

Luke 11:1-13  
Pentecost 7C  
July 28, 2019

“All I Need Is ...”

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

Jesus closes His teaching on prayer, **(Luke 11:13)** *“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!”* As we hear Jesus, we might react a little like Navin R. Johnson ...

You might remember Navin if you remember a movie, *The Jerk*, starring the comedian Steve Martin. Martin played Navin R. Johnson, a dimwit who started with nothing, got lucky and struck it rich – even marrying the love of his life, then lost it all. Near the movie’s end, as he’s evicted from his mansion, Navin trudges out in a bathrobe collecting a few trinkets saying sadly, *“All I need is ... this thing ... that thing ... and those things. That’s all I need.”* Hearing Jesus, Navin might’ve said, *“I’m sure the Holy Spirit is nice, but what I really need is ... my new super fantastic time-saving digi-gadget ... my job ... my Aunt Eunice to get better! That’s all I need.”*

Last week we sat at Jesus’ feet. He taught that our worship should focus on **(Luke 10:42)** *“... the good portion, which will not be taken away from (us).”* This “good portion” is the Word of God. Informed by God’s Word, Jesus answers a request, **(Luke 11:1)** *“Lord, teach us to pray.”*

In response, Jesus focuses not on “how” we pray, but “what” we pray. “What” should be our priority. And the words Jesus puts into our mouths are very familiar ... some call it “The Lord’s Prayer” others the “Our Father” ... we’ve likely prayed it most of the days of our Christian lives.

Despite Jesus putting words into our mouths, we still struggle. Why? We might start by looking at “what” our prayer priority is ... and compare it to “what” Jesus teaches us.

Many know God as the all-powerful, loving creator of all things. We confess this in our Creeds. So, many see God as one who should provide for our wants and desires. Like Navin R.

Johnson, as we trudge about our lives, we often go around saying, “*All I really need is ... (fill in the blank).*” We know what we need. We see God, the all-powerful creator, as the eternal vending machine who should be able to give it to us. So, that’s “what” the priority of our prayer becomes ... “*God, all I really need is ... (fill in the blank).*” Sometimes we pray for others too, “*God, all Aunt Eunice needs is ... (fill in the blank).*” Then we wonder, “*Why didn’t that happen? Doesn’t God know that’s what I need?*” After a while, not getting what we think we need, we can be tempted to give up on prayer ... or reduce its priority in life.

Jesus reminds us in *His Prayer* what our priority should be. He begins *His Prayer*, (Luke 11:2) “*Father, hallowed by Your name. Your kingdom come.*” Just as the top priority in our lives should be on (Luke 10:42) “*... the good portion, which will not be taken away from (us),*” God’s Word ... so the top priority in our prayer should be on “Our Father” ... that His name would be made and kept holy throughout His creation ... that His creation should live as His subjects, obedient to Him and His Word in His kingdom. Whether we pray these words or not, our Father’s name will be made holy ... with or without us. And, His creation will, one day live as His obedient subjects in perfect harmony with each other and Him ... with or without us. What Jesus teaches us to pray for first is this ... that we would allow our Father to use us to make His name holy and to bring His kingdom to the entirety of His creation. You see, our lives aren’t about us and our will first ... our lives are about our Father and His will for us first.

Then, after coming to our Father, asking that His will be done in our lives, we ask Him for the things we need ... daily bread, a spirit of forgiveness ... .to be forgiven and to forgive, and protection against evil. And so, we ask. But again ... what do we ask for? When we approach the vending machine, we see “a new job” ... we punch the button and out comes ... the same old job we had before ... or worse ... no job. We see “healing” ... we punch the button and out comes

... a relapse ... or worse. We see “a family member who comes to faith” ... we punch the button and out comes ... more rejection. What gives God? I trust You ... I trust You to give me what I need. Do I ever get to express my priorities in prayer?

Jesus doesn't finish teaching on prayer with “... *and lead us not into temptation.*” His teaching continues. First, He uses the story of an unexpected midnight visitor to make one point.

