

Luke 11:1-13

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[0 : 00] Has anyone here got a computer at home that they're not very good at working with? Has anyone, like, really useless with computers?

I'm really useless with computers. I can just work at one in my office, sort of, to do the things that I want it to do, but I'm not very good. And those of you that know me will know that I didn't know how to put a screensaver on my computer for a long time, so I had to sell a picture over the front of the computer screen to act as a screensaver.

That was really bad, isn't it? I heard a story quite recently of someone who was even worse than me when it comes to computers. He bought a new computer and he got all the bits and pieces, and he took them out of their boxes and put the boxes into the bin and put everything on the bench and connected it all up and so on, and it would not work.

So, he fiddled around for a while and then he phoned the helpline. He said to the guy at the other end, I bought this new computer and it will not work.

And this clever person at the end of the helpline said, Well, have you tried... He said, the screen's blank. He said, have you tried pressing Ctrl-Alt and Delete, one after the other, very quickly, and you may get something on the screen.

[1 : 16] So he did this, nothing happened. So the clever computer person said, Well, have you tried, I don't know, fiddling with some other thing? So he fiddled for ages and ages and ages and nothing happened. The guy kept saying, look, it's not working.

This is terrible. I paid £126.26 for all this apparatus and it will not work. And then in exasperation, the guy at the other end said, So it's Sean.

There was a short period of silence. And the customer sort of coughed and cleared his throat and said, Thank you.

No, it's not. And the guy had got all the apparatus connected up, but it was all on this bench that was beautiful. But he had forgotten to switch the thing on at the wall.

Isn't that so much like us in our lives, in the church? We've all the right apparatus, all the right bits and pieces, all sort of connected up in the right way, but not linked into the power source.

[2 : 18] The power is not switched on. And what Jesus is doing here in Luke chapter 11 is giving us a means of connecting to the heavenly power source, to his heavenly Father, and to the Holy Spirit.

Now, I just want to look very broadly at this passage. Luke 11, 1 to 13. But Jesus is teaching about prayer. And prayer really is the connection to the heavenly power source.

And what Jesus is saying here is, This is what you pray for, and this is how you must pray. He deals with these two really huge issues that trouble us so much in our Christian lives and in the life of the church.

But Jesus is saying, This is what you pray for, and he gives a little summary here, what we call the Lord's Prayer. And then he goes on, and he emphasizes certain very important things about the way in which we pray.

But before he does that, we have to notice the reason for which Jesus gives us teaching at this particular point in time. And the three divisions I'm going to follow for my sermon this morning are quite simply the following.

[3 : 45] First of all, why do we pray? Okay? Why do we pray? And then, secondly, what do we pray for? And then, thirdly, how do we pray? It's not a comprehensive study by any means, but it's just what comes out of this passage.

First of all, why do we pray? We read that one day Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.

The first reason that we pray is because the need is great. There is a great need in our own personal lives as Christians and in the life of the church.

I am absolutely convinced of this. One thing, that this church will never achieve anything of any lasting value unless it is a praying church.

I am absolutely convinced that you, as a Christian, will never achieve anything of any lasting value unless you are a praying Christian. I am absolutely convinced of this, that you will never become a Christian if you are not one unless you begin to pray.

[4 : 56] The need is great. And in the context, Jesus had been praying, the disciples had obviously been listening to him. And they became acutely aware of the deficiencies in their own prayer life.

They heard Jesus. They heard God in human flesh praying to his Father. And they felt so inadequate.

And they were also aware of the fact that the ministry of John the Baptist was a ministry that was immersed in prayer because John was obviously a man of prayer.

We know that John spent years in the wilderness. And what did he do in the wilderness? I am sure he didn't just eat locusts and wild honey. We kind of have this vision of John the Baptist out in the desert.

What was he doing? Well, he was sitting there in a coat made out of camel's hair and he spent all the time sleeping and eating locusts and wild honey.

[5 : 57] Well, I am sure he did much more than that. He would have been sick of locusts and wild honey if he did that. I am sure he was a man of prayer like Elijah before him who spent so much time communicating directly with his God.

And the disciples were aware of the fact that the ministry of John the Baptist was one that was surrounded by prayer and immersed in prayer. And they became aware of their deficiencies here. The need was great. They saw the need that they had in their own life of improving the quality of their prayers. And this is why Jesus gives the teaching that he does at this particular time.

So the need is great. And of course the need is great. You only need to turn on the television or open the newspapers or look at your own life or look at your neighborhood and you'll see that the need is great.

