

LIFELINE: Power Through Prayer

Boldness: Will We Seek Him?

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BOLDNESS: WILL WE SEEK HIM?

Luke 11:5-10

Good morning. If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Luke 11. We've been looking at prayer, a subject that if we are really honest with each other, we have a lot of questions about how in the world does prayer really work. We talked two weeks ago about how prayer really is designed to be more than just this thing where we ask for things from God, or we get things from God—that maybe we've grown up thinking about prayer as, may be just a small room in an entire house of prayer. We need to explore some of the depths of what prayer is instead of just settling for that.

We talked about how the primary purpose of prayer is to express the depth of our need for God, to explore the mystery of intimacy with him, and to experience the power of being used by Him. We talked about how the "power of prayer" in of itself is useless, but the power of people who connect with almighty God is unstoppable.

Then last week we looked at the Lord's Prayer, you know that prayer that we sing at weddings, and we recite at different points in our lives. What does it really mean to pray the Lord's Prayer? What is God telling us to do? What is Christ teaching us to do? We talked about how desire is the secret to prayer. We talked about 2 steps: first make your wants Gods wants, and secondly, ask for whatever you want. That's how prayer works. Make your wants Gods wants, then you have the freedom and confidence to ask for whatever you want and know that you have it. We talked about how the Lord's Prayer teaches us to ask for His glory, to ask for His gifts, His grace and His guidance.

All of that leads us to verse 5 of Luke 11 where Jesus tells a story that, to be quite honest with you, is pretty downright confusing on a variety of different levels. I think it confused the disciples. I can almost picture the frustration on their faces when they come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, teach us to pray," and he looks at them and says, "Let me tell you a parable." Can you just picture them rolling their eyes at this point, putting their hands in their hair as if, don't give us another parable just give it to us straight. We don't want to have to figure out these quirky stories, just tell us how to pray. But that's what he does he gives them a story. And it perplexed them then, and 2000 years later it is still perplexing Bible scholars.

There are a lot of people who believe a lot of different things about what this story means. I don't want to be so bold as to stand in front of you and say that I'm going to answer all the questions people have had for 2,000 years since Jesus said this about the story, but I do want to say that during the last week of my time studying this text, to be frank with you, up until this last week I would read over this story and think I'm not sure what that means, but we will go with it because it is in the Bible... But studying it this last week has opened my eyes to an entirely fresh and exciting perspective on what Jesus may be trying to teach us in this passage. Again, I don't want to be so bold as to think I have the answer now after

2,000 years of discussion, but I do want us to look at this story and invite us as a faith family to try to see what Jesus is trying to teach us here.

In verse 5, let's read the first 4 verses though just to make sure we have the context in which the story is given. Luke 11:1 says, *"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.' He said to them, '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 has sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation'"* (Luke 11:1-4). Now here's the story, Luke 11:5,

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not give him the bread because he is his friend yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you: Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened (Luke 11:5-10).

Let's make sure we have the picture here so journey back to first century Palestine. You don't have a stockpile of food everyday. You don't have pantries. You make enough food everyday for that day's needs, and then you go to the next day.

So, this guy has somebody who comes to visit him late at night. He doesn't have any food for him. Unfortunately, there are no grocery stores to go to, no late night Taco Bell in first century Palestine. He doesn't have anything to give him, but he wants to provide for him. In first century Palestine, especially this picture here, hospitality was huge. It wasn't just a social duty to be hospitable, it was a religious duty to be hospitable.

Basically, when his friend comes in at midnight, he has two options either number one he can be a poor host and tell the guy, "Sorry, I don't have any bread just go to sleep hungry," and be a poor host, or secondly he can be a poor neighbor. And he can wake up his friend down the street and get some bread. So you have poor host or poor neighbor, and this guy decides to take what is behind door number two. He says I'm going to be a poor neighbor.

He goes down the street and knocks on his buddy's door. This is when it gets really good or not so good for the guy inside. First century Palestine, this house is not this many-roomed house, it's a one-room house in first century Palestine, which means everybody sleeps where? In the same room. So you have the wife and kids all sleeping on the same mat, same bed, in the same room. The way it works is you put kid number one down, kid number two down, and kid number three down get your wife settled in, and then you bolt the door and crawl in bed there and everything has to be still. There's nobody getting up to go to the bathroom without making some major commotion in this scene.

