

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 17, Jesus on Prayer, Luke 11:1-13

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This is Dr. Daniel Darko in his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 17, Jesus on Prayer, Luke 11:1-13.

Welcome back to the Biblica e-learning lecture series on the Gospel of Luke.

I want to thank you personally for following this lecture series, and I hope with the work my dear colleague Ted Hildebrandt is doing that, you are learning and you are benefiting from this good work that he's putting so much time and effort into making happen. As we go on with our lecture series, you may recall from the previous one that we went through the parable of the Good Samaritan and ended the discussion in chapter 10 of the Gospel of Luke with Jesus in the home of Martha and her sister Mary. Right in chapter 11, we are going to see Luke is going to pick up some of the material we find in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, and to be precise, we are going to find the discussion on prayer at the very beginning, something that happens in Matthew chapter 6 when Jesus began to talk about piety.

So, let's turn to Luke chapter 11 from verse 1 and look at some of the things that Luke has to share with us, at least from verse 1 to verse 13. Now, Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray. As John taught his disciples, he said to them, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins. For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us and lead us not into temptation. And he said to them, verse 5, which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves.

A friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him. 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.

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is a friend, yet because of his imprudence, he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I will tell you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find.

Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives the one who seeks finds, and the one who knocks, it will be open. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? And if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? 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? Prayer and persistence.

In Luke chapter 11, verses 1 to 13, let me just give you a broader framework before we go on to discuss the rest of the passage. First, we notice that Jesus has a habit of praying, and it is because of his habit of praying on one such occasion, one of his disciples will come to him, noticing a very important part of his spiritual discipline and asking how they, too, could follow that pattern. Here, we see another dimension of discipleship: a disciple seeks to learn from the master.

The disciples here want to learn specifically how to pray. The other thing I will walk you through a little bit more as we go on in this session is the notion of kinship and friendship. In other words, in the teachings of the kingdom of God, Jesus will frame it as a family affair.

It is not a courtroom scenario in which a judge is dealing with people here and there and trying to do whatever he can, but Jesus will talk about a father. In the beginning of the prayer, he will not refer to him as a father in heaven as we find in Matthew. He will only refer to him as a father. Later, he will refer to himself as a father in heaven.

And then, he will go on to illustrate something that was happening in France. And then he will resume the notion of kinship and still show them that what is at stake is a relational issue between father and children, if you like, that they should think about prayer as they approach a father and then resume to say they should know that God has better intentions for them than their earthly masters. The punchline emphasis will be obvious that not only will Luke refer to the Father in Heaven, but you notice that Luke will resume a key part of his theology emphasis on the Holy Spirit to say, unlike Matthew, that actually, the Father in Heaven will also give the Holy Spirit.

The charismatic Luke likes to talk about whatever he can find. As you may recall reading from chapter 11, verse 13, Luke may want to make sure that this line is not missing. 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? Let us now begin to look closely at some of the things Jesus will say as far as prayer is concerned.

The disciples ask to teach them how to pray. Jesus, in so doing, will not just tell them, just follow me and say this, but he will introduce them to a relationship with a father. He will talk about the honor of the father.

He will emphasize the kingdom and the role that fathers will already provide or usually provide in that climate that they are the breadwinners and provide for the

family. And Jesus will go on to talk about family relational dimensions, namely forgiving and the head of the household leading the household. Now, let me take time to unpack these five items I have outlined.

When Jesus talked to the disciples and said, when you pray, pray, Father. In Matthew, we know that he talks about our father. He brings in a collective note of not only me but our collective father and then begins to talk about praying to the father.

Luke just says, Father. Luke does not mean to say that it should just be the individual affair to a one single father, but Luke is introducing a direct address to a father to say, pray to him, father, as if to say, this is my dad. What Luke is showing us is what we have seen elsewhere in Luke so far, where Jesus gets into prayer and gets into this intimate relationship with God and refers to God as a father.

That is to say, prayer is not ritual. Prayer is not some kind of offering that one performs on a shrine. Prayer is not some kind of object that somebody throws at a place.

Prayer is a relationship, an interaction between two people or one or more people in a good relationship, as a father and his children. In that sense, when the children come to the father, Luke likes to remind them they're supposed to do this without fear. Bringing the notion of a father to the team also brings some elements of kinship ideas.

Ancient world into the contest. I have often asked my students in the United States about the father concept. It is increasingly the case as we run through one scenario after the other in class that too many of my students don't have a good relationship with their father.

