

ENJOYING GOD // Daily Bread

There was a homeless beggar in the 1st century, who lived in the city of Jericho. His name was Bartimaeus, and he was blind. He'd heard the rumors of a rabbi from Nazareth who was able to perform all kinds of healings and miracles for nobodies and outcasts, for the poor and needy. One day, as he was begging, he heard Jesus and his followers going by. He cried out to Jesus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

And all the people around Bartimaeus told him to be quiet. But he cried out even louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stopped in the middle of the crowded street and told the crowd to bring the man to him. And now the people that were telling him to shut up, were now comforting and encouraging him, like, *we better change our tune, or we're going to get in trouble with Jesus!*

So Bartimaeus immediately got up and began to make his way toward Jesus. We don't know how long Bartimaeus had been begging on the side of that road, maybe since childhood? Maybe his whole life? Just imagine the anticipation, the excitement, the hope building in this man's heart, and the crowd, knowing what Jesus can do for him. It's all building to this moment where this poor, blind beggar is standing before Jesus, and Jesus does something so strange. He looks at him and says,

Mark 10:51, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (ESV)

Everyone knew the answer to that question! He's blind! What do you think he wants you to do for him?

And Bartimaeus says, "Let me see, give me my sight!" And Jesus heals him.

In John 5 when Jesus approaches the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, Jesus walks up to a man who'd been disabled for 38 years waiting to be healed, and the first thing Jesus asks him is, **(John 5:6)** "Do you want to be healed?"

At the wedding at Cana where Jesus turns water in to wine, He asks His mother... **John 2:4**, "Woman, what does this have to do with me?"

What can be so confusing about all of these stories is before Jesus ever gets to the Lord's Prayer, he says this.

Matthew 6:8 "...your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

Which begs the question, why ask? Why pray? Why bring our requests to God if God already knows what we need?

These stories illustrate a profound reality, not only in our relationship with God, but our relationship to ourselves and to the world around us. Because although God already knows what we need, He asks us, not because He doesn't know, but because He wants us to become keenly aware of what we want and need and articulate those needs to Him.

Why? Because there are things that happen when we pray, that wouldn't happen if we didn't.

What if Bartimaeus just sat quietly on the side of the road? What if he never had the audacity to cry out above the noise of the crowds? What if when he got to Jesus, he doubted and instead of asking for his sight, he asked for a new mat to beg from? What if Jairus never cried out for his daughter?

Nothing would have happened. No healing would have come. Nothing would have changed.

James 4:2, "You do not have, because you do not ask."

Over the last month or so, our family has been praying for the salvation of a family we're just beginning to build relationship with. Last Sunday morning, we prayed specifically for more opportunities to know them and love them.

Last Sunday afternoon, their whole family—mom, dad, and two kids—are hanging out in our front yard. Our kids are playing together, and Misty and I had a two hour conversation with them, getting to know them. God immediately answered our specific prayer we just prayed hours before.

Had we not prayed that prayer, would that opportunity have come up? Maybe, maybe not. But I can tell you this: it wouldn't have been on our radar, and we would have completely missed an opportunity to cooperate with what God was wanting to do in that moment.

"Prayer means many things to many people, but at its simplest and most immediate, it means asking God for help. It's a soldier begging for courage, a soccer fan at the final, a mother alone in a hospital chapel. The Lord's prayer invites us to ask God for everything from 'daily bread,' to the 'kingdom come.'"

- Pete Greig, *How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People*

This is where we see a significant shift in what we're taught to pray in the Lord's prayer. Because if you'll notice, nearly everything Jesus taught us to pray so far has been centered on the Father.

Matthew 6:9-10, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done..."

This is an invitation to remember who it is that you're talking to. A loving Father who cares for you, loves you deeply, who is holy and sacred. The ultimate reason and purpose for life, the ultimate beauty in the universe. He is the creator of heaven, and earth, and everything in them, and you get to address Him as your Father.

You have to know who you're coming to. You have to know that He has the power to flip the Earth on its head if he wanted to. The same God that shook Mt. Sinai with lightning and thunder, the same God that split the sea, the same God that holds the planets in their orbit, invites you to call him your father. That ought to give you immense confidence in prayer.

Then we get to the center point, and the turning point of the Lord's prayer, **Matthew 6:10**, "...on earth as it is in heaven."

We're invited to call the perfection and beauty of heaven into the brokenness of earth.

And then look at the rest of the Lord's prayer. There is a movement from "*Your name, your kingdom, your will...*" now to...

Matthew 6:11-13, "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

If you just think about that phrase, "give us," daily bread not only speaks to our needs, it speaks to our wants. Because a few verses after the Lord's prayer in Luke's account, Jesus gives us a parable that is so unbelievably simple and ordinary, and incredibly enlightening as it relates to petitionary prayer.

