forget the very important place that the glory of God should have in our prayers. Half of the Lord's prayer is concerned with the glory of God, with the exalting of God, with the praising and worshipping of his name.

It's not enough for us to come along, as it were, with our own personal shopping list to God. We must be concerned. We must be concerned to glorify him, to adore him, to worship him, to exalt him.

After then, this manner, pray ye. Jesus was giving a pattern. The words that are used here in introducing the Lord's prayer are, When ye pray, say.

[4 : 36] These words should be used by us. They should be our prayer from time to time. When ye pray, use the Lord's prayer.

It's right for us to use this prayer. And yet we mustn't be slavishly tied to the exact words that are here. For you notice that the wording of the Lord's prayer in this passage is slightly different from the wording that occurs in Matthew's Gospel.

Obviously, in the early New Testament church, there were at least two forms of the Lord's prayer current. The important thing isn't the exact words, but rather the ideas and the balance.

When you pray then, say. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth. As in heaven, so on earth. And after having given them this prayer, Jesus gives them some further teaching on the subject of prayer.

[5 : 53] And he begins with a parable of the embarrassed host. And I would like us to deal particularly with this this morning.

The essential meaning of the parable is, pray to God. Pray earnestly. And he will give you what you need.

First, we have here a person who's in a very real need. In hot countries, such as the Middle East, it was sometimes common for people to travel before sunrise or before the sun got hot, and then to travel in the evening, rather than traveling in the heat of the day, when it would be very difficult because of the intensity of the sun.

And so, a man arrives at this individual's door, late at night. He arrives from a long journey, and he's hungry.

And the host is embarrassed, because he's got nothing in the cupboards, nothing to give him. The man is hungry, he needs food, the shops are shut, and there's no food to give to this man.

[7 : 24] So here we find the host embarrassed. He's in need. That's our starting point.

We have many needs too. All of us have needs. There are some of you here today who are unconverted. You have a great need.

You have a need of forgiveness, of peace with God. You have a need that God would have mercy upon you, and forgive you your sins, and accept you, that you'll be converted, that you'll be saved.

And that's a great need. What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? No matter what other needs you have, they are nothing in comparison to this one.

If you don't have Christ as your saviour, then you're really poor. There might be some here today who truly look to Christ as their saviour, trust in him, and follow him, seek to follow him, and yet are lacking assurance.

[8 : 45] You're wanting to know that you are a Christian, to be sure, to be conscious of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with your spirit that you are a child of God, that inner testimony of the spirit, assuring you, and encouraging you.

There might be some here today who are being tempted. Satan is very close to you. You're very much aware of him.

You're needing strength to overcome temptation. Or perhaps you have already fallen, and you need to be restored. Perhaps you have sinned. Sinned openly.

Maybe fallen away and grown cold, and you need God to bring you back. We all need help in witnessing. We need help to be fruitful, to be useful, so that we wouldn't be like the barren fig tree, cumberers of the ground.

It's so easy to be cumberers of the ground, just filling in space. And God is coming, and he's looking at us year after year, and he's saying, where's the fruit? What are you doing for me?

[10 : 01] How are you serving me? We're supposed to be doing his work, bearing fruit for him, doing good works. And what are we doing? What are we achieving? We need God's help, the help of his Holy Spirit, to bear fruit.

Maybe some of you today are in trouble. Maybe some serious illness. Maybe failing, having failed exams.

Maybe some other big problem, family problem. You are in need, in need of God's grace, to cope with trouble.

Maybe there's some here today, who are looking for guidance. You've got a big decision to make. And you're wondering, how can I make that decision?

What am I going to do? There's two pathways, perhaps in front of you. And if you take that step, what if you take the wrong step?

[11 : 07] And the implications seem so great. What am I to do? I want to be sure. We need guidance. Maybe you're concerned about relatives, about their conversion, their growth in grace, a friend.

