

Rediscover Jesus

Part 40: Approach to Prayer | Luke 11:5-13

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Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 40 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Approach to Prayer."

Sermon Introduction

When I was in university, I took a class on entrepreneurship. Honestly, I can't remember a lot from the class anymore, but there's one thing I learned from that class that has forever been embedded into my mind.

One of our projects was to come up with a business plan for an entrepreneurship endeavor, and for one of the classes, the professor had invited his venture capital friends to listen to our pitches.

And afterwards, at the very next class, there were some of our classmates who came to class wearing suits, and in the middle of the class, they just got up and they left. And then our professor asked all of us who were just sitting there looking confused, "Do you know where those guys are going?" Obviously, none of us had any idea.

And he told us that after the previous class when his venture capitalists friends came to hear our pitches, those students came up to him afterwards to ask if they could meet with them more personally. And so, our professor set up that meeting for them, so *that's* why they were dressed in suits and *that's* where they were going.

And then he said something to all of us that I'll never forget: "I want you to remember something: Don't ask, don't get."

And that's something I've tried to put into practice since then.

My wife calls it being *shameless*. I know that doesn't sound like to a good quality to have, but that really depends on the circumstances. There's a kind of shamelessness where we're shameless or even proud in our *sin*; that's *not* the kind of shamelessness we're talking about. The kind of shamelessness that we're talking about and that is commended in Scripture is where we're shameless and persistent in asking for what we know we *need*.

So that's what we're going to look more at today.

The One Thing

***Be shameless and persistent in asking our heavenly Father
for the good gifts that we need.***

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 11:5-13.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

Immediately before this, we saw Jesus praying as he regularly did. But this time, when he finished, his disciples asked him to *teach* them to pray, so he taught them what we call "The Lord's Prayer," which was to inform *what* to pray.

And in today's passage, we'll begin to see *how* Jesus' disciples are to pray—or how we are to *approach* God in prayer.

So that's where we are in today's passage.

Scripture Reading

Let's read Luke 11:5-13.

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 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!"

This is God's Word.

Overview

We'll look at this passage in two parts, where we'll see two *principles* for approaching God in prayer.

- I. We should be shameless and persistent in asking God for our needs (vv. 5-10).
- II. We should trust that God knows how to give good gifts to his children (vv. 11-13).

I. We should be shameless and persistent in asking God for our needs (vv. 5-10).

Verses 5-7 say this:

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'?"

Let's imagine this story that Jesus is telling his disciples for a moment.

You have a traveling friend that unexpectedly shows up at your doorstep in the middle of the night. There's no Google Maps that give his estimated time of arrival, and there's no email or message that he could have sent in advance, so you're totally *not* expecting his arrival, especially so late in the night.

But still, he's your friend and it's been a long journey for him, and he's probably very hungry.

And as the *host*, it's *your* responsibility to feed him, but *embarrassingly*, you have no food to offer him. You and your family have already eaten your supply of bread for the day. So what are you to do?

Suddenly, you remember that your neighbor's household has extra bread. You know it's already midnight, but you're *desperate*, so as your wife and kids entertain the guest, you slip out and run to your neighbor's house and quietly knock on his door and humbly ask to borrow *three* loaves of bread.

These would have been three *small* loaves that would have been just *barely* enough for one man.¹ Remember, *even* the little *boy* who offered up his food to Jesus to feed the five thousand had *five* loaves (John 6:9)—and you're only asking for *three*.

So you don't think it's a big ask, but the response of your neighbor-friend is *shocking*. He basically says, "No." And it's not even a *polite* "No," but he says, "Do not bother me."

On some level, that's understandable. He lives in a small one-room house where his whole family sleeps together on a floor mat, so the front door is *right there*. And don't imagine a nice and quiet door; rather, imagine a heavy bolt that *will* make loud noises as it's being slid back to open the door.² The man *will* wake up his entire family to open that door for his friend, so he rudely responds, "Do not bother me."

Perhaps, if we're honest with ourselves, that's how *we* would have responded too.

But to the first century Jew living in Palestine, that kind of response was *unthinkable*. They would have all *gaped* at the thought of this neighbor refusing to help his friend be a good host to his guest.

