

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.24.2024

## PRAYING PERSISTENTLY

### I. PERSISTENCE IS IMPUDENT

#### Luke 11:5-8

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, **6** for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; **7** 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’? **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.

- Impudence is not rudeness but rather “means shamelessness, lack of consideration, audacity.” In the NIV it’s “shameless audacity” or in the CSB “shameless boldness”.
- It could be interpreted as rude by the person you're speaking to as it doesn't take propriety or social norms into consideration.
- And here in Luke chapter 11, as Jesus gives us this parable on the heels of praying to our Father in heaven, he is highlighting the persistence, the audacity, the impudence with which we are to bring our prayers to the Lord.
- This isn't a demanding demeanor, that's not how we are to come before the throne of grace. We bring our prayers humbly, recognizing who we are bringing them to.
- But this audacity is rather a faith fueled persistence.
- Persistence “is to continue firmly or obstinately in an opinion or a course of action in spite of difficulty, opposition, or failure.”
- In Jesus' time, it was a serious social etiquette violation to not provide your guests with some food and drink.
- He's asking for something simple, something good, and it's within his friends' means to grant that request.
- And notice, he's asking a friend. He's not asking a stranger; he's asking someone he's close to.
- It's the same thing when we ask God for something good. Something within his means to provide.
- We're not talking about asking for wrong things, or praying selfish prayers.
- And we aren't coming to God with our requests as strangers either.
- And this person isn't coming to his friend with a need he can supply himself. It's the type of request where his only option is to depend on his friend completely.
- This is exactly the type of request that we know our Father in heaven can easily and does handle.
- But, the hour is late. His friend has a family asleep.
- Now, is this saying that there are inopportune times to bring our requests before God? No, the bible says we are to pray without ceasing. And if we're to be praying without ceasing, then there is no untimely moment to come before our Father in prayer.

- The point here of this parable is not the untimeliness of the request, that is simply the scenario for the response: "I cannot get up and give you anything."
  - It's the scenario in which this individual's request for a good and simple thing is left unfulfilled.
  - Sometimes you're praying, maybe for a relationship, and you desire to see healing, and restoration, and a renewed sense of love and friendship, and you pour out your heart to the Lord. And there's no change. There's no improvement. Maybe it gets worse.
  - So, what do we do?
  - *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.*
  - He shamelessly and with great impudence persists! He continues on with his obstinate requests until the answer arrives. His friend doesn't get up and open the pantry based on their friendship - he gets up because of his persistence.
  - But once he gets up due to his persistence, the friend answers then based on their friendship. He doesn't just give him bread, he gives him whatever he needs because he is now fulfilling this request for his dear friend.
- 
- This is how we are to be praying! Persistently! We are to press into the throne of grace with our needs, not giving up praying when we don't hear an answer, not pressing pause on *letting our requests be made known to God* as Paul says in Philippians.
  - Don't give up on your prayer! Be persistent in coming to the Lord.
  - Why does Jesus tell us to persist?
  - Because the persistence is for our benefit, not God's. God uses our persistence in prayer for our own good.
  - As we pray persistently, our faith is strengthened.
  - God uses our persistence in prayer to work out things in our own hearts, so that as we continue to pray, those things we were holding on to are let go of and more faith takes their place.
  - As we pray persistently, our reliance on God is increased. As we pray earnestly, incessantly, we are focusing all our expectation on God for the answer.
  - The more we pray, the more we give it wholly to him, and the less we look to lesser solutions or means of provision.
  - The more we persist in prayer, the less we rely on something else or someone else and instead look to the one that Paul says "*will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*"
- 
- As we pray persistently, our will comes more into alignment with God's will.
  - But as we continue to pray, the Lord works on our heart about that situation, and we begin to trust him more for whatever the outcome and our faith grows, and eventually you're no longer asking for that outcome, but you're simply seeking his will to be done.
  - You're instead asking that he would work out his sovereign will over that situation, that He would be glorified in the outcome and provision of the solution, and you humbly express that you don't understand his ways, his delays, and his purposes because he is God and you are not!
- 
- That doesn't always happen the first time we pray, but it happens in persistent prayer.
  - Persistent prayer is used by God for our good!
  - The bible is filled with many examples of men and women bringing their requests in a persistent manner and we see the link to faith that accompanies their persistence.
  - Two Blind Men - *Matthew 9:27-30* *27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." 28 When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and*

*Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." 29 Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." 30 And their eyes were opened.*

- Their faith was evidenced and increased by their persistence.
  - As they persisted, they demonstrated the type of impudence we are to have when we bring our needs before the Lord.
  - Romans 12:12 reminds us to 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
  - Be constant in prayer. The original language here is more literally "In hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering."
  - Perseverance, persistence, boldness, impudence, continuing - these are words that should be synonyms for the manner in which we bring our requests to God.
- 
- Bartimaeus - Mark 10:46-52
  - He knows Jesus is near and he has the impudence to make his request known. Have mercy on me!
  - Mark 10:48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
  - Bartimaeus remained diligent in his cries for mercy. He has faith that Jesus is the only one that can heal him.
  - And Jesus hears him, and calls him over. He asks him what he wants, knowing. He longs to be able to see.
  - Mark 10:52 And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well."
  - We see that link again between persistence and faith. He persisted with his request, persisted until he was heard, but once heard, the answer came because of his faith.
  - Persistence AND faith.
- 
- The Canaanite Woman - Mathew 15:21-28
  - Matthew chapter 15 gives us an account of a Canaanite woman who came crying out after Jesus to heal her daughter who was oppressed by demons. But, as a Canaanite, she was a gentile. She wasn't an Israelite.
  - But at this point in his ministry, Jesus was focused on the house of Israel. And this woman comes begging, breaking social norms to even approach Jesus.
  - Matthew 15:23 But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."
  - But she was persistent in her request. But Jesus doesn't answer.
  - So she persists. She comes right up to him, "Lord, help me!"
  - And they have this amazing dialogue about Jesus coming first to the Jews, and the woman gets it that salvation was served up to Israel first, but she says "I'll gladly take just the crumbs of that grace," because she knew that even that bit would be enough to heal her daughter.
  - And Jesus is amazed. After all her begging, pleading, and finally her reasoning he responds.
  - Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.
  - Persistence, and faith.
  - How many examples we have of persistence in bringing our needs to the Lord, and yet how little we persist!
  - How little we go to our knees day after day continuously lifting up the need!
  - But prayer isn't about us, it's about God. It's to him and for him! And He in turn uses our prayers, our persistence in prayer, for our good, to increase our faith as he responds and delights to answer in his perfect timing.

## II. PERSISTENCE IS INCESSANT

## Luke 18:1-8

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' " 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

- This is such a wonderful parable with a very simple point: Don't give up praying!
  - You have a judge who Jesus says *neither feared God nor respected man*. One commentator describes this judge as "defying the vengeance of God and despising the opinion of men." He did what he wanted.
  - And then you have this poor, defenseless widow, being taken advantage of. She had been wronged. She deserved justice.
  - But it wasn't coming from this judge. He refused her requests to "Give me justice against my adversary".
  - But, she was persistent. She kept coming. "Give me justice against my adversary".
  - v6 *And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says."* In other words, look at his response in giving justice to the widow. If an evil judge will give justice to a persistent widow, what will God's response be to the persistent petitions of his people?
  - Verse 7 *"And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily."*
  - This is the argument from the lesser to the greater: If an unrighteous judge will give justice to a persistent widow he cares nothing for after a while of persistence, how speedily then will a righteous God give justice to the persistent cries of his people for whom he cares a great deal for?
  - And if God responds to the persistence of his people, then what are we to do? Pray always and never lose heart. The whole point of this parable.
- 
- Pray when? Always. Continually. Persistently.
  - Why does he say "and never lose heart"? Because we are prone to. We're prone to give up on our requests.
  - We are to be like the persistent widow; continuous, fervent, relentless in our prayers!
  - We are to persist in prayer, but the question is "Do we?" It's the same question Jesus asks at the end of this passage "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"
  - When the Lord returns, will he find us persisting in prayer, constant in prayer, not giving up on a prayer but instead persistently bringing those unmet petitions over and over to our Father?
- 
- Again, we see persistent prayer is linked to faith. This isn't a judgment, a condemnation of the things we have stopped praying for, but a reminder, an encouragement to continue in prayer, to persist in our requests, because in doing so our faith will be increased and our God will answer the prayers of his elect.
  - How long do we persist in prayer?
  - As long as it takes. As long as it takes for the answer to come. God patiently is at work, even though we might not see it.
- 
- Hannah's example of persistent prayer - 1 Samuel 1:1-20
  - Don't give up praying. Bring your needs to our Father with impudence and in full reliance on him. Don't take a break from praying when the

