The Lord's Prayer
Luke 11:1-13
7th Sunday after Pentecost, Year C July 27, 2025
Choptank Charge Pastor Nan Duerling

Good morning, friends. How delightful to see everyone! We hope you are all doing well and enjoying the long, hot days of the good old summertime.

Recall that last week we looked at the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha in Martha's home. She was bustling around, trying to get a meal together, while her sister Mary simply sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him teach. Many commentators have suggested that Martha was fulfilling her role as hostess. Yet, Jesus himself said that Mary had chosen the better part. Why? Martha was distracted, while Mary was attentive to Jesus. However, as we saw, both active disciples and contemplative ones are important in the kingdom of God. We all have our place. And we all need to study God's word and pray in order to act when Jesus calls us to do so. So, in many regards, each of us is both active and contemplative. One way is not better than the other. Clearly, though, those of us who prefer an active lifestyle have to be careful not to let ourselves get distracted by the many things of this world. We all need to stay focused on Jesus.

Today, we explore another familiar story—that of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray. Jesus himself is what many folks would call a "prayer warrior." By the time he gets to this point in Luke, we have already seen him in prayer in Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28; and 10:21-22. And he certainly isn't finished. We will also see him spending time with the Father in prayer in Luke 22:41-44 and 23:46.

As the scene opens in Luke 11:1, we learn that Jesus "was praying in a certain place." We are not told what his prayer is about; only that he is communicating with the Father. When he finishes, one of his disciples asks Jesus to teach them to pray, just as John taught his disciples. In a way, this seems like an odd request. Jews certainly knew how to pray. What Jesus shared with them was more of a framework, rather than a specific prayer. We see this each Communion Sunday when Rev. Mary Johnson provides us with a prayer that fits the model, though not necessarily the exact words, of Jesus. And we see this modeling in the Bible as well. In Luke 11:2-4, we have a sparse version of the Lord's Prayer. This may actually feel unfamiliar to you, since we normally pray the version found in Matthew 6:9-13. This version is considered more liturgical than Luke's, and so is often used in church services.

According to Niveen Sarras ("Working Preacher.org," Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, 2022), this is very much a Jewish prayer in both its structure and its content. She makes some relevant comparisons for us when she writes:

> There are parallel phrases between the Lord's prayer and the prayer Amidah (which means standing) or the Shemoney Esreh (which means eighteen) of Jewish liturgy. Observant Jews pray the Amidah three times a day. The basic structure of this prayer was well-established in Jesus' time, and the final form was canonized a century after Christ. For example, "Hallowed be thy name" relates to the third Amidah blessing: "Thou art holy and Thy Name is holy…We will sanctify thy name in the world, as thy sanctifiers in the heavens above."[4] "And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us," relates to the fourth

Amidah: “Our Father, Our King, forgive and pardon all our sins.”

> The Twelve Apostles’ teaching, or *Didache,* instructs Christians to pray the Lord’s prayer three times a day. It also adds the doxology at the end of the prayer, “for Thine is the power and the glory forever…Pray this three times each day.” Since the early Church Fathers’ time, Christians recited the Lord’s prayer during the liturgy, especially before Holy Communion prayer *Amidah* (which means standing) or the *Shemoney Esreh* (which means eighteen) of the Jewish liturgy. Observant Jews pray the Amidah three times a day.

The content of The Lord’s Prayer is essentially five petitions in which we ask God to:

1. hallow, sanctify, or make holy God’s name;
2. usher in the kingdom, which had arrived in Jesus, but wasn't completely present;
3. provide for our basics needs each day;
4. forgive others as we forgive them;
5. be delivered from temptations and times of trial.

With Jewish prayer life so well established, we have to wonder why these disciples would need a lesson on prayer. Maybe they are not the intended audience. Remember that Luke’s readers are primarily Gentile. They had no Jewish background, as many of Matthew’s readers did. So, they had to learn the basics,

A Gentile audience had to learn Jewish understandings of God and the kingdom. Most Jewish prayers do not refer to God as Father, but Jesus does so here, This, of course, can be problematic with many children (and adults) not having a positive view of “father” for a number of reasons. Rev. Niveen Sorras continues to help us to understand how these Gentile Christians hear the word “father.”

> Luke’s Gentile Christian audience’s experience with their fathers differs from their Jewish counterparts. The fathers in the Greco-Roman culture enjoyed complete control over their children and grandchildren. For example, a father decides whether his newborn child will be raised in the family, sold, or killed. Luke introduces the Gentiles to God, who is generous, loving, and attentive to God’s children’s needs. Luke changes his audience’s perspective on fatherhood by presenting God as “the Father who cares for his children and acts redemptively on their behalf.” The father-child relationship is based on the confidence of the child. This relationship is centered on love, not fear. God the Father in the New Testament is a personal, intimate, sacred, and trusted authority.

