

Luke 11A

- As we move into Chapter 11, we appear to step aside from the larger arc of the gospel story and explore a side moment between Jesus and His disciples
 - It's a brief exchange recorded in only two of the Gospels, here and in Matthew
 - But it's a fundamentally important teaching on one of a Christian's primary disciplines – prayer
 - But as I said, it only seems to be off the topic, when in reality it is a continuation of what transpired at the conclusion of Chapter 10.
 - In Chap 10 Jesus taught the disciples how they were to relate to their neighbors in the parable about the good Samaritan
 - Then at the end of Chap 10, He taught them how to relate to Himself as the one who embodies the Word of God
 - Now in Chap 11, Jesus teaches the disciples how to relate to the Father through prayer
- Let's read the open verses in this chapter

[Luke 11:1](#) ¶ It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

[Luke 11:2](#) And He said to them, "When you pray, say:
 'Father, hallowed be Your name.
 Your kingdom come.

[Luke 11:3](#) 'Give us each day our daily bread.

[Luke 11:4](#) 'And forgive us our sins,
 For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
 And lead us not into temptation.'"

- Here we find Jesus asked by His disciples how to pray, and Jesus responds with the Lord's prayer, as we now call it
 - If you memorized the Lord's prayer at some point in your life, then I'm guessing this is not the version to memorized

- The more familiar, more lengthy version is found at the beginning of Matt 6, and this is the version people typically memorize or recite
- These verses, especially the ones in Matt's account are well known by some many
 - Millions of people have memorized and recited the Our Father as the right way to pray to God
 - So as we come to these verses, we should take a moment to examine what Jesus was teaching the disciples and us as well
 - And what He expected us to do with this teaching
- As the disciples make this request of Jesus, they are really no different than any other student who would come to their teacher expecting instruction in an important discipline of their trade
 - These men understand from the upbringing and now from watching Jesus in His own prayer time that prayer was a critically important part of their relationship with the Father
 - It is the means by which God opens up a dialog with men
 - It's not just a one way conversation with us speaking to God, or even worse, just a conversation with ourselves in our own head
 - No, it's a time when we speak to God and when we submit ourselves to Him in that time, we can hear Him speak to us as well
 - It is a matter of effort and expectation
 - It comes down to our approach and our attitude
 - And those will be our outline or theme for today
 - Within our prayer life, what is our effort and our expectation
 - What is our approach and attitude in praying
 - And Jesus gives us the direction we seek here in these verses
- In verse 1 we see that the discussion ensues because the disciples see Jesus praying
 - Jesus clearly made prayer a constant companion to His ministry

- He seems to look for every opportunity, day or night, to converse with the Father
- And at some point, the disciples ask for direction on how to do the same
- In verse 2 Jesus answers them by saying when you pray...
 - How easy it would be to pass by these simple introductory phrase, but we shouldn't ignore it
 - He says when you pray
 - not if you decide to pray,
 - not should you decide to pray
 - not if you find time to pray
 - But WHEN you pray
 - Jesus is already presuming that we know that prayer is an important part of our spiritual development
 - So our first point is to be mindful of our **EFFORT** in prayer
 - As believers, followers of Christ, we need to look for opportunities to engage in a healthy, active prayer life
 - In a Christian household, many of us if we were fortunate to grow up in a Christian home, probably assumed that prayer happens at three times and places
 - Before meals
 - Before bed
 - And in church
 - Some might add before a pop quiz
 - And those are fine times to pray
 - But in truth, they are merely convenient reminders of the need to pray
 - They are not the reason to pray

- Do you see the difference?
- If we're not careful, we tend to associate the occasion for prayer with the purpose for prayer
 - In other words, I pray because I'm thankful for this meal
 - I pray because I'm in church
 - But that's like saying a husband only takes time to have a conversation with my wife because he needs information from her
 - I only speak with my friends when I need something
 - Now I can often slip into those selfish patterns, but I know they're wrong
 - And the same is true with God
 - If I only pray when an urgent need gives me the desire to communicate, I'm treating God no better
- So Jesus says when you pray because prayer should be an ever-present, on-going part of our daily lives
 - We should pray as Paul directs:

