

Is God as Good as You?

Text: Luke 11:1-12

Introduction: One thing that became obvious to those who followed Jesus was that He enjoyed praying. He often left them so that He could be alone in prayer. He sometimes prayed the whole night. Once after He finished His prayer at least one of the disciples asked Jesus to teach the rest of them to pray. V. 1

It was customary for rabbis to design prayers for their students. John the Baptist had done this for his disciples. No doubt Jesus was happy that his enthusiasm for prayer was contagious. So He gave the twelve a model prayer. It was a pattern. The real Lord's Prayer probably belongs to John 17. The model prayer was not always prayed in the same way as you compare this one with the one in Matthew 6. The basic outline of the prayer emphasizes both adoration and petition. I like this paraphrase of the prayer:

Father,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world aright,
Keep us alive with three square meals,
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil.

This prayer has maintained a freshness as evidenced in this man's appreciation. He wrote:

What gives this prayer its power?
It never says mine, but our.
Why does it grip me thus?
It never says me but us.
What may its beauty be?
It never says I but we.
It humbles me, but why?
It never says my but Thy."

Even though it is a super prayer, Jesus was concerned that this followers understand that prayers are not just words. Prayers are not like verbal coins to be put into a heavenly vending machine to get some item you need or want.

In a play by Maxwell Anderson two men, Biggs and Skimmerhorn find themselves in grave danger. A part of their conversation runs like this:

Biggs: "Say, do you know any prayers?"

Skims: "I know one."

Biggs: "Say it, will you?"

Skims: "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Bless the bed I lie on."

Biggs: "That's not much good, that one."

Skims: "It's the only one I know."

The problem wasn't that Skimmerhorn didn't know another prayer: The problem was, he didn't know anything about prayer. Jesus knew that prayer to be answered, enjoyed and understood must be more than any memorized words even though they were from His very lips. So He followed up with two questions and one answer that revealed the secret of prayer.

[Let's look at the first question. The KJV has more accurately introduced the verse in these words: "Which of you," in verse five and the question continues in verse seven. So the first question is:

- WHEN YOU PRAY DO YOU CONSIDER GOD TO BE THE BEST FRIEND YOU HAVE?

People in Jesus' time often traveled at night because the daytime was so hot. They would try to walk as long as they could. This man finally arrived at a friend's home at midnight. Bread was generally baked each day so that it would retain its freshness. Hospitality was a high priority in that day and the host was desperate to give the traveler a bed and some bread. His friendly host lived in a one room house. The family was bedded down on mats throughout the room. The sheep and goats were also brought into the house. A heavy bar had been placed across the door. All were sound asleep when the call for help joined the knocking at the door began. To get up would awaken the whole household. It would take sometime to get this menagerie of creatures back to sleep. But Jesus assumes that a good friend would do that and even if a good friend might not enjoy the bother or have a positive feeling about the request, he would do it. He will respond if for no other reason than to stop the noise and get back to sleep.

Based on this story Jesus made the application. Vv. 9-10 Each word is a new level of intensity The Pharisee in Luke 18 didn't ask for anything, but the publican begged God for mercy. "Seek" says that action must be taken so that the prayer can be answered. If you ask God for understanding of truth, then you should be looking into His word. The Bereans in the book of Acts were called noble because they "searched" the Word to see if the words they heard were verified in the Bible. "Knock" is the keyword because it relates to the incessant knocking of the desperate traveler. Jesus said, "If you consider the Lord as your best friend then shamelessly ask Him."

IT'S NEVER MIDNIGHT ON HIS CLOCK.

IT'S NEVER A BOTHER FOR HIM.

HE IS NOT LACKING IN PROVISION.

HE IS YOUR GREATEST FRIEND.

[Then Jesus gave them another question, v. 11]

WHEN YOU PRAY DO YOU CONSIDER GOD TO BE A PERFECT FATHER?

A good father will try to meet the needs and desires of his children. Sometimes to the detriment of the child he will give them a gift that they don't want. He may give his two year old son a train set, not so much that his child knows what to do with it, but he the dad wants to play with it himself. He may give his daughter a shiny convertible on her 16th birthday even though she hasn't had a driver's training session. But good fathers want their children to be happy. Fathers know what it is to have little children grab us around the knees and begged, "Please, daddy, please daddy, I'll never ask for anything else. Mommy said I could have this, if you say "yes." "Please daddy, if you love me you'll do this for me."

Jesus wants us to meet the Perfect Father. The One whose gifts are custom designed for our character. He has in wisdom and love gifts that fit us. Read Romans 8:32 noticing the words, "how will He not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" I think of the little boy in this story who understood the Lord better than many of us.

Mother: "Did you know that God was present when you stole the cookie from the kitchen? And was he looking at you all the time?"

Child: "Yes."

Mother: "And what was he saying to you?"

Child: "He was saying, 'There's no one here but the two of us—so take two.'"

So who has a better image of God? The mother who looks upon you watching you and keeping tabs on you or the boy who sees God as a generous father, who says, "Go on have another cookie?" I don't mean that this should be the total image of the Lord, but for some of us who pray we need a more gracious God to whom we pray.

[I'm sure you've heard the statement that prayer works. But if I were to ask you how it works, I wonder if you would know. Jesus gives us the right answer in this passage.]

YOU WILL KNOW THAT PRAYER WORKS WHEN YOU SENSE THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Look at Matthew 7:11 "he will give what is good to those who ask him." Luke says the Father will give "the Spirit of God." This is not as some say, the second blessing, or the ability to speak in tongues, but the sense of God's presence. It is the result of spending time shamelessly asking your best friend and your trusting father to help you. It is the experience of one who prays unceasingly until prayer is a life style, i.e. "a way of life." Read Psalm 73:25 When does prayer work? When God shows Himself to us.

Conclusion: Is God as good as your best friend? He is better. So treat Him that way. Go to Him often and shamelessly ask Him for something. The invitation I gave with this sermon was given on the basis that someone may be praying for your salvation at this very moment. Your willingness to acknowledge Jesus as your one and only Savior may be the answer to someone who has kept on asking and knocking until you open the door of your heart to Jesus.