But what else what is the other another reason for the teaching being given at this particular time. The need is great. The privilege is great. What an amazing privilege it is to pray.

[7 : 05] Do you see prayer as that? Not just something that we do because we need to. But something that is such an amazing privilege. At the very beginning of his teaching Jesus says to them when you pray say Father.

Do you see prayer in that way? As simply going and speaking to your Heavenly Father. What a privilege that is to call the God of the universe the God who has made the vastness and the complexity of this universe and the intricacy of one single human cell is mind-blowing.

Do you see the privilege of prayer that you can go straight to the God of the universe to the power room the control room of the universe the one who has made everything and sustained everything and simply say Father.

Father. What a privilege that is. The need is great. The privilege is great. And then the third reason is that we have a great example in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever noticed in the Gospels how many times we read of Jesus particularly the night before some crucial decision like when he was choosing his twelve apostles how he went out to a solitary place and he spent a whole night in prayer and there are so many other occasions in which Jesus rose up a great while before the dawn and went out and prayed to his Father.

[8 : 48] There is an example and we have some of the recorded prayers of Jesus. John chapter 17 There is Jesus praying to his Father.

What an example we have. The need is great. The privilege is great. The example is great. And these are three reasons that come out from this particular passage for prayer.

But what's the second thing? Jesus said this is what you should pray for. So why do we pray? We pray because the need is great privilege is great and we have a great example. What do we pray for?

Well what Jesus said when you pray say Father hallowed be your name your kingdom come give us each day our daily bread forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us and lead us not into temptation.

And this is a summary of what we call the Lord's Prayer. And the version in Matthew is rather longer than the version we have here. But we'll just stick with the one that we have here.

[9 : 50] What do we pray for? Now Jesus is not expecting us just to recite this thing over and over again and expect that to achieve something. Although it is certainly appropriate if you are stuck for something to pray then you pray through the Lord's Prayer.

Personalize it. Bring it into your own experience it's an amazing model prayer. What do we pray for? Well first of all before we pray for anything we praise.

That's the first thing. And we often think of praise as being going through what's on this board here. Sunday morning and Sunday evening that is praise we stand up we sing and that is praising God. Well it is and it should be but that is not just praise. Praise is not just confined to the times that we're in here Sunday morning and Sunday evening.

There is something amazing about praising God. Have you ever found this in your own experience? You're feeling really low and you're perhaps not quite sure what to pray about or to pray for.

[11 : 02] Or maybe there's something that's really burdening in you and you want to go to God and to pray and to bring it to God. But before you do that you say well I'm going to have a short time of worship first of all.

Have you ever tried that? Sing a worship song or two just to focus your mind on God before you start. And before you know it you think well I really enjoyed singing that worship I'm going to sing another one and you go and get a book down and you pick your favourites sing a second one and a third one and before you know it the huge problem that you're going to bring to God seems to have gone very much smaller because you've focused yourself upon God.

And this is where Jesus he's so wise he knows us so well he says look begin begin your times of prayer with praise and worship and you will find and you will find that the things that really are so huge and burden you will become so much smaller when you focus upon these things through the greatness of the God that you've come to pray to.

So when you pray begin with praise. Will you try that this week if you don't do that regularly? I challenge you to do that tomorrow morning or tomorrow evening whenever you have your time of prayer.

It's quite difficult to live in a house full of people because we feel kind of inhibited about singing when there are other folks around. I don't feel inhibited about singing in the shower but I feel inhibited in other places.

[12 : 35] Guests in our house get so fed up if I get up early in the morning without singing in the shower. But find somewhere if you can that's reasonably quiet tomorrow for your quiet time.

And begin with a short time of praise. It revolutionizes your prayer life. And Jesus puts it in that order. Begin with praise. When you praise, say Father, hallowed be your name.

Praise first of all. Then what's the second thing? Your kingdom come. Well, we're praying in the second part of the Lord's prayer for power.

It's for the power of God to be manifested in the world because when we are saying your kingdom come, what are we saying? We're saying first of all, Lord, do whatever it is you want in my life today.

Do you realize what you're asking for if you say to God, your kingdom come? You're saying, Lord, your kingdom come in my life. I submit to you. I submit to your will, your purposes.

[13 : 40] I am yours today. Do whatever it is you want in my life today. Your kingdom come in my life. God's power is a scary thing to pray. Prayer can be a scary thing too.

You've got to be prepared for God to do amazing things, unexpected things. We pray for power. We pray for God's power to be at work in our lives, bringing his kingdom to fruition through our lives.

