



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for July 30, 2023**  
**“Unlocking the Power of Prayer. The Call to Prayer”**  
**Speaker: Rev. Dr. Iosmar Alvarez**  
**Scripture: Luke**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 11:1-4 and 9-13

1 One day, Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "**When you pray**, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.

3 Give us each day our daily bread.

4 Forgive us our sins,  
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.  
And lead us not into temptation."

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. 10 For everyone who **asks receives**; the one who **seeks finds**; and to the one who **knocks, the door will be opened**.

11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a **fish**, will give him a **snake** instead? 12 Or if he asks for an **egg**, will give him a **scorpion**? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your **Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**"

#### **Introduction:**

Imagine a world where God deepest desires and wildest dreams for you could be brought to life in Jesus. What if I told you there was a way to unlock our potential and make our dreams in God a reality? Today, Jesus will help us through the Scriptures to unveil the secret that has captivated the hearts and minds of countless individuals throughout history: **the power of persistent prayer**. Get ready to embark on a journey that will forever transform the way you communicate with the divine and unlock the extraordinary possibilities within you.

We will explore the purpose and power of persistent Prayer and how it can transform our relationship with God.

Notice in this passage that the disciples never asked Jesus to teach them how to do miracles, or to walk on water, but to pray. In **Luke 11** we have the first Jesus's seminar on prayer. In this passage, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray and shares a parable about the importance of perseverance in Prayer. As we dig deeper into this text, we will discover KEY principles we can apply to cultivate a more vibrant prayer life.

**Historical and Cultural Context:** During the time of Jesus, Prayer was an integral part of Jewish religious life. The disciples, observing Jesus' prayer life, were captivated by it and wanted to learn from Him.

**Luke 5:16** "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

**Luke 6:12** "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."

In Jesus times, Prayer was not seen solely as a one-way communication where individuals expressed their needs and requests. It was also viewed as an opportunity for introspection and self-reflection, allowing individuals to cultivate a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship with God.

**Prayer was a means to purify the heart and soul, creating a space for spiritual growth and transformation.**

Understanding this historical and cultural context helps us comprehend the profound impact and significance Jesus' prayer life had during his time. His teachings on prayer were rooted in this foundation, yet **Jesus also expanded and challenged traditional notions by emphasizing the importance of sincerity, humility, and faith in prayer.** In this context, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them how to pray.

What do we know about Prayer from Jesus? Jesus knew the purpose of prayer for it is written **Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is **the Lord's purpose** that prevails.

**Definition of Purpose:** Original intend, reason for existence. What is the purpose of prayer? What is the original intend of prayer?

Everyone does it regardless of race, language, culture, continent, deity, or religion. Why?

Everyone does it, but not everyone understands the principle of Prayer and how it works. As a result, our prayer meetings are the least attended meeting in the church. **The size of the church prayer meeting will determine the church's impact on the earth.**

If Jesus modeled prayer for us, Why don't we pray?

Some people don't pray because they get results, other don't like or accept God's answer to their Prayers. After all, God didn't answer quickly enough. However, the root cause of all these reasons is the lack of knowledge, the ignorance about Prayer. It is written in **Hosea 4:6** my people are destroyed from **lack of knowledge.**

Why do I need to pray if God is All-knowing, All-powerful, All present, All seen, and All benevolent? Why does he not intervene and resolve our problems? If we cannot influence God, why do we pray? Why don't we have a passion for Prayer?

The principle of Prayer based on Matthew 18:18-19

**Matthew 16:18-19** And I tell you that you are **Peter**, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of **Hades** will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you **the keys** of the **kingdom of heaven**; whatever **you bind on earth** will be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose on earth** will be loosed in heaven."

**Matthew 18:18-19** "Truly I tell you, whatever you **bind** on earth will be **bound** in heaven, and whatever you **loose** on earth will be **loosed** in heaven.<sup>19</sup> "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you **on earth agree** about anything they ask for, it **will be done** for them by my **Father** in heaven.