We all have a concern too, do we not, for revival. That God would come to his church, and bless his church. That the church would grow, and be strong, and be a great influence, for good in our land. We think of the missionaries too, their needs. There are so many things, so many needs that we have. And Jesus too had needs. That was one of the reasons, why he prayed.

He had needs too. He needed help, to perform miracles. When he performed miracles, we're told that, virtue went out of him. He needed the strength, the power, to perform miracles.

He needed help, to preach, the help of the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel, to the poor. He needed grace, to resist the devil.

[12 : 25] He was constantly, being pestered by Satan. He needed God's help, in order to resist the devil. He needed God's grace, to enable him to drink, that cup, that bitter cup, of sufferings, which it was essential, for him to drink, if his people would be saved.

You see him there, in Gethsemane, in really earnest prayer. If it be possible, let this cup, pass from me. Abba, Father, it's so difficult, it's so bitter, it's so horrible.

How can I face it? And by God's grace, he comes to the place, where he says, the cup, which the Father, hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Of course I shall. He needed grace constantly, the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had needs, you and I have needs. And in this passage, in this parable, we meet a man, with a very real need, the embarrassed host.

Secondly, he goes to his friend, for help. The embarrassed host, runs to his friend's house.

[13 : 53] He doesn't like borrowing. We don't like, borrowing from people. We don't like, bothering people. We don't like, asking for help.

And certainly, we wouldn't like to, to go to them, late at night. Worse than that, the lights are out.

The door is barred. The man and his family, are obviously in bed.

How can we possibly, bother him, disturb him, get the whole family up? And yet, this man is desperate.

He's in a very, embarrassing situation. He's had, a friend coming to him, a friend who's tired, who's hungry, and he has nothing to give him.

And in his desperation, he's shameless. He's bold. He's banging on, the door of his friend's house, in the middle of the night.

[14 : 55] He's importunate. And this word, importunate, means, boldness, earnestness, urgency, persistence.

There are several possible ways, of translating, verses 5 to 8.

As you know, as many of you know at least, there's no, punctuation marks, in the original Greek.

And these words, verses 5 to 8, are translated, in several different ways.

In the authorised version, for example, the version we have before, is here. You see that verses 5 and 6, are a question, with a question mark, coming at the end of verse 6.

But the trouble is, that the answer, seems to be missing. Verses, 7 and 8, seem to, contradict one another. The passage, doesn't flow very well.

[15 : 58] The New International Version, has a different approach. It begins, verse 5, with the word, suppose.

Instead of, which of you, shall have a friend, suppose, one of you has a friend. The argument, that the NIV uses, is that, the question, has become lost, because the sentence, is prolonged.

But then, that in itself, is not terribly satisfactory. It's hard for us, to think of the Holy Spirit, forgetting what question, he had begun.

What question, he was asking. The best translation, of these three verses, is to be found, in the RSV, Revised Standard Version, which takes, verses 5 to 7, as one, long question.

The question mark, should come, at the end, of verse 7. It's one, long, rhetorical question. And I accept that, because, the unit, begins, with a question, which of you, shall have a friend?

[17 : 23] The question, includes, verse 7, which indeed, is the climax, of the question. It's a culmination, of it all. Which of you, shall have a friend?

And he, from within, shall say, trouble me not, the door is now shut, my children, are with me in bed. I cannot rise, and give you. Which of you, shall have such a friend? A very strange friend.

Who, if you went to them, at midnight, wouldn't bother, getting up to help you. And then, the answer, to the question, is given in verse 8.

Given by Jesus himself, in verse 8. I say unto you, though he will not, rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his opportunity, he will rise, and give him, as many, as he needeth. So what we have here then, is, a question, a long rhetorical question, starting in verse 5, ending, the end of verse 7, answered by Christ, in verse 8.

[18 : 28] This man, knows that his neighbour, has food, and that his neighbour, is able to help him. He comes to him, for help, even although, it's the middle of the night.

even although, he's embarrassed, although it's difficult, yet he still comes to him. Now I wonder, do you have a friend?