answer isn't immediate. Gain the increased faith that accompanies it.

- Colossians 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
- Begin praying and continue praying! Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
- We must be steadfast in praying. That means to be unwavering, holding firm to continuing in prayer.
- George Muller - *"It is not enough for the believer to begin to pray, nor to pray correctly; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray. We must patiently, believingly continue in prayer until we obtain an answer. Further, we have not only to continue in prayer until the end, but we have also to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Most frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained, and in not expecting the blessing."*
- Paul was a man who persisted in prayer. Certainly we know he persisted in prayer for the saints and for the church.
- And Paul persisted in prayer for his thorn in his flesh. Three times he pleaded with God for it to be removed.
- But God allowed that thorn to remain there for a purpose for Paul - to keep him humble.
- 2 Cor 12:7-9 *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
- God didn't answer Paul's request to remove this thorn in his flesh - but God did answer. After Paul's persistence, God says "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness".
- And Paul is thrilled with this answer even though it means the thorn is still there. Therefore, he says, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me!
- He says *Thank you Lord! This thorn is a sign of your grace at work in my life and I will take it and boast of what you're doing!*
- Paul didn't initially know what God was doing in his life with that thorn in the flesh. God didn't initially tell Paul what he was working out, he was just working in Paul's heart doing only what God can do, working for our good.
- But because of Paul's persistence, God answers him.
- Until Paul persisted in prayer, he never realized this work the Lord was doing in his life by using this thorn to keep him from becoming conceited.
- The same holds true for us. God is at work in your life, in your heart, that beautiful work of sanctification where we are molded, and refined, to become more like Christ. And we likely don't see it happening at the moment.
- But persist in prayer until God answers.

### III. PERSISTENCE IS ILLUSTRATED

- Christ himself persisted in prayer. All through the gospels we see him praying - praying giving thanks to God and bringing repeatedly to his Father prayers for the glory of God.
- The night that he was betrayed and arrested, leading up to the cross, what did he do? He persisted in prayer as he was sorrowful and troubled as he looked ahead to the cross, the suffering, the anguish that lay before him.
- Three times he continued to pour out fervent prayers to his Father

- Matthew 26:39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."
- Matthew 26:42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."
- Matthew 26:44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.
- Why didn't he pray just once? Didn't the Father hear him the first time? Did the Father not respond to the Son?
- Three times our savior persisted in crying out to his Father. We don't see an answer from the Father recorded, but we see the effect of persistent prayer. When he is done praying, Christ is ready. He is fully confident in the plan ordained by his Father that through his shed blood we might be reconciled to God.
- Christ never doubted the Father's plan or was questioning it, but in his humanity, the thought of the suffering he was about to endure caused him distress, and anguish and sorrow. And so he prays. Persistently.
- And in prayer, he is strengthened, and in full submission to the Father, confident in the divine plan, he then willingly goes to the cross.
- Christ's persistence in prayer gave him confidence in the will of the Father which led to his own obedience in going to the cross.
- He was confident, having persisted in prayer, that God was going to use his suffering and sacrifice so that you and I can have our sins atoned for!
- And that confidence and faith He had in the plan of the Father, in the plan ordained from before the foundation of the world that he would send His Son to die so that men and women and children who believed in him could be rescued from damnation and brought into the kingdom of God, that confidence stayed with Christ all the way to the cross.
- We are to pray persistently because that is the example our Savior has given us.
- And as we do, our faith will be strengthened and increased, and we continue praying knowing with full confidence that we have a good heavenly Father who responds and answers the prayers of his children.

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?