Imagine you are a dad, you have kid one, two, and three sleeping soundly, everything is good, and then all of a sudden, this dude starts banging on the door saying, "I want some bread." Now I love how he starts the conversation, he actually says, "Friend," which is a good way to begin a conversation if you are waking someone up at midnight because this whole friendship thing is now walking a very tight line. You see, it's one thing to wake up

dad in the middle of the night, it's a whole other ballgame to wake up all the kids in the middle of the night, and that is what he has done. You can imagine yourself in that dad's position, you wake up, this guy is banging on your door outside, and you look around you, and all these little eyes are popping open, and you are like oh, no. He basically says don't bother me, go away, I'm not going to get up and give you anything. But Jesus says, this guy will get up and will give him something not because he is his friend, because that whole thing is up for question at this point. He will get up and give him something because of his boldness.

What does this mean? Whenever you hear Jesus tell a story or parable, you're always thinking, okay I know somebody in this parable is me, and I know somebody in this parable is God. That's why we love Luke 15, a couple of chapters later, we have the parable of the prodigal son, and your like "Okay, I know I'm the son, I wander away and I'm coming back and God is the Father, and He comes running after me, and He wraps His arm around me and gives me all these things." I love that story. So the disciples sitting there listening to Jesus tell the story are thinking, okay I think we're the guy who is going and asking for something, cause he's talking about prayer, so we're that guy, but--who's God? The grumpy old guy on the inside yelling don't bother me? Is that God in this story? Something is not adding up here.

It's the same thing when you get over to Luke 18 Jesus tells another story about an unrighteous judge. Jesus said the judge who doesn't really care about anybody and a poor widow comes to him looking for justice, and he tries to ignore her, and time after time she keeps coming back and coming back, and coming back, and finally the judge just because he is fed up with this lady decides to give in just to get her out of his hair, she's driving him nuts. So, I think I'm the woman who's asking for things but, who's God? I mean is it at this point that I'm supposed to preach this text and say alright, the point of Luke 11 is you go to the door of heaven, and you just keep banging on it as loud as you can, and finally God will get up and do something for you, not because He loves you, but because He's sick and tired of you. What in the world is this story all about?

People discuss different things about this story. Some people think that it is designed to be this contrast between the guy who's irritated inside, and God. The only problem with that is there are some things that are similar about the guy inside and God like the supply they have, what they have to give. There are some things that are similar, so we put ourselves in this situation deciding which characteristics of God we think this guy is like, and which characteristics of God we don't think, and we are in the position of deciding that. I don't think that's the point.

Other people, and some of you even have in your translations, "because of the man's boldness," instead some of you have "because of the man's persistence." People believe that the point here is that he was persistent by knocking on the door, and it's implied there that he was so persistent that's why he got up, but when you think about it, it doesn't matter if you knock one time or twenty times, when you knock on the door in the middle of night, so you can get a couple pieces of bread, you've crossed the line. So, maybe persistence is not the point, and it's at that point that many sermons are preached on this text that basically say, "If you just keep asking God, he will finally answer you." Just keep bothering him over and over again, and one day he will actually get up and do something for you. I don't think that's the point.

I think it all comes back to this word, it all hinges on, "because of this man's boldness." This word in the original language of the New Testament is really difficult to decipher, to translate in English. It is a kind of combination between boldness and shamelessness. It's

this picture of someone who is annoyingly relentless, bold, shameless, no shame. So it's at this point, I'm sitting there over and over again this week ... God what does this mean? It's at that point that things started to open up.

The Key to the Parable:

Look through the perspective of the man in need.

Here is what I encourage us to do as we think about this parable, and here is what I think, I believe is the key to understanding this story. Look through the perspective, put yourself in the mind of the man in need. I invite you to put yourself in the shoes of this guy who is going looking for bread for his friend who has come to visit him. Put yourself in his shoes. Resist the temptation to try to compare or contrast the guy inside to God. Let's just leave that to the side. Let's simply put ourselves in the mind, mindset, the attitude of the guy who is looking for bread, the man in need. Put yourself in his shoes.