A friend, to whom you can come, at any time, in any situation, whatever, the circumstances. A friend, to whom you can come, even when you're embarrassed, by your own sins, and your backslidings.

The night, of your own backslidings, as it were. And yet, this is what Christ, is talking about here. A great friend.

God is our friend. That is, if we are his people, if our faith is in Christ, God is our friend. This man, goes to his friend, for help.

[19 : 38] What about you? We've spoken about, some of the needs, that you have. Maybe you have today, some great burden. Something that's really, worrying you, and troubling you.

Something that's, perplexing you. Really bothering you. Do you know the friend, that you can come to?

God, is a friend, to his people. And the great thing, about him is, that he's always, good food, in his cupboards.

Whatever our need, he can supply it, out of the riches, of his glory, by Christ Jesus. All power, in heaven and in earth, is given unto me, says Christ.

I have all the resources. Come. No matter, what your situation, no matter, what the devil, is telling you, in order to keep you back.

[20 : 49] Oh, you can't go. It's too late. The lights are out. The door is barred. Remember, it's the devil, that's saying that.

Come. He goes to his friend, for help. Thirdly, he receives, all that he needs.

Just picture the scene. Think of the house, a one-roomed house, the man, his family, have gone to bed.

The children are in their beds. The man and his wife are in bed. And suddenly, in the darkness of the night, they hear a knocking at the door.

And a shout. Friend, are you there? Lend me, lend me three loaves. Somebody has come to see me.

[21 : 52] Somebody has come on a long journey. They're hungry, and I have nothing to give me, to give them. Friend, lend me three loaves. Now, he might think in his heart, well, dear me, he could have come some other time.

My children are with me in bed. He might think, well, if I get up, if I take the big bolt off the door, I'm going to wake the whole house.

Perhaps my children will be awake all night, and I won't be able to get them over to sleep again.

Even although that passing thought might cross his mind, yet, because he is his friend, and because of the importunity of the one who has come to him, he will rise and give to him everything that he needs.

Despite the difficulties, he will get up, because he is his friend. What friend is there who wouldn't get up to help somebody who was really in need?

Although it was the middle of the night. A friend will help us in an emergency.

[23 : 10] And further, because of his importunity. I used to think that importunity meant here because the man kept pestering him, kept banging on his door right throughout the night.

Something like a child calling out for a drink in the middle of the night. And you know that the child doesn't need the drink. And yet, in the end, you get up and give the child a drink just in order to have peace and to get to sleep again.

But that's not the idea that's here. The idea behind importunity is rather one of urgency.

Earnestness. The shamelessness of banging on this man's door in the middle of the night.

Yes, there is something of the idea of persistence. persistence. But also the idea of earnestness. Of real need. He rises and he gives him all that he needs.

And Jesus applies this. Verse 9. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

[24 : 21] Come to the heavenly friend. Ask. Ask. Whatever you need. Ask. Whatever your problem. Ask.

Whatever's troubling you. Ask. And it shall be given. Seek and seek is a bit stronger. It involves action. It involves looking for an answer.

Seek and ye shall find. And knock is even stronger still. Knock on the door of heaven. Waken heaven with your cry.

Let your cry be earnest and from the depths of your heart. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Keep on knocking.

Persist in it. But you won't have to keep on knocking for long at the gate of heaven before you'll get an answer. Before you call I will answer says God.

[25 : 27] Yes even before you call I will answer. God hears God answers and look in these two verses verses 9 and 10 we have six promises that God will answer our prayers.

Six promises. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

For everyone that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Six times Christ here is assuring us if we pray we will receive an answer.

He will hear. Recently I was talking to a young woman who seems to have been converted and she was telling me how various prayers had been answered.

Prayers that she had been making. But then she said there's one thing one really important thing I've been praying about and God doesn't seem to be answering it.

[26 : 40] doesn't seem to be bothering and I can't understand this. She had been praying that God would lead her into a certain job and this hadn't happened.

And she was perplexed. Why? I've prayed to him and he hasn't given me the guidance that I was looking for. He hasn't answered.