[Phil. 4:6](#) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by **prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- We pray because God's word calls us to pray
- We don't see prayer as something that happens only when certain circumstances dictate it, because ALL circumstances warrant prayer
 - We pray because we will always have needs
 - We pray because the Father has revealed Himself to us and we want to know Him fully
 - We pray to know His will for our lives
- Jesus' instructions then take the form of a specific prayer
 - But as we examine the specifics, let's take note of the form, the model that Jesus presents

- He starts with Father, hallowed be your name
 - So the first thing to note is that we pray to the Father
 - Within the trinity, scripture is always consistent in demonstrating that the audience for our prayers is always the Father
 - The Spirit gives us the words we pray (Rom 8:26)
 - Jesus by His sacrifice gives us the very opportunity to approach boldly with our petitions (Heb 4:16)
 - But it is the Father we approach, it is the Father who hears our petitions
 - And note that the word here for Father – pater – is the same as Abba in Aramaic
 - It is an endearing term for God – seeing Him as we see a loving earthly father, someone who desires to care for his children and enjoys hearing our needs and desires to respond
 - This was very different from what the disciples would have been taught before
 - God was never seen in such an intimate way under Jewish teaching
 - God was feared, God was fierce, God was mighty, God was unapproachably Holy
 - And He remains all these things today and evermore
 - But He is also a loving Father to His children
- Then we're told to declare his name to be hallowed
 - We don't use the word hallowed as much today
 - The word in Greek is hagiozo – which means holy, consecrated
 - But the phrase hallowed is your name is simply an expression of praise for the Father, and for His holiness, and His matchless name

- It could be translated may everyone regard your name as holy as they should
 - God's name is important in scripture and in eastern cultures, because a name was seen to be the summation of a person's attributes, effectively your reputation among people
 - And when we pray, we should pray to see God's holy name revered as it should be for His glory
- But it also implies a fulfillment one day
 - It occurs in the aorist tense, meaning a future specific occurrence when His name will be understood fully
 - In other words, it is a declaration of God future plan to be seen universally in his creation for Who he is
- Interestingly, then Jesus says Your kingdom come
 - This is a petition, a request again, and again in the aorist tense in the Greek
 - It's a petition looking forward to the approach of God's kingdom on Earth
 - Anytime you see a reference in scripture to God's future kingdom, there is only one kingdom in mind - Messianic
 - If this kingdom were already in place in any form, then this statement wouldn't make sense
 - Because it points to a specific moment in the future when God's kingdom will come
 - So Jesus tells us to include petition for God's kingdom to arrive
- Before we move on to the rest of the prayer, as yourself this question
 - Why should be pray for these things?
 - Aren't they destined to happen anyway?
 - Isn't God determined to have His name revered throughout His creation?

- Paul says in Philippians

[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus **EVERY KNEE** WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

- And isn't His kingdom destined to arrive on the day He has determined? The entire scripture teaches that God's kingdom on earth will arrive one day
 - Ezekiel describes it in detail, Rev 20:6 announces it
- So why pray for these things? Will they somehow fail to happen if we don't pray?
 - In other words, we've come to our second point concerning prayer – our expectation when we pray
 - These requests are things that God has will happen
 - And yet Jesus says to include these petitions in your prayers
 - And in that dilemma we learn something critically important about prayer
 - Our prayers aren't about persuading God to do something
 - For His mind is not subject to being changed

[1Sam. 15:29](#) "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or **change His mind**; for He is not a man that He should **change His mind**."