Because I think from the very beginning Jesus tells this story from his perspective. "Suppose one of you." It's almost like saying, imagine you had this guy come to you at midnight, you needed some food, so you had the nerve, imagine if you had the nerve to go to your friend at midnight to try to get a couple of pieces of bread. I think he is basically giving us a picture of a guy who is in some ways just plain rude, a guy who, somewhere along the way, socially has not gotten the hint that it's not the most appropriate thing to do to go to your friend at midnight and knock on the door and ask for bread. This is one of those guys who just doesn't know which social lines to cross and which social lines not to cross. I don't know if you've ever been around somebody like that, or if you are somebody like that. I don't know, but there are some social things that say, you know, it's not the most appropriate thing to go in the middle of the night. That takes a lot of nerve, a lot of gall, to go and just ask for a piece of bread, while the whole family is asleep.

But in this guy's mindset, however shameless, even rude that might be, this guy is thinking—my friend who is inside that house has food, I know he has bread—he won't mind if I come and knock on his door, in fact, he'll be delighted to get up and get something for me—that kind of shamelessness, that kind of boldness. If you could put yourself in that mindset, I think that is exactly what Jesus is teaching us about prayer. I believe he is teaching us that we can be that bold, that shameless, with the God of the universe.

Shameless Praying ...

I want you to think about it with me—3 characteristics that, at least in this guy's mindset, he was thinking about the guy inside. Whether they are true or not, that is not what we are looking at, but at least this guy thought it that I think helps us understand what we need to think about God when we come to him in prayer.

God is able.

The first characteristic that leads to shameless, bold praying is this: God is able. God is able. This guy, think about it with me, if you put yourself in his shoes, he knows two things about this guy inside. Number one, he knows he has bread, and he will be able to help him because this guy keeps a stash of bread. Number two, he knows he can do something about

it, and he will help him out with it. I think that picture is all over the pages of Scripture when it comes to prayer. This picture of God, this attitude about God.

First of all, He has the supply. We know He has the supply. He has what we need. Hold your place in Luke 11 and go back to Psalm 50. I want you to see this. Go to the middle of your Bible, open up right in the middle, it should come close to Psalms. Go to Psalm 50 and look at verses 7–12. This is God speaking to His people about His supply. I love these verses. These would be good verses to underline in your Bible. They give us a picture of God's supply. Psalms 50:7, *"Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me."* Now listen to Verse 9, *"I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it"* (Ps. 50:9-12).

Isn't that great? This is God saying just in case you have forgotten, I have everything. I mean everything, cattle on a thousand hills, every bird that you see in the sky, I actually know personally. The world is mine and all that is in it. I have all the supply. Now that is key for praying. Why do we pray to God? Because we know he has the supply, but not just the supply, He has the sovereignty. Sovereignty is a word we use a good bit to talk about how God is in control not only does He have the supply, but He has the authority to do whatever He wants with the supply. He has the authority to use everything in all of creation to accomplish His purposes and His plans. This is all over Scripture, too.

Take a left from Psalms and go back to the end of Job, the book right before Psalms, Job 42 look at this with me. Let me show you a couple of verses you might underline in your Bible to talk about sovereignty of God, how everything in all creation is under His control and His authority. His plans and His purposes direct everything. Look at verse 2 in Job 42, Job is talking to God after he has gone through some major trials, a confusing time in his life. It says in Job 42:2, *"I know that you can do all things; (now underline this) no plan of yours can be thwarted."* No plan of yours can be thwarted, cannot be changed, at all.

Now go back to Psalms and look at chapter 33. Take you on a little tour that shows the sovereignty of God, look at Psalm 33:10-11. Job 42 says, no plan of God, absolutely no plan of God can be thwarted, can be changed, can be augmented." Listen to Psalm 33:10-11, *"The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."* His plans, his purposes are fixed. From generation to generation, his plans are not changing. Go to the very next book, Proverbs 19:21. This verse contrasts our plans (the way we make plans) with God's plans (the way He makes plans). Listen to Proverbs 19:21, it says, *"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* His purpose prevails. What Proverbs is telling us is that our plans may change sometimes we get more information or new circumstances happen, and we change our plans. There is never any new information for God, never any new circumstances that He was surprised to see happen. His purpose never fails. It never changes.

