

The Friend At Midnight

Luke 11:1-13

Pastor John Miller

Luke tells us that “Now it came to pass, as He...”—Jesus—“...was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples...”—it doesn't tell us which one, or the place where He was praying—“...said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’”

I think if we are honest as believers, we will admit that none of us pray as we ought or pray as much as we should or pray the way we should pray. I think that when it comes to our prayer life, we all feel lacking. I know that I feel this way. When someone asks me, “Pastor John, how can we pray for you?” my answer is always, “Pray that I would pray; pray for me that I would pray. Pray that God would deepen, enrich and strengthen my prayer life.” I believe that as I do that, I'm a better husband, a better father, a better pastor, a better preacher. I think all that we are flows out of our prayer life.

Warren Wiersbe says, “No Christian rises higher than his praying. Everything we are and everything we do for the Lord depends on prayer.” I say “Amen” to that. Everything we are and everything we do flows out of our life of prayer.

Perhaps this is why, in verse 1, one of the disciples—and I pointed out that it doesn't tell us which one. My guess is Simon Peter; he's always speaking up. The disciples observed Jesus. They watched Him praying.

Now if you are a student of the Bible, you know that Luke's Gospel emphasizes the prayer life of Jesus. If you want to see Jesus praying, study the Gospel of Luke. Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man. And wherever Jesus prays in the Bible—just a little theological tidbit for you—that is supporting the doctrine of His humanity. As the Son of God, He didn't really need to pray. But as the Son of Man, He was in a body of limitation. He was sinless, but He was fully human also. Because Jesus was fully man and fully God, in His humanity, He prayed to His Father. He depended on the Holy Spirit to resist temptation; no different than you and I. So this supports the doctrine of His full humanity.

But many times people will ask me, “But Pastor, why should we really pray? Isn't God sovereign; won't He do what He's going to do anyway?” I'm going to deal with that in the passage today.

I want to give you one reason to open this message; why we ought to pray. That's in verse 1: because Jesus prayed. If it's good for Jesus, it's good for us. If it's good for John the Baptist—Jesus said, “Among those born of women, there is not one greater than John”—then it's good for John Miller. If John prayed, I need to pray. If Jesus prayed, we all need to pray. He is our example of prayer and shows our need to pray. So our heart's cry should be, as we look at this passage on prayer, “Lord, teach us to pray.” That's exactly what Jesus is going to do.

Now there are four sections to this text, verses 1-13, where Jesus takes us into the school of prayer. The first thing that Jesus teaches us is the pattern and priority of prayer, verses 2-4. It's in what we know as The Lord's Prayer. In verse 1, the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus answered them in verse 2: "So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

This prayer is commonly called The Lord's Prayer, but it's not really a prayer that Jesus would have prayed. The Lord's prayer, strictly speaking, is John 17. I think you're all familiar with it. It was a long, beautiful prayer that Jesus prayed in the upper room.

I believe that The Lord's Prayer, here, is not given to us to pray verbatim, word for word. It wasn't prayed by Jesus; He wouldn't have prayed "forgive us our sins," because He had not sinned. What He is giving us is a model of prayer, or a pattern of prayer, in which we discover the priorities of prayer. We've done an in-depth series through The Lord's Prayer, so we won't tarry on it, but let me mention the five aspects of prayer that Jesus gives us in this pattern.

Number one, prayer starts with God's person; "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." "Let your name be considered hallow; let it be set apart as holy." This also indicates that we should pray as children to a father, but in order to do that, you must have a relationship with God. The Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. It actually teaches that apart from regeneration, being born again, that individuals are children of wrath, children of the devil. They are under the influence of "the prince and the power of the air." We need to be born again to become God's children, and once we are God's children, we then have a relationship with God. When we are converted, we become God's children, God becomes our Father and then we can begin to talk to Him. So God's name must be hallowed, set apart and considered holy.

Secondly, The Lord's Prayer moves to God's program: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The priority of prayer is God. It's not me. It's not getting what I need. It's knowing God, experiencing God, worshipping God. I view prayer as time exposure to God. As we spend time with God, He changes us. Not only does He give to us, but He changes us into the people He wants us to be. Prayer brings us more into the likeness of Christ.

Thirdly, we pray for God's provision. Only after we've established relationship—He's our "Abba," our Father; His name is to be holy and magnified in prayer—His person; then His program is to be followed—His will is to be done; and then we have His provision, verse 3: "Give us day by day our daily bread."