The commitment of the ancient Palestinians to hospitality has been described as "legendary."³ The traveling friend would have been considered a guest *not only* of the individual and his family that hosted him under their roof, but of the *whole community*, which meant that there was a great responsibility not only on the *host* but on the *friend* that he approached for help.⁴

So in this story, the person clearly in the wrong here is *not* the travelling guest, it's *not* the host that went looking for help, but it's the friend who was *able* to help his neighbor but who *refused* to do so.

Notice that verses 5-7 is one long question. And the question begins with "Which of you?" This was a way to introduce a hypothetical situation and a rhetorical question, like "Can you imagine?" where the anticipated answer is immediately self-evident.⁵

So this hypothetical short story is *really* one long rhetorical question that would've sounded more like *this* to the hearers: "Can you imagine a friend who refuses to help you in providing hospitality at the arrival of an unexpected friend?"

And the immediately self-evident answer to the question is, "No way!" *No* first century Palestinian Jew would have refused to help his neighbor-friend in need, even if it was at midnight and even if it meant waking up his family in order to help him.

Hospitality was the sacred duty of the *entire* village community, and so it was this neighbor's *responsibility* to help if he could.

So how does this story end?

Verses 8-10 say this:

⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

¹ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008), 213.

² Walter L. Liefeld, and David W. Pao, *Luke*, rev. ed., EBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009).

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁴ Walter L. Liefeld, and David W. Pao, *Luke*, rev. ed., EBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009).

⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

Basically, the host won't leave his neighbor's house until he gets what he needs.

The key word here is "impudence," which literally means "shamelessness," or "lack of sensitivity to what is proper."⁶

He's no longer quietly asking and knocking, but he's beginning to make a scene. His *asking* and *knocking* are getting *louder* and *louder*. He *desperately* needs food, so he's shamelessly and persistently asking for it.

Now, not only is *that* man's family being awoken, but in a small village with all the houses in close proximity,⁷ *all* the families around them are beginning to be awoken.

And so, even though friendship and social responsibility were *not* good enough reasons for this neighbor to get out of bed to help this man, his shameless and persistent asking finally gets his neighbor out of bed to give him "whatever he *needs*."

So what is Jesus' point here?

Verses 9-10 say this:

⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

The verbs "ask," "seek," and "knock" are all present imperatives, so they read more like "keep asking," "keep seeking," and "keep knocking."

And there seems to be an *escalation* of desperation.

- To "ask" is to acknowledge our need and to ask for help.
- To "seek" is to get up and go look around for help; it requires more *effort*.
- And to "knock" is to pound on a closed door; it requires *persevering* effort.⁸

To be clear, to "ask," "seek," and "knock" are all ways to talk about *praying* to God.

Essentially, Jesus' point is that if the *host* in the story was shameless and persistent about asking his neighbor-friend to provide food for his guest, how much more shameless and persistent we should be about asking—or *praying*—to our God for what we *truly* need.

But the key here is regarding "need." The neighbor got up to provide *not* whatever his friend *wanted* but whatever he *needed*.

All throughout this passage—here and later—what's *asked* for and what's *given* is *food*; it's a *need*. It harkens back to "Give us each day our daily bread" from the Lord's Prayer.

And if we go back and look at verse 5, notice that it starts with the word "And," which means that everything that Jesus says in this entire passage connects back to the Lord's Prayer immediately before this.

So what is it that we truly need that we ought to shamelessly and persistently ask God for?

The Lord's Prayer basically lays out what we *truly* need—what we *should* be petitioning God to provide for us.

We are to approach God as "Father," and we are to pray for our *needs*.

⁶ Study note on Luke 11:8, in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008). See also R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

- We need *his* name be hallowed (or honored and glorified).
- We need *his* kingdom (or his rule and reign) to come in our hearts and our world.
- We need *him* for daily bread.
- We need *him* for daily forgiveness of our sins, and to help us to forgive everyone who has sinned against us.
- We need *him* to keep us from sin and temptation that would keep us from him.

These are our true needs.

We may readily accept that we *need* daily bread and daily forgiveness and to be kept from sin and temptation, but it may sound strange to say that we *need* God's name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come.

But just go back to creation and see what happened to Adam and Eve when they did *not* honor God as holy and when they did *not* acknowledge him as King.

Enjoyment of God and a world without tears became marred with shame, guilt, suffering, and grief. Sin and death came into the world.