Some of them will struggle to call God their father. Some of them have their father at home, but they have no good relationship with the father because they have imposed this concept of a tyrant father on the father. Even as some will admit, the father may not have done anything to deserve that, but they have been taught sometimes with a mother who may be too eager to try to assess some feminist agenda, maybe go overboard.

Now, let me qualify this. I am all out for feminist empowerment and women's empowerment, all for that. I was raised by a single mom who was very, very strong doing great things, and I am raising two daughters that I always tell can be anything and everything they want to be; and I believe that they can do it, and I'm raising them to do better than me.

So, the issue is not gender here, but some of my students have confessed to me that, in fact, they have been taught to see men a certain way. They cannot project the idea of a father into the father they have. The sad part is when I think about my students, who are young men who struggle with the concept of fatherhood and how they could become fathers tomorrow.

When Luke says, when you pray, Jesus said in Luke, refer to God as Father. He is not talking about the father that you and I may have that we don't like or may have different concepts of or, you know, we may be struggling to even associate with that father. The idea of the ideal father was a positive in the Second Temple Jewish parenthood.

The father is the head of the household. The father is the custodian of the honor of the household. The father provides, protects, guides, and keeps the family honor intact.

The father preserves all good things for the family. The father works hard to develop a state for the family. The father leaves an inheritance for the children to be able to live on when he's gone.

The father's life is all devoted to the family's welfare. As the head of the household, whatever goes wrong in the household falls on his back. Shame on him if anyone in the household is not doing well.

The father then becomes this figure who, yes, is the head of the household, but it's not a tyrant household, a tyrant leader, but he becomes the head of the household who takes care of his family, works in concert with his wife, or in a Jewish community, sometimes wives. But you should know this. The father that Jesus will be referring to and that which will resonate in the ears is a positive image of one child's desire to be like.

One of the women in the household feels loved. One of the young men in the household desires to model. One who is the figure doing the best.

But Luke will even elevate that above that because, down in the text, he will refer to him as a father in heaven. May I just interject in this lecture and try to remind you that you may not have a good relationship with your father? You may have a very, very difficult father concept with a father.

But may I remind you that your father in heaven is not like your father on earth. That no loving father on earth could even be compared to what the father in heaven could do and be. May I encourage you to join me in embracing this concept of a loving and caring father called God, whom we can approach, whom we can embrace, whom we can love and feel loved by and cared for.

Let me be personal with you here. I was raised by a single mom. I had a father who loved me but was not around.

He comes once in a while, he brides me with all the good things, and then he goes away. But I always knew that he loved me but he was not there. I never wanted to be that kind of father.

I wanted to be a father who is present. I wanted to be a father who is there for my children. So, like me, you may not have a father who is ever-present.

Or like me, you may have a father you don't want to be like. But when we come into prayer, Luke reminds us, as Jesus told the disciples, to pray, father, father, dad, as my daughters would like to do, dad. And they ask me a question, every question, and every question.

Sometimes, I feel like I have an examination with them. They give me the toughest questions, the things I don't have answers for. But that's the good thing when you have a good relationship with your heavenly father; you come to him fearlessly, and you address him, Dad, and you begin to talk to him.

Luke says that when you pray, the first item on the list that you should pray for is that his name be hallowed. The Greek word is the word to be set apart, to be sanctified, to be honored. That is to say that when you pray, one of the central issues that you have at the back of your mind as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is the honor of your heavenly father.

He may help you, and in your life and through your life, his name may be honored. His name may be glorified. His name may be sanctified.

This English word that I don't hear is used a lot; pardon me, English is not my first language. I don't hear too many people talking about being hallowed. But you see, it's talking about being honored.

Let your name be honored in me and through me. When we say hallowed be your name, that is, in effect, what we are saying. This is part of the kinship obligation.

Children live to honor their parents, and it is their desire that they honor their parents. The father is always proud of these children for who they are. And it is the children's desire to actually say, I want to live to honor my father. But notice the next line.

When you pray, he says, pray your kingdom come. Your reign comes. Come and rule.

Come and take charge. You see, the kingdom of God is God's reign in the lives, in the hearts, in the minds, and in the affairs of those who have submitted to his leading and will. When you pray, he says, pray your kingdom come.

And it's a powerful prayer because if God's reign is at work, no one, no power can interfere with what God is about to do and will do in your life. He says, when you pray, pray at the very heart of those who live on sustenance farming and their need as Jesus will grow up with. Pray that the Father will give us bread.

Pray that the Father will give us something to eat. And in some parts of the Middle East today, sometimes I think that gives us this, they are literal. That every meal almost has to come with some nice, flat, numb bread, and we sit down, and we twist it, and we dip it into something, and we eat.

And it's good. It's good. Give us this: they are deliberate.