Let me show you one more. Keep going to the right, and you will come to Isaiah. Go past Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon and go to Isaiah 14 – this is huge for us to understand the picture of the God we are praying to. Isaiah 14:24, this is God speaking to His people and He is reminding them of His sovereignty. Listen to what He says, *"The Lord Almighty has sworn, 'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand'"* (Is. 14:24). God says I plan this, and it happens, I purpose this, and it happens.

So here is the picture the Old Testament is giving us, especially in these books, especially Psalms that teaches us so much about prayer. He is giving us the picture of the sovereignty of God, who, yes, He has all the supply in the world, but He also has the authority to do with it whatever He wants to accomplish His purposes and His plans. He is sovereign, and He is in control.

Now, if we are really honest, it is at this point that we start to wonder, "If God is sovereign over all the universe, and He is running this universe to accomplish His purposes and His plans, then why do I even need to pray?" Do you feel the weight of that question? Why is it even necessary for me to pray? It's almost kind of presumptuous is it not for me to come to this sovereign God and say, "I know you have a universe to run and all, but I have these couple of things in my life, I'll make it quick, just bring this before you, and I'll be out." It's almost embarrassing in a sense, when you see the greatness of God all over Scripture, and you really think about it, prayer seems like something that is almost inappropriate.

But I think this is something Jesus knew in Luke 11. He knew that in the minds and hearts of His people that there would be a question, "Well, why do I even need to pray if God is so great? Why should I even go to him doesn't that seem a bit presumptuous?" Here is the beauty of what He is saying—He is saying with this picture, yes God does have the supply. He is able, and this guy knew that about his friend inside. He knew he was able. God is in control, and this is a good thing, just as a side note, this is a really good thing! We sometimes think that, prayers should work, where we are controlling the agenda of God, and we are telling God what to do. The only problem is, when you are telling God what to do over here, and you are praying, someone else is telling God what to do in their praying, then all of a sudden you have this God who is running around beckoning to all of His people trying to figure out what to do and has no clue how it is going to end ultimately. That is not the God we pray to. We pray to a God who is in control, and that is a good thing!

God is approachable.

But here is the beauty of it, not only is He able, He is fully able, but here is the second characteristic about what this guy knew about his friend inside. God is able and secondly, God is approachable.

This guy, regardless of what the guy inside is really thinking, this guy is thinking—you know, old Frank in there—he doesn't mind me coming here at midnight—in fact, I think Frank would want me to come to him at midnight—he would not mind at all for me to wake up him and his family because he wants to give me bread. That is what this guy is thinking, whether it is true of Frank or not, it doesn't matter at this point. What we are thinking about is that from this guy's perspective, he thinks—that guy is approachable, he will not mind me coming—and that's what Jesus is trying to communicate to us—yes, God is sovereign, yes, He has all the supply—yes, He is in control, and He is running this whole universe for His purposes and His plans, but the beauty of it is—this God has invited you to come to His presence. That God has said, "I am approachable to my people. I want my people to come to me."

I want to make this sentence very, very carefully. I think what Jesus is teaching us here is that God delights in revealing Himself to those who are bold enough to bother him! God delights in revealing Himself to those who are just plain bold enough to bother him. Now, I hesitate to use that term because bother is obviously not the most positive word. No one wants to be a bother to anybody else.

But think about it this way with me—let me give you a little illustration—there was a time in my life when I was really busy traveling all over the place, and the weight of things at

church were really heavy, and I was feeling crowded in all around. And my wife, Heather, comes to me and says something along the lines of, "David, I know you are really busy and you have a lot on your plate, but I have some things going on in my life that I am really struggling with. I don't want to bother you with them, but I want to share them with you. She is hesitant to do that because she doesn't want to bother me amidst all that I'm doing. Now, when that happens, what am I going to say to my wife? I'm going to say something along to my wife along the lines of, "Yes there is a lot going on, but I want you to bother me with the hurts and the burdens in your life." In fact, I delight in the fact that I am the one you come to bother with those things. And the only thing that would really bother me is if you went to somebody else instead of coming to me with those things. That's why I am here. I want to be bothered by the things in your life.

