



Sermon – March 3, 2019
Deron Biles

Verses Covered

Luke 11:1 - 13

Well good morning, Central. It's a great delight for me to be here. I bring you greetings from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. And our new president, Dr. Adam Greenway, who was voted on this last week is already on campus and we are excited about him being there and looking forward to what God is going to do through Southwestern Seminary. Appreciate being your partner in ministry. We exist to train God-called men and women for service in the local church. And so we thank you for your partnership, for the privilege of working with you. With me this morning is Grant Sellers and he works in the admission office at Southwestern Seminary. It may be that there are some of you, it may be that there are several of you here this morning feeling called of God to some area of Christian ministry and you need to connect with someone from Southwestern Seminary. We're going to be here after the service. Grant's got some paperwork. If you want to enroll this morning, you can do that. And we're delighted that you're here. Wow! Thank you, choir, praise team. What a great morning of worship. Our new president at Southwestern Seminary is preaching this morning at North Richland Hills Baptist Church where your pastor preached last Sunday. And he did a marvelous job.

It was such a delight to be able to hear the word of God as he expounded it. I was particularly interested as I was watching the recording of pastor Chris standing on the front row next to my pastor. Now you need to know my pastor is 6 foot 3. So here's your pastor and here's my pastor. My pastor is young. He's tall. He has a full head of hair and he's from the University of Kentucky. So I'm watching these two standing there side by side and here's what I'm thinking. If it were not for Jesus, these two men have nothing in common. And I'm so delighted to be here. Thankful for your pastor. My task this morning is to convince you of something that you already believe in. And to teach you something that you already know. Sounds like an easier task than it really is. It's actually the task that Jesus had with His disciples. And if you have your Bible, let me invite you to turn with me to the gospel of Luke, chapter 11. I want to talk this morning on the subject of prayer. Have you ever noticed that Jesus prayed a lot? Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He prayed often. Many times in the gospels, you see Jesus praying alone with the Father. When Jesus was being tempted by the enemy, Jesus prayed. When Jesus called His disciples, before that, He spent all night in prayer. When Jesus was in the process of celebrating victories like the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus prayed. When Jesus faced sorrow like the execution of John, Jesus prayed. But

we find other times Jesus prayed over meals. Jesus prayed when He was working miracles. He prayed in John, chapter 17 for the disciples. He prayed in the garden. And the Bible says He sweat drops of blood. When was the last time you broke a sweat when you prayed? Jesus prayed on the cross. And the Bible says that Jesus still is praying. In fact, Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, says He ever lives to make intercession for us. And here's what I'm thinking about the prayer life of Jesus. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more do you and I need to pray? It might be like the disciples this morning. You and I need to come to Jesus and ask Him to teach us how to pray. S. D. Gordon once said, you can do more than pray once you've prayed. But you can't do more than pray until you've prayed.

Now you already believe in prayer. You probably already believe that you should practice prayer. There's probably been times in your life when you have been involved in prayer. Some of you, in the very near future, are facing mid-term exams. Your prayer life's about to increase, at least temporarily. And then if you're like the rest of us, after that period passes, you'll go back to the same old dreadfully boring, and mundane habits of prayer that most of us spend our lives having. The irony is, we believe in prayer. We just don't always practice prayer. That's the story that Jesus is going to lead with His disciples. The problem's not unique to us. This is the same problem that the disciples had 2,000 years ago. So with your Bible open to Luke chapter 11, beginning in verse 1, I want you to see the answer as Jesus shared with His disciples. The Bible says,

¹Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just like John taught his disciples." ²And He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say: 'Father, Your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. ³Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. He did not bring us into temptation.'" ⁵He also said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I don't have anything to offer him; ⁷then he'll answer from the inside and say, 'Don't bother me; the door's already locked, my children and I have gone to bed; I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If 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?"