Luke 11:5-7, "And He said to them, 'Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves, for 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"?'"

Luke 11:8, "I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs."

That word literally means to be shameless, insolent, rude, ill-mannered, and bothersome.

And Jesus says, pray like that! Ask like that! Bother God with your requests! And because this guy bothered his neighbor enough, he received the bread he wanted. And to be clear, he didn't NEED the bread. He WANTED the bread.

In our parable series, we talked about the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow out of Luke 18. Jesus gives us the same principle.

There's an indifferent and unjust judge, and there's a widow coming and asking for justice against her adversary. The judge doesn't want to give it to her, but eventually the judge says in the parable, *"This lady is wearing me out! I'll give her the justice she's asking for..."*

Then Jesus says, **Luke 18:7-8**, *"...will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night...I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily."*

Shameless, persistent, bothersome requests!

Now we have to be careful because Jesus is NOT answering the question, how does God receive our prayers?

Jesus is not saying that you are even capable of bothering God with your requests. God does not lose His patience.

Jesus does not lose His patience with us and just giving in because we won't leave Him alone. And one of the dangers with parables is assigning meaning to things that the parable is not addressing.

It's not, how does God answer? It's, how should we ask?

And the answer is: relentlessly, shamelessly, rudely, constantly. Ask so much, so often that you feel like you're bothering God about it, even though it's not even possible.

When Jesus says to bring our requests to him, it carries with it the idea of a child pestering their parents. Asking, and asking, and asking until you just give in because you don't want to go insane!

But this is how children ask. They're shameless! Persistent! Audacious! And Jesus says to go to God like that. Why? Because if you go back to the beginning of the Lord's prayer, God is your Father. Come to Him like His child.

This is why Jesus says in Luke 11...

Luke 11:9-10, *"And I 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, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."*

Look at the Old Testament examples. It's astonishing. In Genesis 18, God comes and says, *"Abraham, I'm about to wipe out Sodom and Gomorrah where some of your relatives live."* Abraham begins to pray and look at how he prays.

He says, *"Lord, if there are 50 good people there, you wouldn't wipe them out, would you? Please, for my sake, do not wipe out Sodom and Gomorrah if there are 50 good people."* God

says, "All right." Abraham says, "Let me ask you one more thing. If there are 45 good people in there, 45 decent people, will you please not destroy it?" God says, "Okay, I won't destroy it for 45."

"One more thing," Abraham says. "How about for 40 people?"

"Fine I won't do it for 40 people."

"Uh ... how about 30? How about 20? How about 10? 5?" And God allowed Lot to escape before destroying the city.

And did you know that Jesus Himself came through Lot's lineage? What if Abraham didn't have the audacity to plead for his family in Sodom? What if he never asked?

Or think about Moses in Exodus 33. He's going, "God, I'm not doing what you tell me, unless you come with Me."

Does that not sound like a child/parent conversation. Like, "I don't want to take the garbage out because it's dark outside and I'm scared. Dad, can you come with me?" Absolutely, no question. You're still doing the work, but I'll come with you.

Luke 18:16-17, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

What is crystal clear in what Jesus teaches us about bringing our requests to God is that we're to be shameless. To bring a childlike audacity in what we ask of God. And to be bothersome, painfully persistent in our requests.

"When nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stonecutter hammering away at his rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it – but all that had done before."

- Jacob Riis

This is a perfect visual representation of persistence in prayer. And it's an encouragement to those of us who yet to see our prayer answered, to keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. To keep pounding away at that stone until it breaks in two.

Pete Greig tells the story of Queen Bertha of Kent from the 6th century in England. She was a Christian, her husband was not. He was a pagan king. One day, wanting to be kind to the queen, he had a chapel built for his wife where she could go and do all her Christian things. Essentially it became her prayer room.

She went to this prayer room every single day and prayed for her husband, King Ethelberht, to be saved. It took 17 years, every day, praying in that little chapel until God dramatically answered her prayers.

In 597 AD, a group of monks from Rome came to England, and began preaching the gospel, and not only did King Ethelberht surrender his whole life to Jesus as the one true King, but a massive missional movement began from that place throughout the England. Thousands and thousands of people turned to Christ.

The reason that the famous Canterbury Cathedral was built on King Ethelbert's land was solely because His wife prayed for his salvation faithfully for 17 years. The heart of Anglicanism around the world today goes back to a wife that faithfully prayed for her husband.

Bertha thought she was praying for just her husband, but in reality, she was praying for her nation and for generations to come, and we're still feeling the impact of those prayers 1,400 years later.

Sometimes, we're praying prayers for YEARS until we see an answer. And other times, we see answers months, weeks, days later, and even in the very instant we're praying.

So today, we're going to respond by bringing our requests to God. Here's the invitation for us today. Ask, seek, knock.

Luke 11:9-10, "And I 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, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."