But we also pray that God's power may be manifested in the world at large. your kingdom come in the lives of the people in your church and the lives of those out in the world.

We want your kingdom to be extended, to be advanced. We want your power to be seen in our lives and in the world. And Jesus says, first begin with praise and then pray for a manifestation of God's power in your own lives, in the life of your church, and in the society and the situations.

in which you live. So we praise. So the first thing is praise. The second thing is power. What's the third thing? Give us each day our daily bread. Provision.

[14 : 53] Provision. Provide for us, Lord. Give us what we need. Just give us what we need. It's a very hard thing to pray, really, isn't it, in contemporary Western society, when all of the advertising

on the television and the newspapers, encourages us to desire things that, in most cases, we don't actually need at all.

It's so hard, I think, to focus simply upon the issue of what we actually need on a daily basis. Jesus says quite clearly to us that if we seek his kingdom, he will give us all the things that we really need on a daily basis.

And I don't want, we don't have time to go into this, but this petition is a very challenging petition in a materialistic society. Give us for each day our daily bread.

Lord, just give us what we need. There's a very wise man, lived hundreds of years before Jesus came. His name is Agur, and his words are recorded in Proverbs chapter 30.

[16:09] And he prayed, I think it's really an amazing prayer. He said, don't give me poverty, because if you give me poverty, then I'll become so, so consumed with my needs, I might even stoop to stealing, and I will disgrace you.

please Lord, don't give me poverty. There's nothing really virtuous in and of itself in poverty. But then he also said this, he said, Lord, don't give me riches, because if you give me riches, then I may forget about you.

I may say, who needs God? I've got two cars in the drive. Why do I need God when I have two cars? I have a six-figure salary every year.

Why do I need God when I have a six-figure salary? I don't need God. I can go down to Sainsbury's. I can fill up the chest freezer till it's bursting. Why do I need God?

Agur said, Lord, don't give me poverty and don't give me riches. Just give me enough. And then I can focus on you and not in all material possessions.

[17:24] Either acquiring them or them acquiring me. It's a very challenging petition this. And it's simply for provision. So Jesus says, praise, power, provision.

And then what's the fourth thing? It's pardon, forgive us our sin, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. I think I've probably said this to you before.

Do you know the problem with what Jesus teaches? The problem with what Jesus teaches is not understanding it. We often like to think that, you know, what Jesus is teaching is just so incredibly deep and it's just so amazing that I need to go to this book and that book and the next book and I'll look up some website just to see what does Jesus actually mean by this?

Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. The problem with so much of the teaching of Jesus is not understanding it. It's doing it.

And what Jesus says here is, look, we have need of having our sins forgiven. We need pardon. We need to come to God and ask him to forgive us.

[18:45] If you are not a Christian this morning, if you have never really trusted in Jesus Christ, then the first thing you need to do is to pray this prayer from the bottom of your heart, forgive me my sins, for I trust in Jesus and in his blood to cleanse me.

If you pray that prayer, then God will hear and answer and transform your life. If you are not a Christian, that is where you have got to begin. But those of us who are Christians also need on a daily basis to bring our sins to God for forgiveness.

Forgive us our sins, he says. And, you know, we are aware of the things that we do on a daily basis which are displeasing to the Lord. Let's bring them to him on a daily and an hourly basis and ask him to forgive us and he will.

But, there is a qualification here. And this is where it gets really difficult. You know, in some ways, you know, we can almost accept this idea that if we sin, if we do something that is displeasing to God, what do we do?

We go and we confess it and we say, Lord, please forgive me. And he forgives you. And that's great. But, here is the hard bit. Jesus says, can you really pray this when you come to me asking for forgiveness?

[20:06] Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sinned against us. That's the hard bit.

That's the bit where our Christianity is really put to the test. When you go to God asking for forgiveness of sins, are you going? And in your heart, you bear a grudge against someone who has wronged you in some way.

They may even have asked your forgiveness, but you're not willing to give it. Well, we needn't expect God to forgive us our sins if we're not prepared to forgive others.

And there's an amazing teaching in Matthew 6. And Jesus says, look, you come to church, and you come here to worship me, and you know that there's something wrong between you and another person.

Jesus says, I give you permission to get up out of the church service and go and put it right. I'm not interested in your worship until you sort out that problem with that other person.

[21 : 17] That's a frightening thing, isn't it, really? You see what I mean? The teaching of Jesus is easy to understand, but it's hard to do.

