

Luke 11:1-28: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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- [0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 11 verses 1 to 28. Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.
- And he said to them, When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us, and lead us not into temptation.
- 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, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.
- 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. 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.
- And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, And the one who seeks finds, And to the one who knocks it will be opened.
- [1 : 1 9] What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, Will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, How much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?
- Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.
- While others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, And a divided household falls.
- And if Satan also is divided against himself, How will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, By whom do your sons cast them out?
- Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, Then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, His goods are safe.
- [2 : 3 1] But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, He takes away his armour in which he trusted, And divides his spoil. Whoever is not with me is against me, And whoever does not gather with me scatters.
- When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, It passes through waterless places seeking rest, And finding none it says, I will return to my house from which I came.
- And when it comes, It finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, And they enter and dwell there, And the last state of that person is worse than the first.

As he said these things, A woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you, And the breasts at which you were nursed. But he said, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Jesus' teaching on prayer, With which Luke chapter 11 begins, Is relatively brief, But exceedingly important. Of the synoptic gospels, It is Luke in particular that places an emphasis upon Jesus as a man of prayer.

[3 : 35] Notice, for instance, That Jesus prays before the heavens are opened in his baptism. He prays before he is transfigured. He prays as he chooses the twelve disciples. These things aren't recorded in the other gospels.

Seeing the importance and the power that prayer had for Jesus, It is understandable that the disciples would want to learn how to pray from him. And the Lord's Prayer is not just a worked example of a good prayer, Although it is that.

It's a gift of specific words that we ourselves can pray. The address is to Father. One of the things that comes into very clear focus in this chapter and elsewhere, Is the fact that God is our Father, And we approach him as such.

Recognition that God is our Father is found in the Old Testament too, But it comes into much clearer focus than the new, Particularly through Christ's own relationship with his Father. And it comes into the foreground at times of redemption too.

We should beware of over-intimatising this language. It's not the language of Daddy. However, we should also beware, on the other hand, Of removing the intimacy from it. The fact that we address God as our Father is truly remarkable.

[4 : 42] Also, Father language speaks of a relationship between the speaker and the person being addressed. Father language is calling upon God, among other things, To recognise us as his children, And to act on our behalf.

Isaiah chapter 63 verse 16 expresses this, For you are our Father, Though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not acknowledge us, You, O Lord, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is your name.

In Exodus chapter 4, Israel is said to be God's firstborn son. And God's recognition of his son, And how he stands as father relative to that son, Is one of the reasons for his redemption of Israel and his people.

When we address God as father, Among other things, We are calling upon God to act, On account of the way that he stands relative to us, As our father, And we as his children.

Hallowed be your name, Is also a statement of fact, And a calling to act. It expresses the desire of the person who is praying, That God's name be hallowed, That it be made holy.

[5 : 47] God's concern for the holiness of his name, Is seen in such places as Ezekiel chapter 36, Verses 19 to 23. But when they came to the nations, Wherever they came, They profaned my holy name, In that people said of them, These are the people of the Lord, And yet they had to go out of his land.

But I had concern for my holy name, Which the house of Israel had profaned Among the nations to which they came. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, That I am about to act, But for the sake of my holy name, Which you have profaned Among the nations to which you came.

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, Which has been profaned among the nations, And which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, Declares the Lord God, When through you, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

The concern that God's name be hallowed, Is the concern of the third commandment. We do not want to bear the name of the Lord in vain. We do not want God's name to be profaned. Indeed, there are ways in which The expanded version of the Lord's prayer in particular Could be seen as a transformation Of the ten commandments into prayer.

In declaring our Father, We are appealing to the one God, Beyond which there is no other. In saying hallowed be your name, We are calling for the fulfilment of the third commandment. In the petition, Your kingdom come, We are calling for the great Sabbath rest Of the day of the Lord.

[7 : 13] The petition, Hallowed be your name then, Is not merely a statement of fact. It is a desire that God would act To display the holiness of his name Through action in the world.

God is ultimately the one Who will hallow his own name. And the next petition calls for God's Eschatological kingdom, For his reign to come, For God's rule to be seen In the situations of history.

In these statements, We are being taught the posture Of longing for God's action in history, For hungering and thirsting after his righteousness. All of this is a way of conforming us to God's will, Teaching us to seek first the kingdom of God And his righteousness over all other things.

And the next petition turns to our need for bread. Maybe we could see this as an allusion to manna, The manna that's provided each day for the people's need. This is a recognition of our utter dependence upon God For our sustenance and our immediate provision.

We receive all the good things of the world As a constant gift from his hand. And there's a recognition of a hand Behind all of our own human providence. The next petition is about the forgiveness of sins.

[8 : 20] The new covenant involved a general release From Israel's sins, its debt, As the nation was forgiven its sins. Christ declares the year of the Lord's favour.