This is a good place for me to point out that there are no personal pronouns in The Lord's Prayer. It's not, "Give me." It's not, "Lead me." It's not, "Forgive me." It's "us" or "we" or "our." He's saying, "Give us...our daily bread." So when I pray, I need to remember I'm part of the family of God, and I need to pray for others, as well.

But verse 3 indicates that there is nothing wrong with praying for material needs. Not greeds, but needs. You ask, "Well, where do you get that?" Bread. It doesn't say, "Give us our daily caviar." It doesn't say, "Give us our daily fillet mignon." It doesn't even say, "Give us our daily In-N-Out burger." It says, "Give us our daily bread." Bread was a basic substance for life.

At every meal, they would have bread, and it would be dipped in other items. It was a necessity for life. When we think of the bare necessities of life, we think of bread and water. It takes bread and water to survive. So "Give us...our daily bread" means that God has promised to provide our needs, but not necessarily all of our greeds or all of the things that you may want. So we need to pray for God's provision. God will provide for us. We need to learn to trust Him.

Fourthly, we move to God's pardon. Verse 4 says, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." God's person, God's program, God's provision and God's pardon. What a wonderful thing to be able to say, "God, forgive my sins."

1 John 1:9 say, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That's a real heart-felt need; "God, I've sinned. Please forgive me."

We also need to forgive others who have sinned against us. You can't expect God to forgive you of something that you're not willing to forgive others of. "Forgive us as we forgive others."

Fifthly and lastly, The Lord's Prayer, in verse 4, moves to God's protection. So God's person, God's program, God's provision, God's pardon—or the priority and pattern, and then "God, protect us." "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." I love that. So "God, give me strength. Help me to avoid temptation."

By the way, you have to put feet to this prayer. You can't be praying, "Lead me not into temptation," as you walk into the Fuzzy Frog if you have a problem with alcohol. (The Fuzzy Frog is a made-up bar; there's no such place. "I asked Pastor Miller where that's located." No. It's an invention of my own crazy imagination.) You can't be yielding to temptation as you pray that prayer. You have to put feet to your prayers. God "has given us a way of escape," and sometimes it's your two feet, for heaven's sake. Just get out of the room. Go somewhere else. Turn and run. The Bible say, "Flee youthful lusts."

In summary, having looked at this prayer, we must pray because Jesus prayed. It is a God-appointed way for blessing in our life. James 4:2 says, "You do not have, because you do not ask." Secondly, we must pray to our Father. We come as children to our Abba, our Father. It's a relationship. Thirdly, we must pray for God's glory: "Thy name be hallowed." The name of God is His nature and character. Fourthly, we must pray for God's kingdom and for God's will. Let's pray for God's kingdom to be advanced and for His will to be done. Fifthly, we must pray for our needs; "Forgive us...lead us...and deliver us."

Now Jesus moves to the second main lesson in this school of prayer. He moves from the priority and pattern of prayer to the persistence in prayer. He illustrates this in a parable in

verses 5-8. This is the parable of The Friend at Midnight. Verse 5 says, “And He said to them...”—there’s no skip in the text. He just keeps talking—“...‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight...”—and he’d better be your friend, if you go to him at midnight; that’s for sure—“...and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’?” Now notice verse 8: “I say to you...”—whenever Jesus says, “I say to you,” He’s going to drive home a point—“...though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.”

Here Jesus gives us a picture of what could commonly happen in that day. Hospitality was a premium; it was very, very important. We’re not as hospitable in our western, modern world as in those days. You had to show hospitality to someone when they showed up at your tent. You fed them. You took them in. It was part of hospitality.

Here’s the story: a guy goes to bed at night. In those days, poor folk had a one-room house, and many times the bed was a common bed where the whole family slept together. Some believe that maybe there was a raised, wooden platform in the house. The animals could be underneath it, and the family would be on top of it. It would be one big family bed. Talk about family togetherness!

So the guy bolts the door and goes to bed that night. Then he gets a knock on the door at midnight. It was his neighbor. “Psst! Hey! I just had someone drop in on me.” They apparently were traveling at night to escape the heat. “I don’t have any food; my kids ate it all today. It’s all gone, and the grocery stores are closed right now. Can you get up and give me something to eat?”

The guy says, “Go away! It’s midnight and I’m in bed. All my kids are with me. If I get up, I’m going to wake up the whole family! Get out of here!”

“Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!” He starts knocking more persistently, more adamantly and more fervently. The neighbor keeps knocking so much that this guy says, “Okay! He’s going to wake up the kids anyway. The neighborhood’s going to wake up. Porch lights are starting to come on.” So he gets up and throws the bread and hits him in the face with it. (No. That’s not in the text; I just threw that in there. If I were telling the story it would be, “Take your bread!” Pow! I’d throw it at him. “Thanks, man. I really appreciate it.” This is how I’d dramatize it in a movie. Moving on...) By the way, these would be little, round loaves of bread, little pieces of bread, three pieces of bread, not three loaves of Weber bread, but three little, flat, round pieces of bread.