But the more I listened to her the more I could see that God had been answering her prayer. Because God doesn't always give us what we want.

He gives us what we need. He doesn't always give us what we want because if he did then we would be like spoiled children. A child that can ask anything of their parents and gets everything they want then they're spoiled.

and we would destroy ourselves by asking for things which weren't for our good. Things which we would use just to consume on our own lusts.

[27 : 48] Sometimes God says to us in answer to our prayers wait a bit. I believe that's what God was saying to this woman. Wait. You've got to learn some things first.

You need some preparation first. You need to be established and confirmed first. And sometimes God says in answer to our prayers he says no because it's not for your good.

It's not something that would be beneficial to you. But God always hears our prayers. He always answers and he always gives us what we need.

My God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. That's Paul saying there that God will supply all your need.

You haven't got one need but God will supply it. Everything you need is supplied by God. God the Christian lacks no good thing.

[28 : 56] Everything you need remember that. Sometimes hard to believe it that you haven't got one need but you haven't. As a child of God God provides you with every single thing you need.

God is here presented to us as our friend. And then Jesus the friend who supplies our needs but then Jesus goes on and he talks of God as our father.

A son asks for bread of his father will the father give him something useless a stone. The son asks for a fish will the father give him something harmful a serpent.

The son asks for an egg. Will the father give him a scorpion with a sting in its tail that could kill him? No. Even you, you sinful fathers give good things to your children.

How much more then? Will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

[30 : 07] And if we get the Holy Spirit we've got everything. The Holy Ghost he does everything for us. If we have the Holy Spirit we'll be converted because that's what conversion is.

The Holy Spirit coming into our lives born of the Spirit transformed by the Spirit. If we have the Holy Spirit we'll grow in grace we'll become holy.

That's what the Spirit does. That's why he's called the Holy Spirit. Not because he's holier than the other two persons in the Trinity but because his work particularly is to make us holy.

The Holy Spirit. We want to be fruitful. The Spirit makes us bear the fruit of the Spirit. We want to see people converted.

The Holy Spirit will work through us through our witness and testimony to their conversion. We want guidance.

[31 : 09] The Spirit will lead us. We want help to cope with life. If we have the Holy Spirit we'll cope. A little later on in this gospel we come across another parable.

parable of the unjust judge. And a widow woman who comes to this judge asking for help.

Asking to be delivered from someone who was oppressing her. Avenge me of mine adversary. And the judge says well give me a bribe. And the woman has nothing to give him.

And so he sends her away. Then he thinks to himself this woman is going to keep on coming back. She's going to keep on asking me for help.

She's going to tire me. And so the unjust judge gives to the woman, to the widow, what she requires. And shall not God avenge his own elect speedily?

[32 : 22] If the unjust judge gives to the widow woman what she wants, how much more? Your loving friend, your loving father, your loving God will avenge you speedily, will deliver you speedily from all that oppresses you, will come to your aid and to your salvation.

Ask and you shall receive. Are you unconverted today? Have your sins been forgiven? Do you know God as your friend and your father?

Ask and it shall be given you. Ask for Christ. Ask God to come into your life. And he will come. That's his promise. The reason why you're unconverted today is because you don't want to be converted. Because you won't ask to be converted, to be saved.

ask and you shall receive. Fellow Christian, whatever's a problem to you today, whatever's worrying you, ask and it shall be given you.

[33 : 35] Let us pray. Gracious God, we pray that thou would help us to ask, that thou would help us to seek, that thou would help us to knock, that thou would make us aware of our own need.

For sadly, oh Lord, so often we are blind to our need. If only we were convicted of our need, then, oh Lord, we could come.

Do thou convict us of our need? And do thou enable us to come? Grant, oh Lord, God, that thou wouldst hear our prayers, whatever we're praying for today.

And each of us here have different prayers. Hear our prayers and give to us just what we need. Lord, we don't want things that will harm us, things that will not be helpful or useful, but give to us what we need.

And forgive us for our sins, for Jesus' sake. Amen.