That's what happened when God's people sought to honor their own names above their Creator's name, and when they sought to crown themselves as kings rather than submit to him as King.

So do we *need* God's name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come? Absolutely! We have *no* hope of life without those needs being met.

Now *why* does God want us to shamelessly and persistently ask him for these needs?

Because he wants us to know that we absolutely *need* them, and he wants us to *value* them when he provides them.

Last week, we learned that the petition, "Give us each day our daily bread," is *not* a prayer of *thanksgiving*, but it is a prayer of *asking*. And this prayer is *not only* for those who have nothing to eat, but it is especially for those who *think* they can take care of themselves.

But because most of us do *not ask* God for food each day, we forget how much we absolutely *need* food, and we don't *value* the food God provides for us.

The same goes for the petition, "and forgive us our sins." Because some of us do *not ask* God to forgive us our sins each day, we forget how much we absolutely *need* forgiveness for our sins, and we don't *value* the forgiveness God provides for us.

And the same goes for the first petition, "hallowed be your name." Because some of us do *not ask* for God's name to be hallowed (or honored and glorified), we forget how much we absolutely *need* to honor and glorify his name and we don't *value* the opportunities he provides for us to reveal who he is to those around us.

The Lord's Prayer presents to us what our *true needs* are and what we should shamelessly and persistently *ask* God for.

Now a question for us is this: are *these* the needs that we shamelessly and persistently ask God for?

Perhaps some of us don't *shamelessly* and *persistently* ask God for *anything*. Our relationship with God is so *formal* that the thought of being so raw and desperate is unthinkable to us. But read the psalms and you'll find plenty of examples of God's people going before him shamelessly and persistently.

Perhaps some of us have no problem asking God once, ten times, or twenty times, but at some point, we lose hope—and we *stop* asking. And even if you continue praying, you've put boundaries on that particular ask—you just don't go there with him anymore. But any relationship where you need to walk on eggshells to avoid certain topics is *not* a very intimate relationship.

Perhaps some of us don't go to God in prayer *at all*—or *only* as a *last resort* after we've tried everything else on our own.

Whether you feel like any of those are you or not, for *all* of us, if we pray to God *at all*, ask yourself: "What is it that I tend to ask for?"

For most of us, we tend to shamelessly and persistently ask for *desires* rather than *needs*.

We *assume* our true needs, but we are *consumed* with our desires.

And so...

- We don't ask for *his* name be honored and glorified.
- We don't ask for *his* kingdom to come.
- We don't ask *him* for daily bread.
- We don't ask *him* for daily forgiveness of our sins, and to help us to forgive everyone who has sinned against us.
- We don't ask *him* to keep us from sin and temptation that would keep us from him.

Rather, we shamelessly and persistently ask for success, safety, healing, a spouse, a child, suffering to be taken away.

Now, in and of themselves, there is *nothing* wrong with asking for any of those desires. We see in Scripture that God's people have asked for *all* of those things. We *ought* to come honestly before God, asking for our desires. But our *needs* should inform our *desires*, not the other way around.

For many, their *desires* inform their *needs*.

- "I want success" becomes "I need success."
- "I want sex" becomes "I need sex."
- "I want a spouse" becomes "I need a spouse."

And once we're *convinced* that a *desire* is a *need*, we so easily turn to accusing God of withholding something that we *need*, and we justify our actions to obtain that "need" for ourselves, even if it violates what God clearly says we need.

And so...

- "I need success" turns into neglecting to spend time with God each day and forsaking corporate worship with God's people on the Lord's Day.
- "I need sex" turns into engaging in pornography and masturbation.
- "I need a spouse" turns into marrying an unbeliever or someone who you know is *not* on the same page with you in terms of what it means to follow Christ.

But what would it be like if our *needs* informed our *desires*? What might it look like to shamelessly and persistently ask God for our *true needs*—and to have our desires *shaped* by what we truly need?

It might look like Jesus' disciples, who, even after they were threatened by the religious authorities for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, we find them praising God and praying together that God would empower them to *continue* to speak the gospel with all boldness (Acts 4:1-31).

It might look like Jesus' disciples, who, after being beaten and threatened *again*, we find them "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for [Jesus'] name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease from teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:41-42).