Jesus then drives home the point: He didn’t get up and give the bread to his neighbor because he was his friend, but because of—and here’s the key word, the optimal word in verse 8—“his importunity,” as it says in the King James. It’s a good word. What it means is “a shameless

persistence.”

If you're impertinent, you'd say, "I don't care what you think! I don't care who I bother! I need this, and I don't care!" You're real impertinent. You gotta have what you gotta have. We would use the word "obnoxious." He bugged his neighbor. He wouldn't stop knocking.

So the guy said, "Alright, already! Stop knocking!" He gets up, unbolts the door and gave his friend the bread. I love what it says at the end of verse 8: "He will rise and give him as many as he needs." He's saying, "Just stop knocking on the door at midnight; alright?" Perhaps this guy's wife told him, "Go to the neighbors. See if they have anything."

"You go to the neighbor's." It's one of those things that the husband and wife argue over; who's going to ring the neighbor's doorbell, you know.

"You want bread? You go knock on the neighbor's door."

"I don't want to knock on the neighbor's door." You just feel that way. "I don't want to bother the neighbors at midnight!"

Some people feel that way about God. "I don't want to bother God. He's got all the angels to deal with, the cherubim and seraphim. He's got all the problems in the world He has to deal with. I don't want to bother God with my little problem." We can't bother God. Jesus told us in this important parable that he arose and gave him the bread because of his "shameless persistence."

Now you need to understand that this is not a parable of comparison but of contrast. This is not God being compared to a grumpy, sleepy neighbor who gets irritated. "Oh, all right! I'm sick of you! You can have the new car," you know. It's not God likened unto the sleepy neighbor; it's God contrasted. God is not annoyed by our asking. He is a loving Father Who never sleeps and Who never slumbers. Don't you love that? Whenever you cry out to God, He's not sleeping.

Remember when Elijah had the contest on Mount Carmel with the false prophets of Baal? They were crying, "Oh Baal, hear us!" from morning until afternoon. And Baal didn't hear them, because there is no Baal. Then Elijah started to hassle and heckle them. He said, "Cry a little louder; maybe your god is on vacation. Maybe your god is sleeping right now and needs to be awakened." It was a little "sanctified" sarcasm on Elijah's part.

Aren't you glad that your God never sleeps or slumbers? Whenever you cry out to God, His ear is open to your cry. I love those statements in the psalms that say, "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard my cry." That's awesome. Many times in the night or when you're alone, you're in a dire strait, you cry out to God and you just know that God is there and that He hears you and He answers your prayer. He's not an annoyed, grumpy, sleepy friend. He's our loving Father, Who always gives His children what they need. God, as our Father, knows our needs before we ask Him, and He's not irritated by our prayers. He loves to help us in our time of need.

If you're a parent, you're not irritated by your kids coming to you. You love them. If my phone rings and it's one of my kids, I answer the phone. I want to be available to help them at any time. I'll interrupt anything to be able to answer the phone and meet their needs and help them in a time of need.

Now notice in verse 8 that we should pray with "a shameless persistence." That's the "importunity." So we should pray earnestly, fervently and humbly. James tells us in his epistle that "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man..."—or "woman"—"...availeth much."

Remember when Hannah prayed for a child? I love Hannah's prayer. She knelt down in the temple, and Eli saw her lips moving but nothing was coming out of her mouth, so he accused her of being drunk. She told him, "No, I'm not drunk. I'm a woman of sorrowful spirit."

Many times the deepest kind of prayers are borne out of sorrow. The deepest prayer is the fruit of sorrow. "God, I need You! God, I'm in trouble! Lord, I pray for help. Lord, please see me. Please come to me!" He hears that cry. He heeds that cry.

So Hannah said, "No. I'm not drunk. I'm praying for a son." Then God gave Hannah a son, because she prayed with importunity.

I think of Jacob, who wrestled with an angel, which we now know—I believe that angel was the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a preincarnate appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. It's called the "Christophany," an appearance of Christ. He actually appeared before He became a man, and He appeared in that passage as an angel. Jacob wrestled with Him from morning until evening. The sun was starting to go down, and the angel of the Lord said, "Jacob, let me go."

Then Jacob said, "I'm not going to let you go until you bless me!" There's that importunity. Then the angel crippled his leg.

