

The Lord's Way to Pray

A sermon on Luke 11:1-13 by Pastor Jason Liebenow

When I was in grade school, I remember a friend of mine telling me that if I prayed for a Nintendo 64 (that's a video game console), but he said that if I prayed for one before I went to bed, I would find one in my room the next morning when I woke up. I was quite excited about the thought, so that night, I prayed, "Father, please give me a Nintendo 64!" And I went to sleep, ready to see what I would find the next morning.

As you may imagine, I did not find a Nintendo 64 in my room when I woke up. I was confused. Why didn't God answer my prayer? But you know, it's funny as I look back on it now, because I can see that God really did answer that prayer! I did not get that Nintendo 64 that morning, but I did end up getting one a couple years later and along with it, God taught me how to save money for something that I wanted to get. He taught me how to work towards a goal.

God answered my prayer, even if it was a selfish and perhaps ridiculous prayer, God answered it, just not in the way I expected. And in fact, I find that God is still answering that prayer. You see, God knew that I believed that this video game would bring me happiness. But God has brought me happiness in other ways since then. He has taught me where true happiness comes from. I find I am still growing and learning and finding happiness, all because God is still answering that silly prayer that I said a long time ago.

Do you have a prayer story like that? How is your prayer life? Today we want to take a look at this important aspect of our lives as God's chosen people, as we consider, the Lord's Way to Pray.

In our gospel lesson for today, we get a special glimpse into one of Jesus' lessons with his disciples. And in this lesson, we see that God

wants to see two things in our prayer lives. He wants us to pray wisely. And he wants us to pray recklessly.

Jesus begins his lesson by showing his disciples some good things to pray for. In this shortened version of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gives us a great example of those things that are good for us to want and to petition our heavenly Father for: 1) that God's reputation maintain its proper place, 2) that God's rule over the world through the spreading of the gospel come both to our hearts and to all the world, 3) that God provide for our earthly needs, and 4) that God provide for our spiritual needs, both in forgiving us and teaching us to forgive, as well as defending us against Satan's assaults on our own souls.

After this lesson on praying wisely, Jesus moves on to three lessons on praying recklessly. In his story, we see that friends can get things from each other, simply through shameless asking. Jesus throws this blanket promise at us that all who ask receive, all who seek find, and to all who knock the door will be opened!

Then Jesus admonishes us to trust him and not doubt. If earthly fathers, who are evil, who are sinful, who have committed all kinds of sins even against their own sons; if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children when they ask, how much more will our Father give to us when we ask?

Jesus even goes as far as to say that God will give us the greatest gift of all, the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and influence our lives! God would do all of that for us, simply because we ask him.

Brothers and sisters, God makes some crazy promises in this section. In a world that is full of promises that are too good to be true, we have become accustomed to doubting, and rightly so. The world is full of lies. But don't let your doubt of the world spill into your view of your God. God's promises are certainly too good, but they are also too true!

Look again at our Lord's teaching on prayer. Jesus encourages us to pray to God that he would forgive us our sins. We ask God to forgive our sins every time we come together in worship, but could there be a more outrageous request? All those things in your life that are wrong, all those things that we shouldn't have done but did, all those things that we should have done but didn't, every single one of our sins, from the small ones to the great, are one more reason why our God should hate us, are one more reason that God should punish us, are one more reason that God should ignore anything that we have to say to him.

But God invites us to ask him to forgive us. Try that with your boss. Consistently don't do what he wants you to do and then ask him to forgive you, what do you think will happen? Try that with the government. Keep on doing those things that the government says are illegal and then simply ask the courts to forgive you, see what happens.

But God does invite you to ask him for forgiveness for anything and he promises that you will receive it. God invites you to seek a clean slate in his eyes, and he promises that you will find it. God invites you to knock on the doors of heaven so that you might enter into eternal life which by your sin you do not deserve, but he promises that he has opened that door for you.

If God would answer a prayer as wild and crazy as full and free forgiveness for every bad thing you've done, and every good thing you have not done, if God will answer prayers like that, what prayer could possibly be too ridiculous for him to answer?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, pray recklessly! Ask your God for what is on your mind, even if you feel it is impossible! Our God can give us more than we can ask or imagine. Test him on that! Pray to him for a pony. Pray that God give you your youth again. Have the doctors told you that the situation is hopeless? Pray that God heal you

completely! Pray for anything and watch as God answers your prayers with even more than you hoped for!

Pray for the wild things, but also pray for the wise things. Pray that the Holy Spirit enter into our hearts and lead us show love just as God has shown us love. Pray that the gospel might spread to our friends and neighbors and that the church might grow in leaps and bounds! Pray that his Word might reach the ends of the earth so that the whole world might join the multitudes who will praise God forever in heaven! Pray that God might use you in spreading his rule across the whole world! Pray to your God and trust that he does answer prayer.

When I was young, I prayed to God for a simple toy. Looking back, it wasn't the wisest thing to pray for, but that's not how God saw it. God loved that prayer and he joyfully answered it in a way that was even better than I imagined. God loved that prayer because, silly as the request may have been, God saw his child looking to him for what I needed.

This is how God sees your prayers too. He loves it when you look to him for what you need, and he loves to give you what you ask for, and he will answer in a way that is even better than you can imagine! Brothers and sisters in Christ, pray wisely and pray recklessly, because your God loves to answer your prayers. Amen.