Yes, it is the father's responsibility to provide for the needs of the family. But something in that grammar is very interesting here to observe. Jesus is talking about the obligation of the Father to provide.

But when he says, give us this day, our daily bread, the word that is translated daily is a very, very interesting word. The word can be translated daily. So, it could be daily bread.

It could refer to bread that we need for tomorrow, or it could be the bread that is necessary for us. I will give you the three options on the screen so that you can follow them. Either way, what the prayer seems to suggest is that we should pray, trusting God to provide the food we need.

It is a prayer that is rooted in the trust that a father can provide. And then Luke goes on subsequently to pray, to ask, to teach the disciples to pray to forgive our sins. Both in Luke and Matthew, forgiveness has two dimensions.

Forgiveness as God forgives and forgiveness as we forgive one another. If you remember the previous discussion with the lawyer, love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Here, the prayer goes to another part of relational dimensions.

When you are in a context where family is together, and everybody is in everybody's business, somebody is going to wrong somebody. You know, I like to say that there is this amazing species that we call people. People, when you don't have them, you feel lonely.

Sometimes, when you don't have them around, you feel really miserable. When you have them, sometimes they are a pain in the neck. Sometimes, they make you happy.

Sometimes they make you really sad. Sometimes, they rub you the wrong way. Sometimes, they tickle you when you don't want to be tickled.

But you see, people are people, and people are all we have here, and we will always need people. So, there is a relational dimension whenever you are in a family setting. And if you imagine God's household with so many children, including me, in that household, you can just imagine.

Too many people will wrong too many people. We will need forgiveness. Jesus says, pray for forgiveness from God as we also forgive one another so that the group dynamics in the household of God will be that which is rooted in the spirit of generosity that allows us to forgive one another and relate well.

As a Catholic boy, I should tell you, one of the things growing up I learned in my Catholic home is just reciting the Lord's Prayer, the version that is in Matthew that is also repeated in the Didache. And I reached a point where I recite the Lord's Prayer so many times, and sometimes I go to confession, the priest will give me the same kind of prayer, and I just, you know, and I just come in and recite them. And at some point, I lose the point of that prayer.

The prayer has no relevance to me at all. But as I increase my understanding of what Jesus is teaching, I understand the relational part of this. Jesus is saying, when you come to God, imagine a God you can relate to, imagine a God whose honor you want to maintain, imagine a God who is able to provide you, ask him to provide, imagine a God who is able to forgive you, ask him to forgive, imagine a God who expects you to forgive others in the household who err or who do wrong against you, and imagine that God who leads not into temptation, who leads in the right paths, who leads in the right way, and pray that he makes these things happen in your life.

And look, and look, Jesus is teaching the disciples that, in effect, if you strengthen that relationship with God as a disciple, and you make that spiritual discipline, namely prayer, a key part of your life, you will be guided, directed, and provided for by God. But lest people think that God will not answer their prayers, Jesus will go on and tell the parable that he told. In that parable, he talked about that friend who visited.

And here, when the friend comes, the friend will come in the middle of the night. You should know that in this context, honor and shame is a big issue here. For a friend not to respond to a friend if other people hear that a friend is calling and another friend is not helping, that is shameful that is embarrassing.

True friends don't do that. The custom would dictate that a friend who knocks at the door of a friend comes in. But please, don't think about this scenario as if you are in America or you are in an African country, and somebody comes in, and you open the door or do not open the door.

No. Imagine an ancient Mediterranean household where to go to bed with your family. You all live in one relatively big house with one door. It takes a lot to close the door and to keep the door safe from animals potentially penetrating and coming in to hurt anyone.

So, if someone comes in and says the person is knocking, it takes a whole lot to do that. And because the entire family is in one space, the movement is also going to wake people up. As Jesus told the parable, Jesus is actually telling just that.

There is too much inconvenience involved here. Yes, it is a friend. It is embarrassing that one friend cannot help the other.

But notice what Jesus is doing here, too. He still brings the relationship to bear in how he discusses kingdom business. He mentions the word friend four times in this occasion.

So yes, custom dictates this. And Jesus explains that it will be so difficult for a friend to get up and give bread to the one who is asking. Of course, normally, you don't make bread and leave leftover bread in that context.

But we know that there might be some leftovers, and this friend may be able to meet the need somehow in this scenario. But Jesus wanted to remind us that before the listener thinks that the one who is unwilling to get up and help is not being a good friend, he states in the parable that it's a matter of inconvenience at stake. Disturbance of the family and all other related issues here.

But then he goes on to highlight. You see, it is not because he's a friend, but because the friend who comes late in that night persists. Because he persists, neighbors could even hear him asking for help.