It might sound like the apostle Paul saying, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21), and "For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

For us, it might begin with speaking to ourselves: "Even though I *desire* success, sex, or a spouse, I do not *need* any of those things. Rather, I *need* to glorify God. So even though I'll continue to honestly pray for

God to provide for me success, a godly spouse, or sex in the context of marriage, I will never confuse those *desires* as *needs*. Rather, I'm praying shamelessly and persistently for my *true* needs—that, whether I'm successful or not in the world's eyes, single or married, sexually fulfilled or not, God would enable me to live in such a way that displays my contentment in Christ and glorifies his name."

As Christ's disciples, our *true need* to glorify God ought to inform our *desires*—not the other way around.

And when we *shamelessly* and *persistently* ask God for our *true needs*, he is *not* like the reluctant neighbor-friend who won't get out of bed to help us, but our help comes from the Lord, who will neither slumber nor sleep (Ps. 121:1-4)—and whether we come to him at midnight or at any other hour of the day or night, he will *gladly* and *willingly* give us what we need.

So first, we should be shameless and persistent in asking God for our needs; and second...

II. We should trust that God knows how to give good gifts to his children (vv. 11-13).

Verses 11-12 say this:

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

Here, we see Jesus following the same pattern as before. In the first part, he told a story that made people *gasp*: "No way. Nobody would do that!"

And the same thing is happening here, except this hypothetical situation and rhetorical question is *directly* translatable into *our* culture. *No* father is going to give his hungry child who asks for food something that's going to hurt them. That would be *so* diabolical—*so* evil. It's unthinkable!

Everyone would have *gasp*ed. There's *no way* a father would do that.

And then, Jesus makes his point.

The beginning of verse 13 says this:

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, ...

Here, Jesus acknowledges that *all* of us are sinners—we're all "evil" to some extent. We do wrong, we hurt others—everything we do is tainted by sin. But Jesus says that *even* earthly, evil (or sinful) fathers don't give *bad* gifts when their children ask for *good* gifts.

But another point that's also equally, if not *more*, true is that fathers don't give *bad* gifts when their children ask for *bad* gifts either.

If it were up to my children, they would ask for chocolate for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They think they're asking for a *good* gift. They like chocolate. It makes them smile. They love the taste.

But parents know better. If I gave them what they wanted, it would be a *bad* gift. Their teeth would rot, they would be malnourished, and they would be on the fast track to getting diabetes.

And as much as I try to explain that to them, they're *not* quite convinced. In *their* minds, chocolate is a *good* gift—and on some level, that's true. There's nothing wrong with chocolate, and we give them chocolate as part of their dessert after dinner and as a treat after school on certain days. But we know that if we give them what they're asking for—24/7 chocolate—that *good* gift will become a *bad* gift to them.

So instead, we give them *good* gifts that they don't quite recognize as *good* gifts. We give them grains and proteins; we give them fruits and vegetables. But I don't think I've ever heard my children say to us,

“Thank you for these vegetables.” In *their* minds, the *good* gift is the chocolate, but in *our* minds, yes, we give them chocolate from time to time, but the *good* gift is in the everyday, healthy, balanced diet that we try to provide for them.

Our earthly fathers *know* how to give good gifts to their children. They don’t give *bad* gifts when their children ask for *good* gifts, and they don’t give *bad* gifts when their children ask for *bad* gifts.

Now what does any of this have to do with prayer?

Earlier, Jesus said that “everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” (v. 10). This sounds like such an *absolute* statement. But we’ve *already* seen that this is pertaining to asking for our *true needs*—not just any *desire* that we have. But at the same time, that doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want us to ask for our desires. He does!

In Scripture, we see people ask for all kinds of things they desired.

- Hannah shamelessly and persistently asked God for a child (1 Sam. 1).
- David asked God to save his dying child (2 Sam. 12).
- Solomon asked God for wisdom (1 Kings 3).
- Elisha asked God to raise a dead child back to life (2 Kings 4).
- Ezra prayed for protection and a safe journey for the travelling Israelites (Ezra 8).
- Nehemiah asked God for favor with the king (Neh. 1).
- Paul asked God to remove a “thorn in his flesh” (2 Cor. 12).