Based on Matthew 16 and 18, Luke 11 prayer is more than talking to God.

**Definition of Prayer:** What is Prayer, then, based on Mathew 18? **Prayer is an earthly agreement between two or more people for the will of the Father to be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**John Wesley** \_ "Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

**Exposition of Scripture:**

**Main Point 1:** The Pattern of Prayer - The Lord's Prayer

### 1. Jesus' Model Prayer (verses 1-4)

**The Importance of Prayer:**

Prayer is a necessity not an option **"When you pray."** **NOT if you pray.** Prayer it is not a choice but an expectation.

**WIFI Analogy**

**Matthew 5:5-8**

<sup>5</sup> **"And when you pray,** do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> **But when you pray, go into your room, close the door,** and pray to your Father, who is **unseen.** Then your **Father, who sees** what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> **And when you pray,** do not keep on **babbling like pagans,** for **they think they will be heard because of their many words.** <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Therefore, Prayer is not about eloquence, intensity, length, or posture. Prayer it's about intimacy, it's about knowing God and His Will for us. In summary, Prayers based on God's Word, and Will give us legal authority to move the hand of God. Prayer of Surrender: **Thy Will be done, NOT Mine**

**Key Principles from this Passage:**

- Prayer is our direct line of communication with God.
- Through Prayer, we can grow in intimacy with Him and seek His guidance.
- Without Prayer, our spiritual life will be shallow and ineffective.
- Jesus begins by providing the disciples with a model prayer known as the Lord's Prayer.
- This Prayer teaches us to acknowledge God's holiness, seek His kingdom, and depend on Him for our daily needs and forgiveness.

**Recognizing Our Heavenly Father's Sovereign Authority**

**Contemporary Theologian Quote:** "One of the amazing things about the Lord's Prayer is that it avoids calling God "Father" in the abstract. It calls Him "our Father," emphasizing the corporate devotion of

the community of faith."

Seeking God's Name, Kingdom, and Will  
Petitions for Daily Provision, Forgiveness, and Deliverance

### **A Model for Prayer**

- In response to the disciples' request, Jesus teaches them the Lord's Prayer.
- This Prayer serves as a framework for our prayers.
- It emphasizes the importance of praising God, seeking His will, asking for daily provision and forgiveness, and seeking protection from temptation.
  
- Jesus shares a parable about a persistent friend who keeps knocking on his neighbor's door in the middle of the night.
- This parable emphasizes the importance of persistence in Prayer and highlights the friend's willingness to respond to the persistent request.

## **2. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight (verses 5-8)**

### **The Parable of the Persistent Friend**

Understanding the Nature of God's Response

**Contemporary Theologians:** "God is not like the neighbor in the parable. He is not reluctant to answer our prayers. Rather, He is a loving Father who delights in providing for His children."  
Encouragement to Persevere in Prayer

## **3. Ask, Seek, and Knock (verses 9-13)**

**John Wesley** "God does nothing except in response to believing prayer."

### **The Persistence of Prayer**

- Luke 11:5-13 tells the parable of the persistent friend.
- Prayer is not just a one-time request but a continual conversation with God.
- We must keep seeking, asking, and knocking, knowing God will answer according to His perfect will.
- Jesus encourages His disciples to ask, seek, and knock in their prayers, assuring them that God will answer and provide.
- He uses the analogy of a loving father who delights in giving good gifts to his children, reinforcing the idea of God's generosity towards His children.

### **Main Argument:**

The main message of this passage is that **Persistent Prayer** is powerful and essential for developing a deep and intimate relationship with God.

"Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not." — **Saint Augustine**

## Call to Action

### Prayer is a Personal (When) event and a Corporate (Our) activity.

Personal: **Ezekiel 22:30** "I looked for **someone** among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.

Corporate: **2 Chronicles 7:14** if **my people**, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Who is in charge of the earth?

### Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "**Let us** make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and **let them have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

### Let us take dominion and stop blaming God for human affairs:

- Make Prayer a priority: Set aside dedicated time each day to pray, seeking God's face and aligning your heart with His will.
- Engage in community prayer: Participate actively in communal worship, whether it's attending religious services, joining prayer groups, or seeking opportunities for collective devotion. Embracing these shared experiences will foster a sense of belonging and strengthen the spiritual fabric of your community. **September On Tuesdays from 8:00 to 8:30 am via Zoom and 6-7 pm in person at St John.**
- Persist in Prayer: Don't give up when answers or breakthroughs don't come immediately. Keep knocking on the door of heaven with faith and perseverance.
- **When you pray**, pray by faith with the foundation that: God's sovereignty is connected and revealed through His Word. God will never violate his Word. God will never fail on his promises. **Therefore, if it is written, you can pray it.**
- Trust in God's goodness: Understand that God desires to give good gifts to His children. Trust that He knows what is best for you, even when His timing doesn't align with yours.
- Align your prayers with God's purposes: Pray for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done in your life and the world around you.
- Extend forgiveness: As you seek forgiveness from God, be willing to forgive others as well. Allow the grace and love of God to flow through you.
- Depend on God for daily provision: Recognize your dependence on God for your everyday needs and trust that He will provide for you.
- Set aside dedicated time for prayer: Prioritize prayer in your daily routine, allocating specific moments for conversation with the divine. Whether it's early mornings, evenings, or moments of solitude during the day, create a sacred space for intimate communication with God.
- Journal your prayers: Consider keeping a prayer journal to document your conversations with the divine. Reflect on your prayers, note any answers or guidance you receive, and observe

patterns in your journey. This practice will enhance your awareness and deepen your connection with God.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we have explored the transformative power of persistent prayer and its significance in our lives as individuals and as a community.

Let's recap the key takeaways before we part ways today.

**Firstly**, we have learned that prayer is not simply a religious ritual or a way to ask for favors. It is a profound means of connection with God, our Father, allowing us to express our deepest longings, joys, and struggles. Through prayer, we can cultivate a relationship with the divine and seek guidance in our lives.

**Secondly**, we have seen how persistence in prayer is essential. Just as Jesus exemplified, we are encouraged to persevere in our prayer lives. The journey of prayer is not always easy, but persistence brings us closer to our goals and deepens our faith. Let us remember that no prayer goes unheard, and our continuous devotion has the power to transform our lives.

**Lastly**, we are reminded that prayer is both personal and communal. While personal prayer allows for introspection and self-reflection, communal prayer strengthens the bond within our communities. Let us embrace the power of both, finding comfort in our personal conversations with the divine and unity in joining with others in collective worship.

Remember, persistent prayer has the power to transform lives and bring about extraordinary possibilities. Embrace this spiritual discipline as a lifelong journey and witness its profound impact on your relationship with God and your journey of self-discovery.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of Prayer and for teaching us the power of persistence. Help us to cultivate a vibrant prayer life where we seek Your face, trust Your goodness, and align our hearts with Your will. May we experience the transformative power of persistent Prayer in our lives and be people who depend on You every season. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### **Benediction:**

Dear brothers and sisters, as we depart from this place, may we carry the lessons we have learned from Jesus' teaching on Prayer in Luke 11:1-13.

May we be inspired to confidently approach our Heavenly Father, knowing He delights in hearing our prayers and meeting our needs. May we persist in seeking His guidance and transforming power in our lives.

May God's compassionate and forgiving heart be reflected in our relationships. May we extend grace and mercy to all, just as He has shown us.

May the Holy Spirit empower us to be agents of God's love and blessings. May we bring healing where there is brokenness, hope where there is despair, and justice where there is inequality.

As we go forth, may the words of Jesus echo in our hearts, reminding us to ask, seek, and knock with trust and faith, knowing that our Heavenly Father is always ready to give good gifts to those who ask.

May the peace of Christ guard our hearts, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guides our steps, and the love of God surround us constantly.

Go in the Name of Jesus, our Teacher and Savior. Amen.