In Isaiah 61 that is foretold, The chapter that he reads out In the context of the Nazareth sermon. And there is a reciprocal element here. For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Indeed, if we do not forgive others, We ourselves will not enjoy forgiveness. We must remit all the debts that people owe to us. We must live as those who have relinquished Their claims upon others.

Who put ourselves in the hands of God and neighbour. In the requirement that we forgive others, We are being called to participate In God's own act of forgiveness. God has declared this great release of the year of Jubilee.

And now we are supposed to extend that To all the people around us. To give them the forgiveness that God has given to us. The final petition of the prayer Is a prayer for deliverance from the time of testing And the evil one.

[9 : 21] We can think of Christ's own experience in the wilderness As he led into temptation. The temptation is that time When your faith might be tested to breaking point. That time of difficulty and trial Where your mettle is tested And you may find yourself wanting.

From the Lord's prayer Jesus goes into some more general teaching about prayer. He emphasises the importance of forgiveness And we have already seen this as a theme in his healings.

Often people have to persist. It is their stubborn faith that Christ will hear them And will answer them That gets rewarded with healing. And the illustration that Jesus gives Of the man at night requesting food from his neighbour Highlights two ways in which we can expect The efficacy of our prayers.

First of all on the basis of relationship. That if you approach your friendly neighbour You expect him to give things On the basis of your friendship. And then beyond that On the basis of honour.

That if he doesn't respond to friendship Your impudence And the fact that he must respond On the basis of his own honour to that Is good reason to expect That you will get what you have requested. God will give what we need.

[10 : 27] Prayer is about presenting genuine need to the Lord. And God does not withhold from us what we need. This is the request of a son or daughter to their father.

And on the basis of the love that he bears for us And the need that we have We can expect a favourable response. Indeed we will be given more than we expect.

Our heavenly father will give the spirit To those who ask him. Prayer preceded Jesus' reception of the spirit At his baptism. And it will also precede the church's reception Of the spirit at Pentecost.

After casting out a spirit of muteness From a man Some of the people speculate That Jesus is doing so By the power of Satan himself By Beelzebul And others are trying to test him Asking for a sign.

Jesus' response shows That the kingdom of Satan is in trouble. A kingdom divided against itself Cannot stand And if Satan's is such a kingdom Then its days are numbered.

[11 : 25] However, if Jesus is casting out demons By the power of God Then something more is happening. The kingdom of God has come upon them. The reference to the finger of God here Looks back to Exodus chapter 8 verse 19 With the conflict between Moses and Aaron And Pharaoh and his magicians.

Then the magicians said to Pharaoh This is the finger of God. In this statement Jesus is implicitly comparing Those testing him with Pharaoh's magicians In the Exodus account.

Jesus presents this situation In terms of the Exodus. He is delivering an enslaved people From Pharaoh, Beelzebul By the finger of God. Jesus casts himself as if A heavenly strong man Fighting against the demonic forces of Satan.

Satan is the strong man And Christ is the stronger. Just as Jesus spoke of Satan Falling like lightning After the return of the 72 Here he talks about him being overcome His armour being removed And his spoil being divided.

The people have been held hostage by Satan And now people like this mute man Are being released. The spoil is being taken from the strong man. People who had been in his clutches Are being snatched loose.

[12 : 34] But this is no time for presumption or complacency. While Israel is being set free By the ministry of Christ It cannot presume upon that fact. If they do not deal with the root issues Within their hearts They will merely be occupied once again By these demonic forces In a way far more severe Than their original condition.

Jesus has just spoken about the way That you are either for him or against him. There is no not against middle ground. And here cleansing that leads to Just leaving the place empty Is not enough either.

It just leaves people open To be overtaken by worse sins and demons. They must be filled rather with the Holy Spirit. This passage ends with a woman Crying out from the crowd to Jesus Talking about how blessed his mother is That he is her son.

And Jesus responds in a way That does not disagree with her But corrects her And shows that there is more to the picture. The true blessedness comes to the people Who hear the word of God and keep it.

The sense of Jesus' response is More than that Blessed are those who hear the word of God And keep it. It is less a denial of the woman's statement Than it is a what is more response.

[13 : 40] And here we can understand better What the blessing of Mary the mother of Jesus is. The blessing of Mary is not on account Of the mere physical bearing of Jesus. Her blessing is on account of the fact That she believed the word of God.

Luke chapter 1 verse 45 And blessed is she who believed That there would be a fulfilment Of what was spoken to her from the Lord. She heard the word of God And she kept it And was blessed on that account.

Indeed we could argue that Mary is the first And the paradigmatic new covenant believer. A question to consider How might the practice of prayer Have changed for the average member Of the people of God From the old covenant to the new?