Because of that persistence in the words of Jesus and I read, I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he's a friend, yet because of his impudence, because of his persistence, he will rise and give him whatever he needs. It's on that note Jesus goes on to say to them, you should ask, and it shall be given to you. You should seek, and you will find.

You should knock, and it will open up to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and the one who knocks, it will be open to him or her. This

same statement is repeated in Matthew in chapter six of Matthew in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

But what Jesus is doing tying this up to the discussion on prayer is this. Understand the father that we are talking about here: Jesus is trying to ask from this father; cry out to this father, persist if you are not getting the answers, ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking, and then he brings out the team. Remember, he started the prayer in verses one and two, saying you should pray to your father.

He goes back to that particular topic now and says, now, having told you this, let me ask you a question. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? For 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? Before I elaborate on this, just take a look at that text again and look at that line verse 12. If you ask for an egg, be given a scorpion.

Maybe you are not familiar with a scorpion, and you say what is the analogy between an egg and a scorpion? If you know what a scorpion is like, if you bust a scorpion or if you step on a scorpion, the internal organs burst out. It looks like a mixture of eggs, a yellowish mix. As a village boy, too many times, there were scorpions in my shoes. I did not know I'd put my feet in and squash them and all that, and I can tell you that it is not a good feeling.

You always feel lucky that you are not beaten by that scorpion because scorpions could be poisonous. But what is Jesus saying here in this analogy of a father? Jesus is trying to remind his audience as the disciples want to know that they, as natural fathers, are very aware of the sensibilities of a father. And as natural fathers, they always wish the best for their children.

Here, I offer a critique against the notion out there, especially in Western civilization, that ancient fathers were always tyrants, didn't care too much about their children, and that a father figure was always a problem. I study family dynamics in the ancient world and households in the New Testament. I don't know where they get that fact from because I can't find it anywhere.

There is always their stream in a context where a father may abuse a child, and philosophers may erase that and condemn that. However, the ideal father always loves the best for his children and cares for them. The whole idea that a father is a heartless father, caring for no one, is a misnomer that someone has injected into our social consciousness.

You see here, Jesus appeals to the disciples that even those around him who are fathers know the natural sensibilities of a father desiring the best for their children. Trying to highlight that, indeed, God desires the best for his children and will go on to answer their prayers and give them the best. That is why they should ask and keep asking; they should seek and keep seeking; they should knock and keep knocking.

So, if they, as fathers, know what is best for their children, Jesus is telling them that they should trust in the heavenly father's pleasure to give good gifts to his children. They themselves have pleasure when they are able to give good things to their children, and they wouldn't give a scorpion or snake or serpent for their children. So, the heavenly father has a good pleasure in giving the best for his children.

Here, highlighting the imagery of the heavenly father underscores the fact that there is a father in heaven who can provide and do what the earthly father could not. I love my children; I love them dearly, and I will do everything for them. But I could never do to my children half a quarter or 10% what heavenly father could do for them.

The other thing to note here is Luke's emphasis on prayer and the Holy Spirit. Luke wanted to remind the audience, the disciples at a time, that it is not only the father who provides bread for his children; it is not only the father who forgives his children and leads his children not into temptation. That Father has the good pleasure of even giving them the Holy Spirit.

My dear brothers and sisters, following this lecture series, I'd like to remind you that we have a heavenly father who loves us dearly. He made you in his own image and likeness, and refused to accept what society wants you to be, or wants to frame you to be as if you are not significant. You are significant in the eyes of the heavenly father, and the heavenly father is eager and willing to hear you if you have given Jesus Christ the chance to be your Lord and personal savior.

You can call on God as your father; you can pray to him. You can pray to him as it outlined in Luke's version of the Lord's prayer. And you can pray to him persistently, knowing that your heavenly father desires to give the good pleasure or the good things, the good gifts that he has for his children.

I don't know about you, but being raised by a single mother and coming to a full grasp of this understanding of my heavenly father has anchored my standing in God, strengthened my resolve to live a life that brings glory to God, and gives me that daring spirit to go forward knowing that my heavenly father is always at hand leading, guiding, directing for a good cause. I pray, and I trust that as you follow this lecture series, not only do you think about the intellectual insight you may get, but you also think about the relational dimension that Jesus brings into his discourse. He had a relationship with a father to whom you can pray, who cares for you, and whom you can trust.

May that God, may that Father give you that grace you need. May he give you the power and the resolve you need to be the faithful follower of Jesus, should I say the faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus as he would like us to be. God bless you, and I hope you keep learning with us.

Thank you.

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