Now, get the picture here—yes, God is sovereign, yes He is in control of the whole universe, and He is carrying out His purpose and His plans. But here is the beauty of it, He delights, He absolutely delights in being the one that you come to with your hurts, your cares, and your struggles. Please let this soak in, not just the person beside you, in front of you, behind you, right where you are sitting, God delights in revealing Himself to you when you are bold enough to bother Him. In fact, I think He would say that the only thing that bothers Him is when you don't come to Him with those things, and you go to someone or something else in this world?" Do you get the picture here? The beauty of a God who delights in being bothered.

It almost seems presumptuous to say to this God, I know you are running a universe here, and I know you are accomplishing the plans and the purposes of all nations, but I have a couple of little things going on in my life that I just need you to give your attention to, and I need you to sit here and listen to me, put your focus on me, and deal with some of these things in my life. Doesn't that seem presumptuous?

But that is exactly what Jesus is saying to do. He is saying go to Him. He's not saying don't badger the Father with all the trifling things that are going on in your life instead He is saying, be as invasive as you want—ask and it will be given you—seek and you will find—knock and the door will be opened to you—you come to Him boldly, shamelessly. And it may not make sense to anybody else, but you have the privilege of approaching the throne of grace with confidence Hebrews 4 says, because God delights, He invites you to approach Him. This is incredible!

Think about it with me. God invites us to bother him anytime. That's what this story is telling us—anytime! It's at midnight for a reason. This guy inside is thinking—you know, I mean I could do this at noon or midnight, it doesn't really matter, this guy wants to help me. Time is not a factor in this guy's mind. That's what God is saying, it's what Christ is teaching us.

Folks, it is never too late to come before God. It is never proper for us to say in the presence of God, "God I know that I should have started praying earlier about this, it might be too late." It's never too late. And it's never too early. We don't need to say to God, "I know that this is a ways off in the distance, and you might not be concerned with this right now." He is concerned with this right now. It's never too early. God invites us to come to Him anytime, not only anytime, but God invites us to come to Him in everything—in everything!

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything," in everything (Philippians 4 says) *"present your request to God"* (Phil. 4:6) In the Greek, everything there in Philippians 4 means everything. Everything! No exceptions! I mean think about it in this story—is this

really an emergency—is this really that important? Come on, it's not like somebody is dying or the wife is having a baby, or the kid has broken His leg, or there's a robber in the house and he's coming to get some help at midnight. All he wants is a couple of biscuits!

If you are the guy inside, you are thinking give me a break! A couple of pieces of bread? Tell your friend to go to sleep. He'll forget he's hungry, and then wake up in the morning and have breakfast. The guy's life is not dependent on him getting a piece of bread tonight! But somehow in this guy's frame of mind, he's thinking this guy, he's approachable with anything. It doesn't have to be a big deal to come to him. That's what Jesus is teaching us about prayer there is nothing too small to bring before this God.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is nothing in your life that is insignificant to bring before the God of the universe. That is an amazing thought! Just that sentence—there is nothing in your life that is too small to bring before the God of the whole universe! Nothing too small! Nothing that's not that big of deal.

Look at Nehemiah 6:9 where Nehemiah prays. Amidst all these mammoth things God is doing in Jerusalem at that point, He prays that God will strengthen His hands. And God did. He said, "God I really need some strength in these 10 fingers right now." God does it. There is nothing too small!

And there is nothing too great! The Bible never cautions us against the magnitude of what we pray for. In fact, the Bible does the opposite. We pray for mountains to be moved. We pray for colds, and we pray for cancers, and everything in between—there is nothing too great.

