

Luke 11:1-13
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 27, 2025

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week, Christ lovingly chastised our desires to supplant sitting at the feet of Jesus with our own earthly idols, and he promised to safeguard the good portion of His Word and Sacrament for all who, like Mary, come to rest in his visitation and receive their share in it.

The natural result of that is a confidence to call upon Him who graces us with such marvelous things. If He defends our share in a heavenly portion that can be rivaled by no trite earthly anxieties and worldly idols, and if we recognize that He alone is the true God apart from whom we ought not expect or even seek any good thing, then why would we not pray to the one true God who loves those He not only created, but redeemed and baptized as His dear adopted sons: “What father... if [a] son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”

Though, in our reading, our attention is immediately (and understandably) drawn to the prayer our Lord taught us to pray, let’s not overlook the verses that follow... for Jesus even compares and

contrasts the divine and earthly familial relationships... for the earthly familial relationships were created to, and were expected to, echo that divine relationship.

In other words, fathers, for various reasons, if the generation is going to pray to the Father in heaven, much of its faith and confidence to do so depends on looking at you. And that means, men, rather than wasting energies fighting an earthly battle against societal feminism, we ought learn that the answer is not a pendulum swing to hyper-masculinity (an equally societal construct that will equally end in societal destruction); but the answer is faith in the Christ whom God has sent and thus a boldness to pray and to teach our families to pray.

Though the central unity of all society is the marriage relationship – husbands and wives – Jesus points to another relationship in our text to teach the relationship that is ours with God. Fathers have a special bond with their sons, much as mothers do with their daughters. Mothers are to have a special bond with their daughters as they hand down from one generation to the next the true beauty of woman, of how God made her to rejoice in her unique beauty as an echo of the Church and the Church's divinely-given ability as the lovely bride of Christ to bring children into all the blessing and benefits of God's love. What joy and divine blessing for the mother handing down this wondrous truth to her daughter and,

more generally, one generation of Christian women handing down this truth to the next generation of Christian women.

Likewise, fathers ought have a special bond with their sons – not based merely on sports or hunting or computers or revving engines – but based on the Word of God; for it is for one generation of men the divine privilege and responsibility to hand down the faith to the next generation of men; and it is for the younger generation of men the divine privilege and responsibility to safeguard the faith which has been entrusted to them for the sake of their households and for the generations to follow.

So, fathers, if you have refused ...especially in the presence of your sons... to be the son who asks the heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit, how do you expect that the children who ask you for good things will learn to have confidence in the true heavenly Father whom – by Jesus' own analogy – your life is meant to echo and confess? If you have not prayed up through yesterday, repent, rejoice in God's forgiveness in Christ, and desire to do better. If you struggle to pray today, repent, rejoice in God's forgiveness in Christ, be strengthened by the Sacrament, and desire to do better. But, if you will not pray tomorrow, be ashamed before your families that you are so embarrassed of your God that you will not appeal to Him. Men, we don't have to be good at praying... for no father gives a fish to his son because his son was good at asking, but because the father loves him and meets the imperfect request with generosity. So, we

need not pray to *impress* God, our wives, or our children. But, we need to pray because we are sons of God... and if we want our children to learn from us, we ought not be too proud as men to still be seen as the children who ask the heavenly Father for all good things.

Consider Abraham's prayer in our Old Testament Reading. Why is it recorded for us? Perhaps an example of impudence, persistence? But, why so persistent? Not because God is *reluctant* to answer prayer... for, in our reading, Jesus *contrasts* the neighbor frustrated by the knocking when he's already in bed... contrasts that with the heavenly Father always awake to safeguard and eager to bless. Does the Psalmist not joyfully confess in the 3rd psalm, "To the LORD I cry aloud, and He answers me from His holy mountain. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me." And do we not pray in the Catechism's Evening Prayer that our God would remain watchful and "keep us safely this night?" Again, Jesus *contrasts* the *wicked* fathers – even *they* know how to give good things! – contrasts them with the *heavenly* Father... in His righteousness and compassion, will He not give even the Holy Spirit, as Jesus elsewhere promises, "I will ask the Father, and He will send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth."

Instead, consider how our Gospel text, combined with last week's, is an expounding of that beloved verse found right in the

heart of it all: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

- “Ask, and it *will* be given you” – isn’t that the son asking the father for a fish with confidence his father will reply for his good?
- “Seek, and you *will* find” – Last week, how far did Mary have to go to find the good portion she sought?... just to the feet of Jesus. How far do we go to find those elusive promises of earth we seek – even just a little “R & R” ... not unlike Martha, whose anxieties and desire for earthly answers only took her far away from the Christ so close at hand to bless, “Come to me, you who are weary and heavy laden; I will give you rest.”
- “Knock and it *will* be opened to you” – Isn’t that the image of our Lord never needing to be roused from sleep, but always alert to our need and quick to bless?

