

Intro: There is probably no better known prayer in the Christian church than what we call The Lord's Prayer
This is how it came about: Luke 11:1-13 Pg 735

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As we begin this series of messages on The Lord's Prayer, there are a couple of foundational issues to start with

1. Prayer Is Something That Can Be Taught...And Learned. Vs 1-2

For many of us prayer doesn't come naturally! We feel uncomfortable, wonder if we are doing it "right" and often avoid. Many of us, when faced with feeling inadequate about prayer, just resign ourselves to the fact of "That's just how it is!" But, here is the good news! Prayer is just like any other behavior. It can be learned. The more you practice it...better you are!
Notice what happens here:

- Disciples Asked
~Teach: Lit = help us learn how to do what you just did! Help us incorporate that into our life
What were they asking? *We want to be powerful, we want to be effective, we want to be heard!, want to be answered!*
~John taught
~You can teach: Jesus didn't say to them...that's an unreasonable request! You will NEVER be able to pray like me!!
- Jesus Responded! (3 ways)
~Example: (Here and in other places that they witnessed Him pray) Lazarus; Feeding of 5000, Mt of Transfiguration
~Practice: Luke 4: Early, solitary place (they were figuring it out...prayer...spiritual power are connected!)
~Instruction: He responds by giving them The Lord's Prayer
They said "teach us" and Jesus responded with instruction!

App: Here is the take away: Prayer can be learned! Jesus is making that assumption. Just because you aren't comfortable with it today, doesn't mean you have to STAY that way! Just like any other behavior, the more you practice better you get

2. There Is A Specific Person To Whom Jesus Tells Christians Pray. Vs 2

Jesus was very deliberate in His choice of words. AND, He is uniquely different in doing so as a departure from the OT. I read one article this week that said there is not a SINGLE instance in the OT or any extra-biblical Jewish literature until the 10th century AD in which an individual addressed God as "My Father, or Our Father!" Simply wasn't done!

So, when Jesus did that...it was an amazing departure! 165 times in NT: 65 times in Matt, Mk, Luke + 100 in John!
In fact, only 1 prayer that Jesus prayed that He DIDN'T use that title to address God!

Now a Couple of things we need to address as we think about starting our prayer the way Jesus did "Our Father"

- To use this term doesn't mean that our concept of God should be limited exclusively to a male image. Both the OT and the NT highlight different aspects of God's personality and relationship with us that is female. Jesus simply chose this image as the one He wants us to identify with.
- Father is Not Always a Good term for many of us
~Abusive
~Absent
~Disinterested
~Overly indulgent
Because of those warped, sinful images, I know many people that struggle with thinking of God as their "Father"
We can get beyond that...but we need to realize that for some people it can be a struggle

Here, and in the NT...Jesus defines for us what we SHOULD have had...and what we CAN have when we come to understand the Fatherhood of God! He not only USES that term, but Jesus defines it for us so that we can "reformat" or "recalculate"

- Father the Way Jesus Meant us to understand Him:

Illus: RECALCULATE your Image of God!

~He is paying attention! Not Disinterested, not Distracted, not busy somewhere else, but vitally concerned with YOU
Mt 6:6: Unseen: Secret

Just because He doesn't answer when and how you want...doesn't mean He isn't there or concerned.

He may be teaching you to Trust Him

He may be teaching you to Trust His timing!

You might be "ready" but God may know that everyone around you isn't!

He may know that there are "unintended consequences" to you getting what you want...So He says No!

~He knows our heart! Luke 18:9-14 God sees beyond the surface of what we say to our heart
We never have to worry if we don't get the words right! God knows our heart! He sees it all...understands
He knows us better than we even know ourselves.
That is what is going on here in this parable that Jesus tells us.
One man feels good about himself...righteous and holy. The other feels awful. Both were wrong: God looks at heart
1 Sam 16:7 *Man looks on outer appearance, upon words...God looks at our heart!*
Rom 8:26 *Helps us when we don't know how to pray*

~He wants to bless you with "more" Luke 11:11-13
Not QUANTITY...QUALITY
Not PHYSICAL...SPIRITUAL (The "gift of more" is the Holy Spirit!)
Not fulfilling every foolish and selfish desire
James 4:1-3
But, it is the desire of the Father to give you every blessing He can...w/o hurting you...and MORE!
Eph 3:20 To Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above anything ever ask or desire!!!

~He seeks your best! What we want...and what we need are not always the same!
What we desire...and what is truly in our best interest isn't always the same!
God KNOWS better than we do...and He is seeking our best!
Mt 26:39 & Heb 5:7-10
He prayed as intensely and with as much desire as anyone EVER has..God said NO!
Listen: God HEARD Him...But He knew there was something BETTER on the other side

App: So, when you pray...Father: Attention; Heart; Bless; Best!

And, you can always Trust that to be the case, even when you don't understand, because of the next thing Jesus says:

3. God is Unlike Anyone You Have Ever Known! Luke 11:1-2
We have to totally rethink our understanding of God. The God of the Bible is unlike anything or anyone else He is God!

- **The One In Heaven!**
~Transcendent: God is above, other than, and distinct from anything that He has made
~Immanent: God is with or near His creation.

*"Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. "*Jeremiah 23:23-24

App: There is NEVER a time or a place when God is not with us. It may FEEL that He isn't there...but He is.
And when He chooses to remove that sense of His presence...it is ALWAYS for a reason!

- **The One Who is Holy:**
~He is completely Holy: To be eternally separate and distinct from all impurity
~He is fully man: Heb 4:15 "Tempted in every way, yet without sin!"

App: Jesus is the perfect God-man...Fully God...completely holy....Fully man...just like us but without sin!
So when we Pray...He knows...He understands...He can feel who we are and what we feel.

CONCL: Here is a critical Question:

When you pray...WHO are you praying to?
A false image of God twisted, marred, short of who God REALLY is?

Or

Do you pray to your Heavenly Father: The God of Heaven...Through His Son Jesus, who KNOWS
Paying Attention:...Always right there with you
Knows your heart...Even when you don't
Wants to Bless you:...but will never do something to harm you...even when you ask for it
Wants to give you More...Exceedingly...Abundantly...Above anything you ask or imagine!

This week...When you stop to Pray...Take a moment...Remember WHO God truly is...THEN PRAY...
You will be amazed at the difference it makes when you are praying the way Jesus prayed...