I ask you this morning, what is in your life, or what couple of things in your life are you praying for, that are so big, so great, that if the person next to you right now knew that you were praying for those things, they would say you are out of your mind—that could never happen? I have a couple of those things that I'm praying for in my life, my ministry. I'm not going to tell you what they are. If I did tell you what they are, you would think, "There you go on your little idealistic rampages again. It will never happen." No, there is nothing too great to bring before my God. He delights in taking big things that we ask, and showing His power and His glory and His greatness. He says, come to me anytime in everything!

God is active.

He is able and He is approachable, but here that's still not enough to cause this guy to go banging on the door. I want you to see this next characteristic of God that I think is in the mind of this guy as he's thinking of His friend inside the room. He's able, He's approachable, and third—God is active. He's active!

Think about it with me. You put yourself in this guy's shoes in this story. You wonder—this guy almost thinks that His buddy is probably inside awake just waiting for him to come knock on the door. "Hey! I mean, His family might be up baking bread for all I know. I'm going to go knock on their door. No, they don't want to go to sleep. They are staying up late tonight. They're probably having a midnight snack themselves, so I'm going to get one for my buddy over here." It's not a matter of whether or not this guy is asleep in there, apparently this guy who's coming to the door is bold enough to think that either he's awake or he's just fallen asleep or He would be glad to get up and go running over to the table and fix some bread and bring it to the door—here you go, have a great night! That's what is in this guy's mind. And that is what Jesus is telling us to do—how to approach God in prayer, like he's active. Here is the picture we need to see in this story: God is not asleep! He's not asleep! He does not sleep, nor does He slumber, Isaiah says.

Now I'm guessing that most of us in this room at least believe that. "Okay, I know God is not asleep, that He is not snoozing." But, let's be honest, have you ever felt like God was asleep in your life? Have you ever felt like He wasn't listening that He was ignoring some of your needs that He checked out on you and He was going on doing other stuff apart from you? And if we are really, really honest, a lot of times we pray like we are trying to wake up God. We pray like God is just sitting there, and we are saying, "God will you just please get up and do this." And I want to remind you, based on Luke 11 that your God is not asleep. Your God is active before you even say a word to Him. He is already moving. We are not arousing a sleeping giant when we pray. We are praying to a God who is constantly at work in your life, in the lives of people that we pray for around the world—He is constantly at work, He is not asleep.

Not only is He not asleep, but here is the picture in Luke 11 this guy is not just asking for bread for himself, he is asking for bread for somebody else. And what we have in this story is a picture of asking literally interceding on behalf of somebody else's need—not even his own need—but interceding on behalf of somebody else's need. This leads us to the privilege in Luke 11 that Jesus is highlighting here. That we have the privilege of interceding. That's a term the Bible uses to talk about how we stand in the gap for other's needs. We pray on behalf of other's needs.

What Luke 11 is showing is that intercession is the means by which we have the privilege of participating with God and all that He is doing in the world. Intercession—the means by which we participate in the activity of God—especially in other people's lives—that we have the privilege of coming to Him, not just for ourselves, but for people around us, and for their needs—interceding.

Now, it's at this point that we even go back to that question that we started wrestling with a little bit earlier, "If God Has His sovereign plans, and His sovereign purposes, then why do I need to ask Him to do this or that in somebody else's life? He's just going to do it anyway, whatever He thinks is best, so why do I need to pray?"

These are the questions we wrestle with, but think about it with me—we have the privilege of coming before God on behalf of others, and in that process, we actually have the privilege of participating with what God is doing in those people's lives. And prayer is the means by which God takes us with our inadequate view of where life is headed, and our inept view of the future, He knows it all, and He has chosen to allow us and our praying to be a part of the means by which He moves in other people's lives. And this is a privilege that we cannot leave to somebody else. We pray because we have the opportunity to come before God on behalf of those who are poor, and those who are hurting, and those who are unreached with the gospel, and we have the privilege from our knees of being involved in what He is doing all over the world. What an incredible honor! That we as a faith family must take advantage of on behalf of each other!

Think about it! You go in your room this week, and you close the door, and you pray for an unreached people group in the northern province of China who have not heard about the gospel yet. And you pray and you plead, "God I pray that they will come to know your grace. I pray that they will come to know Christ." Then God is using your prayers, using you on your knees, to be a part of His plan to make His gospel known among this people group in the northern provinces of China. What an amazing picture!