And that's what he wants us to do. He says, forgive our sins, is what we ask God. And we've got to be able honestly to say, we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

How can we expect God to forgive us if we're harboring a grudge against some other person? So what have we got? Praise, power, provision, pardon, and the last one you could probably predict, lead us not into temptation, is protection.

We need to be protected on an hourly and a daily basis. He says, lead us not into temptation. Lord, please don't bring us into any situation which is going to make it difficult for us to live the life you want us to live.

And Lord, if we are tempted, please keep us from sin. Keep us from the devil. Do you believe in the devil? I asked you this before, I think.

[22 : 24] I was amazed, actually. I read somewhere or heard somewhere quite recently. I can't remember exactly what the figure was now. There must have been at least half of people in the United States who profess to be born again Christians don't actually believe in a personal devil.

I find that amazing. They must be living on another planet. Do you believe in a real personal devil? Do you believe in a force that is intent on destroying your life, your happiness, your future, your family, your church, your society?

One of the names that's so powerful when it's applied to the devil is that name, destroyer. It's applied in revelation. He is the destroyer. Do you believe he exists?

Do you believe that he wants to bring you into temptation and to make you sin? He can't make you do anything. But he wants to do that. And this is why on a daily basis we need to pray for protection. Lead us not into temptation. What an amazing prayer this is. What amazing elements there are. Praise. Power. We want to see God's power in our lives, in our church, in our society, at work.

[23 : 44] We want to know God's provision. We want to know his pardon. We want to know his protection. Will you pray through these five elements tomorrow? I'm going to challenge you to do that. Begin with a short time of praise.

And then, ask for God's power to come. Ask for him to provide, to pardon, to help you forgive others who you may have a difficulty with.

And to protect you. that's what we pray for. So, what have we had so far? Why do we pray the need's great, the privilege is great, and the example is great?

What do we pray for? Praise. Power. Provision. Pardon. Protection. And then the final thing Jesus brings to us here.

He doesn't just leave it there. And he goes on and he emphasizes some important things about the way in which we pray. And he really, I think, highlights three things in the remaining verses from 5 down to 13.

[24 : 55] The first thing he highlights is this. That we pray with boldness. And I use the word boldness because it appears in the New International Version at verse 8.

He tells this extraordinary story. Can you just picture the scene? Just try and bring it into your own experience. It's late at night, Saturday evening, you're watching something on the television.

You decided to go and have a bath. You have a nice bath and put in some nice smelling stuff and you relax there for a while in the bath. You come out of the bath and you get into bed. The kids, if you've got kids, they're already tucked up in bed.

They've had their bedtime story and nodding, meet tubby bear or something. And that's great. And they're all settled down in bed. And it's all nice and quiet. The dog's in his bed.

He's had his walk. And it's lovely and peaceful. Turn the light off and it's dark and the bed's comfortable and it's quite quiet. Oh, it's wonderful.

[26 : 01] You're probably dropping off already. Just at the thought. And then suddenly, or if you've got chimes, something sounds like Big Ben in the front hall.

Somebody pressing the doorbell frantically. Oh, who on earth is this? What time is it? It's quarter past twelve. Dear me. I'm not going to the door.

It's probably some criminal or something wanting to break in. Not that a criminal would knock at the front door and ring the doorbell and so on. But anyway, and so you put your head out at the bedroom and you say, Yes!

What do you want? And you realize that it's a guy from three doors up and he says, Could you do me a favor? And you say, What? Do you know what time it is?

It's quarter past twelve. Look, I'm in bed. Children are in bed. The dog's in bed. Everything's in bed. What do you want? And he says, Look, you know, some people have just arrived, you know, a long journey.

[26 : 57] You know, they've just driven from the south of France. non-stop to Aberdeen. And they're really exhausted. And I've got nothing. And I guess I'm just back from holiday myself.

I haven't done the shopping. I've only got two slices of bread. And they've got mould on them.

There's one tin of beans. It's past its sell-by date. Can you give me something to feed these people with?

And you say, Oh, come on. You know, go down to the corner shop. Let's open 24 hours. You know, get something. You know, phone for a pizza. He says, No, come on.

You're supposed to be my friend. Will you give me something? And you say, Oh, no. You know, go away. And you close the window. And then the next thing is, Come on. Bang, bang, bang.

And the doorbell again. And you say, Eventually you go down. And say, Okay, come in. Help yourself. Take what you want from the fridge. But be quick about it. And go. It's an extraordinary story, isn't it?