In Jesus' day, as we heard last week, the Holiday Inn was wherever you could find a person to take you in and provide for your needs. To understand His analogy, it helps to understand how society worked in Jesus' day. Personal pride and honor were tied up, not in who you were, what you did, and how much you had ... it was tied up in the community. If your community was respected, you were respected ... because you were part of it. And hospitality was among the most important ways for a community to gain and maintain respect. So, when the neighbor comes to His friend at midnight asking for bread ... which by the way was the utensil of the day – like a fork or spoon ... so his unexpected guest could eat his meal with clean utensils so to speak, he did so confidently. He fully expected that, with village honor on the line, the neighbor would give him any whole loaves – clean utensils – he might need ... even at midnight. Jesus teaches us to come to our Father the same way – at any time, in any place, for any reason ... and to come boldly – confidently asking for what we need, expecting He'll answer as only He can.

But God, I asked for “healing” – “employment” – “salvation for my son” ... it hasn't come.

Jesus tells us essentially, “*My dear child, our Father loves you. I'd never steer you wrong. He will give you what you need ... when you need it.*” This, my brothers and sisters, can be hard for us to hear ... but, our wants and desires ... what we call “needs” ... might not be what our creator knows we truly need. Our wants and desires ... even the ones that might seem good ... might not be best. Jesus explains, “*What good parent, if their child asks for some healthy food,*

*gives them instead junk food?"* Most of us, sinful as we are, want our children to have the best ... how much more will our holy, perfect Father give us exactly what's needed, when needed.

What we truly need though ... may not line up with our timeline for what we want or desire.

But ... the faithful's prayers are powerful. God answers them all. On one hand, Abraham boldly prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah ... asking God to hold off on the wholesale destruction of the mighty city if even a couple of righteous people were found. God said, "Yes" and relented for a moment. On the other, Paul boldly prayed not once, but three times, that the thorn of Satan be removed from him. Yet God kept the thorn in place saying, **(2 Corinthians 12:9)** *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Both prayed, "Thy will be done." God hears and answers all of our prayers ... "Yes," "No," or "Wait."

Even Jesus prayed ... Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knows exactly how we feel when we pray for our needs. On the night He was betrayed He entered the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. In anguish, He knelt before our Father. He boldly prayed for His needs, heeding His own words, saying, **(Luke 22:42)** *"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done."* He didn't want to endure the agony of crucifixion, so He asked our Father to let Him fulfill His mission another way ... but He also bowed to our Father's will saying, "Thy will be done." The answer was "No." Our Father's will was done. But He also sent His Son an angel from heaven to strengthen Him through His ordeal. Our Father sent Simon of Cyrene to help His Son carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem to the top of Calvary. Our Father had mercy on His Son as He hung dying on His cross ... He died before the guards came to add to His agony by breaking His legs with clubs. Our Father's will was done ... through His Son's suffering and death, our Father strengthened Jesus to do His

will. Then, by His resurrection, the effects of sin, which warp our priority of worship and prayer away from our Father's will toward our own, and eternal death that follows have been destroyed.

Jesus says, **(Luke 11:13)** *"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!"*

Our Father will not deprive us of **(Luke 10:42)** *"... the good portion, which will not be taken away from (us)."* He won't deprive us of the saving grace found only in His Word. And He has given us ... exactly what we need to trust Him and believe His Word and His promises found there. In baptism, He has given us the Holy Spirit ... the One Jesus calls, **(John 14:26,16:13)** *"the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you ... He will guide you into all the truth."* The Holy Spirit, the Helper, dwells within us. He calls us to God's Word ... He enables us to believe our Father's promises ... He enables us to understand our Father's calling for each us through His Word. Then, informed ... first ... by God's Word, our prayers begin to line up with our Father's will. We begin to see the world and its needs as our Father sees them.

We see that we are, in fact, the answer to our own prayer ... through us, our Father's name is made holy. Through us, His kingdom comes to His creation. Through us, our daily bread and the daily bread of all in need is provided. Through us, forgiveness is given and received. And we never fear that we'll be left behind, even though we give more than seems possible, because we know our Father is protecting us from all temptation to see ourselves as the top priority. All we need is what our Father in heaven gives ... forgiveness of sin and eternal life. These He gives to us and to all who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

**May the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

James Kent