Not just in needs around the world, but right here. I'm guessing that we have people on our minds and hearts right here in this room who live right around us. We've come to the conclusion that we just cannot open their eyes to see Christ. We try and try and try, but we

cannot do it. So, we go before God, we fall on our faces and we say, "God we cannot open their eyes to see your glory, but you can, so I pray that you would do it. I pray that you would open their eyes to see your grace, and your mercy, and your love. We pray for people who are hurting around us, who are going through all kinds of trials and valleys, and we say God I cannot give this person I love the strength that I need, but you can, and so I'm going to come to you, and I'm going to call out to you, and I'm going to ask you to show your strength, and your power in their lives, and I'm going to let my prayers be the means by which you show your greatness to them." What an incredible honor! This is the privilege of intercession.

Come before God in a fast, and weep, and plead, and in the process participate with what the God of the universe is doing around the world and around us. Not only the picture and the privilege, but look at this the promise we have to remember is that prayer to God on behalf of others (now this could go for prayer to God as a whole, but we are talking specifically here in this story about prayer to God on behalf of others) is never, never in vain.

I want this to be a reminder to us today because we've all thought it—let's be honest. "You know, I've prayed for this over and over and over again, and it still hasn't happened. So, it wasn't worth me praying altogether." We've all thought it. I even shared a story a couple of weeks ago praying every night as a kid for God to bring a cure for AIDS, so that Mr. Mike wouldn't die. And He died, and there is still not a cure for AIDS. So was that prayer wasted as a kid? What was that about?

Next week, we're going to talk about a picture of trust in prayer that far exceeds what many times we think about. But for the time being, I want to remind you that when you pray to this God, and especially when you pray on behalf of others, it is never in vain. Because God in His wisdom and His infinite glory, is working in your life as you pray, and He's working in the lives of the people you are praying for. He is active, and we don't need to worry that He hasn't heard us that He doesn't know what's going on. He does! He does!

And prayer is the means by which we are participating with Him sometimes in things that we cannot even see. So Jesus says, on my authority (He knows this will be a struggle for us, He knows it) and so He says, I say to you, ask! He's already told us what to ask for—ask for His glory—ask for His grace—ask for His gifts—ask for His guidance—ask, and it will be given to you! Trust me on this, Jesus is saying. Seek, you will find Him. He is approachable. Knock on the door of heaven, and He will open it up, and you will experience and enjoy His presence. Take my word for it, everyone who asks receives—he who seeks finds—and he who knocks, the door will be opened. Your prayers to this God, to the Father are never, never in vain.

So, I want us to take the position of a really bold, really shameless, almost annoyingly relentless friend who just doesn't seem to have a clue in this story in Luke 11 that it might be kind of weird for him to go to his friend at midnight. I want us to take that approach in our lives with God right now.

I'm doing the best I can to try to debunk the idea that worship is a spectator sport. Worship is a participant's activity that we have the privilege of encountering God in. So, we're going to spend some time in praying like this, praying like God is able, like God is approachable, and like God is active. And in just a minute, I'm going to invite us to stand, and we're going to pray and sing a song that is going to fix our eyes on the God that we pray to. We're going to sing out to Him just to fix our minds and our hearts on who He is—that's key! And then once we've done that, then we're going to go into a time where we have an

opportunity to intercede for each other in a way that I hope is right in line with Luke 11, and I hope that will draw us all into the beauty of this picture called prayer.

So will you stand with me? I'm going to pray for us, and I invite you as we sing this song, it is a prayer, it is sung to God that God will fix our eyes and minds, and our hearts on who He is.

Father, we want to be so bold and so shameless because you have invited us to. And we come this morning believing that you delight in revealing yourself to those who are bold enough to bother you. And so we are going to come to you with our needs, our cares, our concerns, our hurts, and we are going to trust that you are active and that you are listening to us. And that you are responding according to your great wisdom. We fix our eyes on you, now. We pray that you would bring our mind's attention, our heart's affection all across this room onto the greatness of who you are, and the fact that you hold onto us in this lifeline picture called prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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