- What He determines to do, He will do
 - And what He determines not to do, He won't do
 - It will be His will that is done, not ours
- Which is why Matt's account includes that important addition
 - After your kingdom come, Matt's version adds Your will be done
 - We are praying to align our will with the Father's and not the other way around
 - Yes, we bring our petitions to Him even before we know His will, but in the course of our prayer life, we should pray for His will and His plan for the creation and then allow the Spirit to conform our will to His

- Then as we mature in our spiritual walk, we are going to find increasingly that our will is His will, and we will be praying for His plan and not our own
- So Jesus begins by saying pray for God's name to be revered, pray for His kingdom to come, then Jesus lists specific earthly needs
 - Pray for your daily bread
 - This is a simple expression of daily provision
 - The phrase in Greek suggests day by day, enough for each day and no more

[Prov. 30:8](#) Keep deception and lies far from me,

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with the food that is my portion,

[Prov. 30:9](#) That I not be full and deny *You* and say, "Who is the LORD?"

Or that I not be in want and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

- Then pray for forgiveness of sins
 - Jesus even includes a reminder that we are to forgive others as we have been forgiven
- Interestingly, are these things in less in doubt than the former?
 - Is God not going to give us our basic provisions in some form?

[Matt. 6:31](#) "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'

[Matt. 6:32](#) "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

[Matt. 6:33](#) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- And what about forgiveness of sins?
 - Have we not already been forgiven by our faith?

[Heb. 7:26](#) ¶ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

[Heb. 7:27](#) who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

[Heb. 10:10](#) By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**.

- The Father has already determined our needs

[Matt. 6:8](#) “So do not be like them; for your **Father knows** what you need before you ask Him.

- And we have already been forgiven, yet we are to ask for forgiveness
 - And yet we are told by Jesus to pray in this way nonetheless
- So again we are praying for our benefit, not God’s benefit
 - Prayer isn’t for God’s benefit, but ours
 - We learn things through prayer, we understand new things through prayer
 - And this leads us to the third point for this morning – our approach in prayer
- Do you approach prayer with the expectation that unless you get what you want from the experience, it was a failure
 - God didn’t answer my prayer
 - Some joke that God always answers prayers, but sometimes the answer is no
 - That’s trivializing God and prayer
 - God always answers prayers and the answers are deep and complex and life-long
 - They are never yes nor no
 - “Heal my daughter” becomes a life of learning about God...

- Prayer causes us to reconsider our desires and whether they are a part of God's will
 - Rather than want riches and fame, we pray for His fame and our daily needs
 - Rather than pray for revenge on our enemies, we remember our own sins and that now we are called to forgive others
 - Rather than seek our plan on earth, we seek His kingdom come
- And as we come to know God and see His will manifest in our lives, He receives glory through our prayers
- Finally, Luke records Jesus ending the prayer with the request that God lead us not into temptation
 - This is a Greek figure of speech, which is why it reads in this strange reverse way
 - It really means simply God help us remain faithful to You in the face of temptation
 - It's not that God would ever lead us into temptation – that phrasing is just a consequence of the reverse form of the Greek syntax
 - So our prayer example ends with a petition for God to strengthen us against ourselves
 - To strengthen us to endure and pass the test presented in temptations
 - This should be the constant cry of our heart in prayer, for we all have our temptations, those things we are especially prone to fall by
 - And we depend on His strength to withstand those temptations
 - 2Pet 2:9 teaches that our God knows how to rescue the godly from temptation

- And we pray to recognize that God is doing just that in our lives, though we so often refuse to avail ourselves of that protection
- Preferring instead to proceed headlong into the teeth of the lion and suffer the consequences of our disobedience
- So what are we to do with this model? Or the disciples for that matter
 - In other words, our third point is to understand our **approach** to prayer?
 - For example, is this the prayer we are to recite anytime we speak to the Father?
 - Did Jesus expect His disciples to put aside other prayer and to adopt these words (or the words captured in Matt's account) and make them a memorized, recited prayer?
 - As you know, many faith traditions – both Catholic and Protestant - have done just that
 - I grew up in a family that attended Catholic church
 - Personally, I don't remember much of what I heard in the many years of sitting in Catholic pews, but I remember the recited parts of the service
 - They were engrained in my memory – the doxology, the Apostle's creed, the Catechism, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, etc..
 - Later as an adult, I attended Protestant churches of various denominations, and found many of them said many of the same things
 - They had their own version of the Our Father, but it was still a memorized, recited prayer
- So was that Jesus' point to the disciples – learn these specific words, memorize them, and repeat them over and over again every time you wish to dialog with the Father?
 - Before we look at an answer in scripture, let's just consider this logically for a moment
 - What was the purpose in the disciple's question to Jesus?