So, back to Abraham. Why does the Old Testament Reading highlight the repetition and persistence of his requests? Did he fear the Lord would not answer? No, rather persistence because, though the Lord had already answered the prayer once, Abraham knew Him to be *such* a gracious God that the prayer could be amended again and again, and the All-powerful God was still gentle and merciful to hear and answer the prayer.

How much does God love to receive our prayer! Every earthly father knows, there is nothing better in fatherhood than having children confident to ask for your blessings. Fathers know the difference between children who demand because they are spoiled

brats versus those who ask in doubtful cynicism versus those who humbly, respectfully, but confidently come to their father. Is such an earthly relationship not merely a shadow of the true relationship that is ours as children of the heavenly Father?

Consider that in your households: The heavenly Father does not delight in being an authoritarian, nor in being his children's best friend. Neither should earthly fathers be an authoritarian nor desire to be their sons' best buddy... but should raise them up in the awe and reverence of the Lord, the daily life of which includes appealing to Him in humility and confidence for help in every distress and for every blessing. As the Large Catechism says, "We are ... to look to Him and expect from Him nothing but good!... [He] gives us body [and] life... preserves us from misfortune... delivers and rescues us." For, if fathers who are not holy know how to give good things to their children, guard and protect them... how much more will the heavenly Father give the very best – indeed, the Holy Spirit himself – to those who ask?

Yes, more than good things, God grants us His Holy Spirit. What earthly father just wants his son to ask him for stuff? Rather, he wants his son to ask him for wisdom, for guidance, for the right understanding of truth and life in this world. In the same way, our prayer to the heavenly Father is not merely for 'stuff,' though He generously encourages us to pray even for daily bread. But, in addition to the *First* Article of the Creed (creation 'stuff'), He teaches

us to desire and pray for, and He promises to grant us the *Third* Article of the Creed (the work of the Holy Spirit). What greater “good thing” can be given... what greater treasure than a portion and share in the Word of Christ, and thus, in the Holy Spirit who works through that Word.

Now, why does Jesus imply that the gift of *the Holy Spirit* is best? Why does Jesus not say, “the Father will give even His *only begotten Son* for those who ask”?

Answer? The Son has been given for all, not only for those who ask. The Christ has come and fulfilled all righteousness and fulfilled all the prophecies that spoke God’s promises of redemption in the Messiah. That is done and need not be prayed for. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift that flows from the work of Christ to those baptized in and, therefore believing Christ’s merit and salvation. The gift of the third article of the Creed is the gift that flows from the second article of the Creed. So then, the certainty of the First Article (“good things”) and the certainty of the Third article (the Holy Spirit and His work) all depend on the central history of the Second Article – “come, let us fix our eyes on Christ Jesus.” St Paul: “We preach Christ crucified.”

Did Jesus, knowing and perfectly desiring His Father’s holy will, not rejoice to tell the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit from the Father... that the Father and the Son would together send the Holy Spirit to bring all the benefits and blessings of God to

you? When you were baptized, you received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And, as He has made residence in your heart, your appeal to the Father is that the Spirit will continue to employ the sacred means of Word and Sacrament to point us to Christ, proclaim to us Christ, feed us Christ... that we may forever rejoice in and cling to our share with our divine brother and his inheritance.

Do such promises sound too good to be true? But, what else has he *already* done for you, which even this morning you confessed to be the truth of your God's love for you in history – He became man, humbled himself as a servant to the point of death, even death on the cross. He regularly sends His Holy Spirit to gather His Church together around Word and Sacraments, that you might have the forgiveness of sins and He might grant you a share in His resurrection and ascension and in the life of the world to come.

And yet, do we think the one thing he will not act on – the one promise we cannot trust – is the promise to hear us when we pray and answer us as is best for our need? How can we doubt such things, when he is the one who *gave* us the very words to pray? “When you pray, say this...” Thus, rejoice in praying the Lord's Prayer, multiple times a day, ever on your lips and hearts, for there is no better prayer than the one the Lord himself gave you, that you may have His promise: that your heavenly Father will hear your prayer, answer it as He knows best, and provide for you as a dear father provides for his dear children...with all the manliness and

fatherliness of a father who disciplines and does not spoil, but loves
and bears with and gives to his dear children.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

Rev. Mark C. Bestul
Calvary Lutheran Church
July 27, 2025