I want to suggest to you this morning, you are as close to God as you want to be. To the disciple's credit, they wanted more. Do you see that in their request of Jesus? They came to Jesus. And they came to Jesus in His certain place. The place is not really particularly significant in the story, except that the disciples seem to know where Jesus is. When they needed to find Jesus, they went to that place suggesting Jesus has been to this place before. And the disciples came to Jesus, notice, while Jesus was praying. And Jesus hears the request of the disciples who asked Him to teach them how to pray in the same way that John had taught his disciples. My translation actually says

that Jesus, when He finished, one of the disciples came to Him and asked Him. Now it's actually a little bit more clear in the Greek which actually suggests that they caused Him to stop praying. Or in other words, they interrupted Him. So Jesus, having been interrupted, been interrupted during His prayer, tells them a story about a man who was interrupted. And in the process, He answers their request. They asked Him to teach them how to pray, so Jesus gives them the model prayer. We see the model prayer recorded here and also in Matthew, chapter 6, where Jesus walks through the pattern, the process of prayer. It's not the exact words that you need to pray every time that you pray. But it's a pattern where we recognize who God is. We recognize the needs that we have, and He is the "need-meeter". We recognize that in the same way we want God to give to us, we in turn give to others. That's part of the pattern that Jesus taught us to pray. So Jesus goes through this pattern of how they are to pray. And then Jesus follows that with this parable about a friend at midnight. Now only Luke records this parable. It's a parable of a man who has a need and goes to a man he believes to be his friend. And Jesus draws the audience into the story when He says to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend." And Jesus is setting up a scenario of a perception of friendship. Is this what a friend would do? Is this the kind of friend that you have, or more specifically, is this the kind of friend that you are? And the story goes something like this. There are three characters in the story. There is the uninvited guest. The unprepared host. And the unwilling friend. And the uninvited guest came to the home of the unprepared host who then presumes on the unwilling friend at an inconvenient time. The unwilling friend rebuffs the request of the unprepared host perceiving it's better for him to fend for himself with the uninvited guest. And at this point in the story, you have a host who is unprepared, calling into question his character as a host. And a friend who is unwilling calling into question his compassion as a friend. So we're left with a climax of the story of an inhospitable host and an unfriendly friend. But despite the unwilling friend's refusal, the unprepared host persists. And eventually the unwilling friend relents and becomes willing, but not because he is a friend, but because of the persistence of the unprepared host. Perceiving that the persistence of this unprepared host and the inconvenience that goes along with it, is greater than the inconvenience of giving him whatever he asks. And Jesus said, "Now pray like that."

And you wonder at the audacity of this prayer that Jesus is teaching us to pray. This habit, this pattern, what is it that Jesus is trying to teach us about prayer. The host in the story believed he had a midnight friend. Now you know what a midnight friend is. A midnight friend is someone to whom you can turn at inconvenient times. You can go to them with needs. You can go to them with trials. You can go to them with crises at any time of the day and you will find them still to be a friend. You see the issue in the story is not about borrowing bread. After all, the man could repay the bread the next day and even better, when the bread was baked fresh. No, the issue is the timing of the request that tests the friendship of the friend. The host wanted to show hospitality, but lacked the ability. The friend possessed the ability, but lacked the desire to show hospitality instead preferring to unfriend his friend rather than be inconvenienced. Now look at the climax. When you get to verse 8, the pivotal point that Jesus is making, "I tell you even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is a friend, yet because of his friend's shameless boldness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs." And so Jesus said, "He gives him something, not out of friendship, but out of the persistence of the unprepared host."

Now you want to be careful with passages like this in the New Testament that you don't allegorize the details of the story. Otherwise, you're left with a picture of God as a cranky neighbor who gets

frustrated when you come to Him at inconvenient times. Jesus is not teaching His disciples to pray for daily bread, but know in the back of your mind, God really doesn't want to give it to you. But if you wear Him down, eventually God's going to give you whatever you ask. That's not the lesson Jesus is teaching about prayer. In fact, as you look at the details of the story that you find when you get to the conclusion to the message, the parable is a contrast. Jesus is teaching us something about God that is magnified much more than we learn about ourselves. He is contrasting the generosity of God to the stinginess of the neighbor. He's contrasting the prayer life of Jesus with the prayer life of the disciples. He's contrasting the way that you give to your children and the Father gives to His children. It's a picture of how much more is God.