- Teach us to pray
- Not teach us a prayer, but teach us to pray
- As His students, they desired to learn something they felt was crucial to their chosen walk in life
- What if Jesus had been a master carpenter, and these were his apprentices in the trade of carpentry
 - And they came to Him and asked Him how to frame a house
 - Wouldn't we expect Jesus to teach them the essentials of the task and use an example to illustrate the principles?
 - Wouldn't he discuss how to read blueprints, making measurements, swinging a hammer, building the structure properly, etc.
 - And then He would proceed to frame a house so they could see it all put together
 - But did He expect them to go off and build exactly the same house every time they set about framing?
 - Or as chef, if He was teaching baking, He would explain how to prepare ingredients, how to combine them in the right order, how to cook them properly
 - And He would probably demonstrate by making a cake
 - But He wouldn't expect them to go out baking the same cake over and over
- In both these cases, it's obvious that the teacher's point is to teach through a model, but not to expect the students to memorize the specific example
 - This would especially true in the case of prayer, because consider it's purpose
 - It's a dialog with the Father
 - It's an opportunity to learn from Him and ask Him to respond to our needs
 - If we always bring exactly the same words to that experience, what are going to learn? What kind of dialog would that be?

- If I responded to my wife with exactly the same words every time we engaged in conversation, how would she interpret my response?
- So logic dictates that this teaching was not intended for us to memorize and mindlessly recite these same words over and over again
 - And then there's scripture
 - When Matt teaches the Our Father, he records Jesus introducing the teaching with these words:

[Matt. 6:7](#) ¶ “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

[Matt. 6:8](#) “So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

- Isn't it ironic that the two verse immediately before the Our Father prayer in Matt's gospel tell us in no uncertain terms NOT to pray in repetitious ways
- And what has the church done in so many places? We've turned the prayer that follows into just so many words, to use Jesus' term
- It's a mantra, a chant
- And when prayer becomes chant, it changes from dialog into monologue
- From a faithful petition before God to a superstitious work of our flesh
- And that brings us to our final closing point – our **attitude** in prayer
 - How do we approach the Father in prayer?
 - Do we see prayer as an attempt to justify ourselves through our good works rather than a sincere effort to know God's will and be confirmed to it?
 - Are we repeating meaningless words hoping to get God's or man's attention?
 - Even group prayer, our flesh can find opportunity to seek glory for itself rather than talk to God
 - Perhaps this is why Jesus gives us this instruction in Matthew

[Matt. 6:5](#) ¶ “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

[Matt. 6:6](#) “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

- To be fair, many Christians recite memorized prayer or seek to draw attention to themselves in public prayer simply out of poor teaching or a misunderstanding of the purpose of prayer
 - I was once one of those misguided people praying Our Fathers and Hail Marys hoping that the more I did it, the more I might achieve spiritually
 - But scripture leaves no misunderstanding – Jesus is teaching us to seek the Father, to seek His will, to seek His goodness, and do so with an open heart to receive His word
 - To engage in a dialog to strengthen our relationship with Him
 - To seek him in a humble heart and with a focus obtaining an audience with God’s and not an audience among men
 - And when He works His will, we can give Him glory for answering our prayers that were prayed in His will
- Now if this week you feel somewhat less motivated to conduct prayer, than don’t be surprised
 - It’s a natural first reaction – wrong, but natural
 - Jesus knew that, and next week he addresses those concerns in Luke