You say, "Wow! Some blessing!" It was a blessing, because as Jacob walked with that limp in his leg, all the cunning, all the pride, all the scheming had gone out of his life, and he became the man who was Israel, now governed by God.

Many times God will allow an affliction in your life. He will allow an adversity in your life. He'll cripple you so that you'll be dependent on Him. Florence White Willett said:

"I thank God for bitter things;

They've been a 'friend to grace';

They've driven me from paths of ease

To storm the secret place.

"I thank Him for the friends who failed

To fill my heart's deep need;

They've driven me to the Savior's feet,

Upon His love to feed.

"I'm grateful too, through all life's way

No one could satisfy,

And so I've found in God alone

My rich, my full supply!"

"Lord, if I need to be crippled to stay in fellowship with you, cripple me. Whatever I need to stay dependent and reliant on You, so be it, Lord."

My favorite example of importunity and humility in prayer is Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. I propose to you that the greatest example of prayer in all the Bible is the Son of God in tears, sweating drops of blood, face down in the dirt, alone with His Father. To me, it is one of the most moving scenes in the entire Bible—the Son of God in tears, the Son of God prostrate in the dirt praying, "Oh, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." He sweat great drops of blood as He anticipated the Cross, but He concluded by praying, "Thy will be done." But the Father said, "No; You must go to the Cross and suffer and die." And Jesus willingly submitted to that. So Jesus prayed, He found strength, He was facing a difficulty, He prostrated Himself and He prayed with importunity, shameless persistence. He prayed three times.

Some people say, "If you really have faith, you pray only once." I guess Jesus lacked faith, because He prayed three times. After three times praying, the Father did not grant Jesus' petition. Jesus did have to drink the cup. He did have to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

So prayer is borne out of creature need. Prayer is to align itself with the will of God. Prayer is to be borne with a sense of "I need You, God."

Jesus is saying in this parable that if a grouchy friend can be forced to, by his friend's shameless persistence, give him what he ought, how much more will our loving God respond to shamelessly persistent, earnest prayer. It's an argument from the lesser to the greater. How important.

There is the third area that Jesus moves into in this parable. He talks about the pattern and priority. He talks about persistent, earnest, shameless prayer. Then thirdly, He gives us a promise to pray.

They said, "Lord, teach us to pray." He said, "Okay; I'm going to give you a promise." He gives

us that promise in verses 9-10. “So I say to you...”—again the emphasis, “Jesus says”—“...ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Then Jesus repeats Himself by saying, “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

Why did Jesus say the same thing slightly differently? For emphasis. Whenever Jesus repeats Himself, He doesn't have a stutter; He needs to make something clear to us. “If you ask, you shall be given. If you seek, you shall find. If you knock, it shall be opened. If you ask, you'll receive. If you seek, you'll find. If you knock, it shall be opened.”

Now I want you to notice that this “ask...seek...knock” in the text is in the “present imperative” tense. “Imperative” means it's a command. “Present” tense means that it is ongoing. He's commanding us to “ask...seek...knock”; it's not an option. Prayer is not an option; God commands us to pray. Not to pray is disobedience. And then because it's in the present tense—keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking; never stop.

I want you to also note that this “ask...seek...knock” increases in intensity. Asking implies requesting assistance for a conscious need. Again, I think that's the heart of prayer. Pride eliminates prayer, but when I am humble and I realize I need God, I need help—I need Him in my marriage, I need to have wisdom, I need Him to give me strength, I need His peace, I need His joy—then I come to Him in prayer. “Lord, I need You.” So the word “ask” indicates an assisted need—“I need You.”

The word “seek” denotes asking but adds action. Not just asking verbally, but I'm now actually out pursuing, doing what I can to seek.

Then the word “knock” includes asking plus acting plus persevering. The word “knock” conveys the idea of perseverance, continuance. “Well, I prayed and God didn't answer.” So we just dismiss our prayer and stop praying. No; we need to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. As I said, it's in the present tense.

I want you to note also that this word “ask” is a petition from an inferior to a superior. The Greek word translated “ask” conveys the idea of an inferior asking a superior. You might be able to ask somebody who's on the same level as you or someone under you, but this is an inferior asking a superior, so it conveys the idea of humility. If there is any way we need to pray, it's with humility. We can't tell God. We can't order God. We can't boss God around.

By the way, Jesus, in this passage—as many have misinterpreted—is not teaching that we can have anything we want. This is not an Aladdin genie's lamp that you rub “in the name of Jeessussah!” Why do Christians pray so weird? “Oh Goddah!” Who talks like that? Christians do when they pray. “God, help us if we pray that way!” You meet your friend at the mall and say, “How ya doinah. Lovely dayah.” Slap that dude!