Throughout Scripture and redemptive history, God’s people have *not only* asked for their *true needs*, but they have *also* shamelessly and persistently asked for their *desires* as well.

And sometimes, God answered, “Yes,” to those desires. Hannah received a child, Solomon was given wisdom, Elisha gave the risen child back to his mother, Ezra and the Israelites were protected throughout their travels, and Nehemiah received favor from the king.

But sometimes, God answered, “No,” to those desires. David’s child died, and Paul lived the rest of his days with the “thorn in his flesh.”

And to all the OT saints, who *longed* to receive the *fullness* of God’s promise, God answered, “Not yet” to those desires (Heb. 11).

If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, think back on the many times God has answered, “Yes,” to your desires. If we reflect long enough, I’m sure we could all join the psalmist in saying, “I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt *bountifully* with me” (Ps. 13:6).

But despite that fact, many of us struggle with the *few* hard times when he says “No” or “Not yet”—and we quickly forget God’s *many* “Yeses” to us.

And in those times when it’s difficult for us to receive God’s “No” or “Not yet,” we need to hold fast to the truth that our heavenly Father *knows* how to give *good* gifts to his children.

But *who* determines what a *good* gift is? It’s *not* the child but it’s the father.

Why is that? Because, in general, a father *knows* more than his child, and a father is *wiser* than his child.

I know that some of us may be thinking of exceptions here as you look out into the world or think back on your own experiences, and I’m sure there are *some* exceptions. But we would be wise to heed the entire book of Proverbs which is written from the perspective of a *wise* father to his *youthful* son who *needs* to be taught wisdom.

Ultimately, we’re *not* talking about *earthly* fathers here, but we’re talking about our *heavenly* Father—and there are no exceptions there. God *does* know more than his children, and he *is* wiser than all of them.

God is *omniscient*; he knows everything past, present, and future. God is *infinitely wise*; “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). And so, *he* is the best to determine what is a *good* gift.

He knows the end from the beginning, but we don’t even know what the next day holds for us. We’ve all made foolish choices, but God has never once done a foolish thing.

We may be tempted to judge God with our feeble sense, but we ought to trust that behind a frowning providence hides his smiling face. Everything that we undergo in this life passes through his hands of infinite love; it’s all carefully measured and designed uniquely and specifically for our good.

In his infinite knowledge, wisdom, love, and goodness, our heavenly Father *alone* is best fit to determine what is a *good* gift for his child. *We* are *not* best fit to determine that.

In Second Corinthians 12, we find that Paul had a “thorn in the flesh.” We don’t know *exactly* what it was—a situation, a person, a health ailment, or something else. But Paul calls it “a messenger of Satan to harass [him]” (v. 7), and he *pleads* with God *three* times to take it away. Paul shamelessly and persistently asked God for his *desire*, but God basically says, “No.” But then, we’re told the *reason*. And this is one of the few places where we *know* the reason.

It was to keep Paul from becoming *conceited* because of the surpassing greatness of the visions and revelations that he had received from God (vv. 1-7). In other words, it was to keep Paul *humble* and to prevent him from getting *proud*. Remember, “God *opposes* the proud, but gives *grace* to the humble” (James 4:6), and “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18), so one of the *best* gifts that God could give Paul was one that would keep him *humble*.

So why was Paul *pleading* with God to *remove* the “thorn in the flesh”? At the most basic level, it’s because Paul didn’t know what was good for him. God had a *good* reason for giving it to him, but all Paul feels is the pain, so he’s asking for it to be removed.

In *Paul’s* eyes, it was a *bad* gift, but in *God’s* eyes, it was a *good* gift.

But once Paul begins to see the *eternal* good that God has in mind in giving it to him, he rejoices! God also encourages him by saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:8). The removal of the thorn was *denied*, but the grace to endure was *supplied*. And God’s purpose was *not* for Paul to simply experience *weakness*, but it was for him to experience God’s power and perfection *through* that weakness.

Paul had the *temporal* (or the here and now) in mind, but God had *eternity* in mind.

Whether we *receive* what we ask for, or whether we *don’t receive* what we ask for, it is for our *eternal* good. And regardless of receiving or *not* receiving, we must know that everything we have in this life is passing away. All the *temporal* good that we desire for will one day vanish like smoke—and what advantage would it have been to us when we walk into eternity? Rather, we ought to align ourselves with God’s desire for us, which is not *merely* for our *temporal* good but for our *eternal* good.