Especially those of us who have had a warm, trusting relationship with our fathers can understand why Luke’s Gentile audience would find it so difficult to call God “Father.” And yet, by calling God “Father,” we can all more easily understand that Jesus wants us to be in a loving relationship with the one he calls “Father.” This isn’t some far away holy being that we cannot relate to. What Jesus wants us to see is that prayer is about a trusting relationship, not the results the prayer gets. As Meda Stamper writes in “Working Preacher.org,” 2016:

> The point of prayer is not to change God’s mind but to shape ours, to make us fit for the kingdom, ready to live the only life possible in God’s household: one of love.

That’s a very different angle on prayer than the one that most of us have been taught. We prayed to get the results we wanted...the sooner the better. And yet what Jesus wants from us

is quite different. He wants us to be in a loving, trusting relationship with one who loves us. We can see that kind of father well illustrated in verses 11-13. This is a God who provides for us as a good father would. Children who ask for food are given nutritious things to eat, not things that will harm them. This is how God works. God wants the very best for us. And God is far more able to give good things than our earthly fathers are.

This all sounds good, but what do we do about the parable that Jesus told in verses 5-8? Great question! He's trying to tell us that this God loves us and can be trusted. But the parable he tells, at least in its English translation, suggests that the one in the house is very hard-hearted. You can yell and knock all you want, but the neighbor has no intention of getting out to help a neighbor who has unexpected company, This may seem far-fetched to our eyes. But remember that hospitality was expected by travelers at any time. They had no way to phone ahead to let a friend know they were coming. They just showed up. So what's a good neighbor to do? Well, get out of bed, unlock the door, and provide the neighbor with what he needs to feed his guest. To leave a friend stranded would be shameful, at the least.

In his book, *Proclaiming the Parables* (page 278), Rev. Dr. Tom Long gives us a contemporary example that may help us to better understand how unthinkable it would be to refuse to help someone in dire need:

> A parent whose young daughter has awakened in the middle of the night with an attack of appendicitis [needs help]. She needs to go quickly to the hospital, but to her father's alarm, he finds that the family car has a flat tire and the jack needed to change it Is missing. So he runs in a panic next door to his friend's house and bangs on the door. "Ruth is very sick," he shouts, and I need to get he to the ER, but I have a flat tire and I have no jack. Can I borrow your jack?" But from inside the house he hears hie neighbor say, ? Nah, It's late. Everybody's in bed. It's not a good time to be dealing with a jack. See you in the morning."
>
> Can you imagine that? Absolutely not. That's exactly the response Jesus expects from his disciples as well.

After a lengthy discussion of the meaning of the word *anaideian,* often translated as "persistence.," Tom summarizes what this parable really says to us (page 279). We're not looking at "persistence" in this parable on prayer, but rather, "shamelessness" and how to avoid it. Dr. Long suggests Jesus could tell the story this way:

> "Can you possibly imagine a situation in which you go to a friend of yours at midnight and say, "I need some help here. Another friend just arrived unexpectedly and I am caught unprepared. I have no food to serve him. I'm embarrassed, ashamed, and desperate. Can I borrow some bread?" and the friend inside the house would answer, 'No. Leave me alone. The door is locked and we're all down for the night. I can't help you'? No, I guarantee you, even if the guy in bed won't get up out of friendship, he will get up to give you what you ask simply to end the public display of your acting in such an embarrassing and shameful way." (Long, page 279).

So, what have we gleaned from these few verses in Luke? Yes, we have read Jesus' pattern for prayer, though as we mentioned earlier, we are far more accustomed to using Matthew's version. We've also heard Jesus present a hypothetical situation about a man caught in an embarrassing situation when a friend arrives unannounced and he has no food to offer him.

And then we're told that far more than a human parent, God will provide to us the good things we need.

We turn to Dr. Long once again to try to put all of this together (page 280):

> If a shameless guy with nothing more going for him than desperation manages to finagle a few loaves of bread in the middle of the night from a friend rudely roused from sleep, then "how much more" will the God who is a benevolent parent give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (11:13).

Your challenge for this week is to think about what prayer is and what it means to you. Spend some extra time in prayer, not to intercede for anyone or provide a laundry list of your needs, but to praise God and focus on God's holiness. Consider reading at least one book on prayer, perhaps *Seek My Face: Prayer as Personal Relationship in Scripture* by Jesuit, William a Barry, or *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home,* by Quaker author, Richard J. Foster.

In closing, Nan would again like to thank those who have led worship and read the sermon She is moving in the right direction, but progress is very slow. Her medical provider has said that this kind of fatigue can last for weeks, perhaps months. So, as much as she did not want to retire, and as much as she misses each one of you, she knows she has done the right thing in retiring and praying that you will soon have a new pastor. Please continue to pray for Nan as various doctors are trying to figure out what is causing this extreme fatigue. It's as if the Energizer Bunny's batteries have all given out at once! Love, Nan