Now look at verse 13 in your text. I want you to see as Jesus draws this message to the climax. 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. That's the pivotal point of this parable, the story. All of this leading to teach us something about prayer. How much more is God? So Jesus says in verse 9, "I say to you, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you'll find. Knock and you'll find that the door is already open to you." And so if your friend will give based on your persistence, how much more will the Father give to you? But wait, there's more to the story and I want you to see what the text says. Jesus is not just saying that God gives when we ask. Look more closely at verse 13. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask? Now we discover that Jesus is not just saying, when you ask God will give. Jesus is saying, when you ask, God will give Himself, the Holy Spirit. How much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to everyone who asks? God will give Himself, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Teacher, the Promised One. Jesus said in John 1:14, 15, and 16, it's to your advantage that I go away because when I go away, I'll send you the Holy Spirit and He'll teach you everything that I've taught you. That Holy Spirit, the One who intercedes for us with groanings that are too deep for words, Jesus said, "When you ask, the Father will give Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit." And in the end you discover God is the friend at midnight. God is the One who is always there for us. God is the One who answers when we call. God is the One who listens when we pray. So the application is you already know how to pray, you're already convinced that you should pray. The answer is you should pray because how much more will your heavenly Father give?

So here's what we learn in the story. Jesus is teaching us first that we should pray. Did you see at the very beginning of the story when the disciples were looking for Jesus, they found Jesus and they found Him praying. They interrupted Him believing that their need to learn how to pray was more pressing than Jesus' need to pray. But the significance of the story is, Jesus was praying. Not only that, when Jesus turns to the disciples and He begins to answer their request in verse 2, He said to them, "When you pray." The assumption Jesus is making is that you will be in prayer. So we learn from the story that we should pray. Not only that, we learn what we should pray. When Jesus walks through the model prayer, do you see the ingredients? These are not the only words that you use when you pray. Not even the pattern you should necessarily follow every time that you pray. But He's giving us some principles about the recognition of Him and who God is. About the fact that He's listening when we pray. About the fact that He is the One who can meet the needs of our lives. So we learn what we pray and we learn to whom we should pray. Notice Jesus said, He's Father. Implying you're His children. And like that child in the story, you come to the Father who is the "need-meeter", and you come to Him as the one who is all-sufficient, and

you recognize He's the loving Father. You recognize He's the One who gives good gifts to His children. We come to Him as our Father. We learned that we should pray and what we should pray and to whom we should pray and how we should pray. We pray with persistence. In fact, that's the tense of the verbs that Jesus uses beginning in verse 19. Literally ask and keep on asking. Seek and keep on seeking. Knock and keep on knocking because throughout this particular passage, the emphasis is on the persistence of our prayer. Maybe it's true in your life that sometimes we, we come to God in prayer, maybe over a mealtime or some other moment of desperation we call out to God and then we go on with the rest of our day or the rest of our lives as though nothing else really happened and fail to persist in prayer. Jesus is teaching a lesson about how to pray. You come to the Father and you keep on coming to the Father. You pray with persistence. We learn that we should pray. We learn what we should pray. We learn to whom we should pray. We learn how we should pray. But then finally and ultimately and most significantly in the text, we learn why we should pray. Here's why we pray. We pray because our Father is more. That's the pinnacle of the story. That's the climax of the message. That's the application Jesus is making. Our Father is more. How much more will your Father give? You already know how to pray. You probably already agree that you should pray.

So this morning I want to challenge you to inconvenience God. I want to challenge you to interrupt God. I want to challenge you to interrupt God with your needs. I want to challenge you to interrupt Him with your questions. I want to challenge you to interrupt God with your questions, interrupt Him with the high points of your life, interrupt Him with the low points of your life. Interrupt God at midnight and early in the morning. And here's what you're going to discover. God likes to be interrupted. You're never an inconvenience to Him. Anytime in any need in any way, you come to the Father, you'll find not only is the Father listening, not only is the Father there, you'll find that while you're knocking on the door to the house, you're already inside. And your Father loves when His children pray. So here's what we need to learn that we already know. It's that we should pray. And here's what we need to be convinced of that we already believe in. It's that we should pray with persistence to a loving Father who is more. How much more? Well that's what you'll learn when you begin to pray like Jesus prayed.

Would you bow together in prayer with me?

Father, in the name of Jesus, will You teach us to pray like Jesus taught His disciples? And may we rediscover how much more You are. In Jesus name. Amen.