The reality is that, in Christ, God has already given us *all* things. We have every spiritual blessing in him, and we get everything he has promised in full in eternity. In Christ, God has promised us the new heavens and new earth; fellowship without sin; eternal life without death or tears; rest without end.

So whatever he’s saying “No” to right now, there’s simply *no* comparison to what he has given us in eternity.

And *how* did God bring about all these eternal blessings for such undeserving sinners as us? He said “No” to his sinless Son’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane to have the cup of wrath removed from him (Luke 22:42). And so, the Son of God drank the cup of God’s wrath to the dregs as he hung on the cross as our substitute; he took the punishment we deserved for our sin, so that we may have eternal life through faith in him as Lord and Savior.

Even in God’s “No” that led to the cross, God opened up the floodgates of heaven’s “Yeses” for sinners.

In every “No” that you hear, remember the “No” that Christ heard—and remember the eternal good that was brought to you because of it. If you ever doubt the goodness of God’s “No” or “Not yet,” fix your eyes on the cross of Christ and see again that our heavenly Father *knows* how to give good gifts to his children.

The rest of verse 13 says this:

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!”

Here, the Holy Spirit is introduced in the passage, so we now see all three persons of the one triune God present: God the Father, God the Son (that is, Jesus himself), and God the Spirit.

On the surface, it seems like the mention of the Holy Spirit is totally out of left field, but this is the climax.

Jesus is saying that the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit as the answer to his children’s prayers. No matter what you’re praying, the best and most good gift God could ever give you in response is *Himself*—the third person of the Trinity.

This is looking forward to Pentecost when God pours out his Spirit upon all his people (Acts 2). They haven’t experienced that yet, but on this side of redemption, *we* as believers in Jesus Christ have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

By the Spirit, we are regenerate (or born again); we are no longer spiritually dead in our sins, but we are made spiritually alive with Christ (Eph. 2:1-5).

Without the Holy Spirit, Christ’s death and resurrection would be *ineffective* for us, for we would still be spiritually dead, unable to recognize our need and Christ’s provision, and unable to believe in him as Lord and Savior for salvation. The Holy Spirit *applies* the salvation that the Son has *accomplished* to those the Father has *elected*.

If we think about it, in every “No” or “Not yet,” the best gift that God can give us is the Holy Spirit, for the entire Christian life is lived and upheld by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in every believer. In any situation—even the worst of suffering—what we need most is probably not what we’re asking for, but what we need most is the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God and that our heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts to us.
- The Holy Spirit enables us to respond in the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- The Holy Spirit equips us with gifts for the common good and the building up of the church.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to rejoice in beatings, sing in prison, and worship in suffering.
- The Holy Spirit moves us to enjoy a deeper relationship with the Father and exude a deeper resemblance of the Son.
- The Holy Spirit encourages us to let go of this world and look forward to the world to come.

Is there *really* a *better* gift that God could give us in response to our prayers?

In giving us the Holy Spirit, God gives us *Himself* and everything good that is in him.

As we close, let’s be reminded that our God is *not* like the reluctant friend who won’t get out of bed, he’s *not* like the unthinkable earthly father who gives harmful gifts to his children, but he is our heavenly Father who *willingly* and *gladly* spares no *good* gift—even pouring out his own Spirit—for his children.

If you’re here today, and you don’t yet relate to God as your heavenly Father, I encourage you to ask God to help you know more of who he is and ask anyone here to learn more about him, and I pray that, whether today or someday soon, you would come to know the fellowship of the Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father as well.

And for all of us who already know God as our heavenly Father, let's continue to shamelessly and persistently ask him for the good gifts that we need.

Life Application

1. Pray shamelessly and persistently through the Lord's Prayer, knowing that these are our true needs.
2. Remember God's many "Yeses" and trust him in the few hard "Nos" and "Not yet's," for he knows how to give good gifts to his children.
3. Treasure the Holy Spirit—God himself—as our greatest need and most good gift as God's provision for any prayer we may have.

The One Thing

***Be shameless and persistent in asking our heavenly Father
for the good gifts that we need.***

Conclusion

If you're able, can we all stand as we respond to God's Word together?