[27 : 52] It's one of these amazing stories that Jesus told. And I think the message really is that the guy, you would say, the neighbor who came to the door at quarter past twelve wanting food really had a brass neck.

Didn't he? But Jesus says, Look, I want you to pray with confidence and boldness. And the message of this story is not that God is reluctant to give us things.

The message of the story is that we ought to be bold and confident as we go to God. And this neighbor really was being very bold. You know, he could have got his head ripped off for this.

But he said, I'm going to my friend. I'm going to ask him because he's supposed to be my friend.

And the message that Jesus says, How do we pray? We pray with boldness, with confidence. We go to God.

Confidently. There's nothing too big, nothing too small to bring to our God. He said, Come with confidence and with boldness. And what's the second thing? Well, verses 9 and 10, he says, Ask and it will be given you.

[28 : 56] Now, I don't understand Greek, but I believe that this should really be translated as keep on asking rather than just ask as a one-off thing.

Keep on asking and it will be given you. Keep on seeking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened. So what's he saying? He's saying, Not only do you come boldly, you come persistently.

Don't just think that all you have to do if there's something really big that you want to bring to God is just mention it once. He says, If it really matters, I want you really to pray and to keep praying and to keep praying earnestly.

Keep knocking. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Because it's the people who persist in prayer that God gives the blessing that he wants to pour out upon us.

And what's the final thing? So we have boldness. We have persistence. Another almost grotesque illustration that Jesus uses here. Which of you fathers if your son asks for a fish, we'll give him a snake instead.

[30 : 02] Just imagine. The scene is just awful. You know, just think of it. You know, instead of cod and chips, you know, cobra and chips.

Sounds awful, doesn't it? You know, it's almost, it's all horrible. It makes us feel kind of squeamish just thinking about it. And Jesus says, Which of you fathers would do that?

If your son's hungry and he says, Will you go and get me fish something and you come back with a cobra and batter and some chips, none of you would do that. He says, Which of you, and if he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion?

Just imagine, soft-burled egg and soldiers, and instead of a soft-burled egg, there's underneath the little kind of cozy thing that keeps the egg warm, he takes the cozy off and there's a scorpion. He says, Ah, that's horrible.

Nobody would do that. And he says, Look, some of you think that my father is like this. That he's going to give you something awful and horrible.

[31 : 01] He wants to bring unpleasant things into your experience. He says, If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

What does this tell us? It tells us not only do we pray boldly and persistently, we pray for those things that God wants to give us.

And he reveals so clearly in his word what he wants to give us. The first thing he wants to give us is forgiveness. Are you a Christian this morning? He wants to forgive you if you've fallen away from him.

Are you someone this morning that's still wavering? Someone that just comes to church because it's something you do and you don't really do it out of a love, a real love for God as your Savior. He wants to give you forgiveness if you just ask him this morning. He wants to give us forgiveness. But what does Jesus say here? Your Father in Heaven is just waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit on you.

[32 : 20] And do we not need the Holy Spirit, the power of the Spirit to transform us, to heal us, to equip us, to empower us, to enable us to live the life that God wants us to live in this world.

We're going to think more about the Holy Spirit tonight. So there's an invitation for you to come back and hear more about the Holy Spirit. The Father is just waiting to give you all that you need to deal with your problems, to deal with your sin, to deal with situations in your life that only divine power can remedy.

He's just waiting for us to ask. And Jesus is saying here, if you pray in accordance with God's will for those things God wants to give you then, He's just longing to pour them out on you.

So, that's in a nutshell is Jesus' teaching and prayer. He tells us really why we pray. The need's great, the privilege is great, the example's great.

He tells us what we pray for. We praise God we pray for His power, for His provision, for His pardon, for His protection. And how do we pray?

[33 : 41] We pray boldly, persistently, and we pray in accordance with God's will. Could I challenge you this morning? I really believe that perhaps the greatest need of each one of us as individuals is prayer.

If you're not a Christian this morning, then you really need to pray. You really need to pray that God would forgive you, and heal you, bless you, take away your sins, live in you by His Spirit.

If you are a Christian this morning, then you really need to pray for God's power, His Spirit, the fullness of His Spirit to enable you to live a life that's pleasing to Him.

and I really believe that if we're ever going to achieve anything as a church, we've got to be a church that's characterized above all things by serious calling on God.

The Father is waiting to pour out the Holy Spirit on those who ask Him. So may He help us to do these things, and may He have all the praise and all the glory.