Prayer is just talking to God out of a felt need. Now if you're proud, you don't think you need anything. Proud people don't pray. Humble people pray.

But just because Jesus said, “Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you’ll find; knock and it shall be opened”—this is not a carte blanche for anything you want. Let me give you three things that need to be in play in your prayers: It needs to be God’s will, it needs to be for God’s glory and it needs to be for your good. God is not going to give you something that is not good for you. And believe me, we are so limited in our knowledge that sometimes we pray for things that aren’t for our good, aren’t for God’s glory, so God’s doesn’t give us our petition.

There are basically four ways that God answers prayer. There is what I call the direct answer; we like that. When we ask, God gives it right away. Praise God! Then there’s the delayed answer; we don’t like that, because we want it right now. Then there’s the different answer. Have you ever prayed for something and God said, “No; I’ve got something better.” Trust the Lord; God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him.

Remember when Paul prayed and asked God, in 2 Corinthians 12, to remove his thorn in the flesh? Again, he prayed three times asking God to take it away, and God said, “No, but I’ll give you something instead—My grace, which will be sufficient. And My strength will be made perfect in weakness.” So Paul gloried in his weaknesses.

The fourth way God answers prayer is the denial answer. That we don’t like. I’ve heard people say, “I prayed and God didn’t answer.”

I say, “Yes, He did. He said, ‘No.’”

“Well, I don’t like that one.” So what. I don’t care what you like or don’t like. When you were a little child, did your parents give you everything you wanted? If you’re only three years old and you want a machine gun, will your father give it to you?

“No, son, that’s not....”

“Waah! If you loved me, you’d give me a machine gun!”

“You’re not mature enough.”

By the way, the real purpose of prayer is not to get what we want; the real purpose is to become the kind of people God wants us to be. It’s to become the kind of people who God can trust with an answer to prayer. Some of you are praying for things that God can’t trust you with yet, because your heart isn’t right, you’re not broken enough, you’re not dependent enough, you’re not humble enough. God has to break you and make you. The goal of prayer is becoming the people God wants us to be. It’s just not getting what we want from God. It’s a shame what prayer has become today in the church. “So God, teach us to pray humbly, fervently, persistently with importunity. And help it to be for Your glory and our good and may it be in Your will.”

So Jesus tells them that God answers prayer always, verse 10. “If you ask, you’ll receive; if you seek, you’ll find; if you knock, it shall be opened,” but it may not be the answer, the time or the

way that we want.

Then Jesus closes in verses 11-13 with the premise of the prayer. This is actually the explanation and conclusion to the parable. So He starts with the priority and pattern of prayer. He moves to the parable of persistence in prayer. Then He encourages them with the promises of prayer. Now He closes with the principle of prayer, verses 11-13.

He says, "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" Here's the premise: "If you then, being evil..."—by the way, notice what Jesus has to say about us. This is certainly the doctrine of the total depravity of man—"... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Now if you have a child who comes to you and asks, "Dad, I'm hungry. Can I have some bread?" would the Dad say, "Watch this. I'm going to give him a rock. It'll break his teeth. Ha! Ha!?" Put that dude in jail! It's child abuse!

"Hey, Dad, can I have a fish?"

"Here. Play with a snake."

"Can I have an egg to eat?"

"Here. Have a scorpion."

Now you're evil, but you know how to give good gifts to your children. This is what's called the argument from the lesser to the greater. If you know how to give good gifts, what makes us think that our Father in heaven, Who is infinitely good and all good things come from above, doesn't want to bless your life? I've always said that God gives the best to those Who leave the choice to Him. Trust Him. Submit to His will. Seek to live for His glory. And ask God to give you the blessings of the Spirit in your life. That's what He says in verse 13: "How much more will your heavenly Father..."—you're His child, and He's your Father—"...give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

That closing statement of "...give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" has been used to tell Christians that they need to ask for the Spirit. I don't think that's what it's teaching. I think that's reading into the text something that's not there.

When you get born again, you get the Holy Spirit. He comes to dwell in you. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in them. But the question is: Does the Holy Spirit have you? Christians have the Spirit, but does the Spirit have the Christian? It's not how much of the Holy Ghost I have. I've talked to people who say, "I've got the Holy Ghost." At least they've got the holy something. Holy jumps or whatever. But does the Holy Ghost have you?

Are you a better husband because of the Holy Spirit? Are you a kinder person? Are you more loving? Are you living a more holy life? Do you care about others? Do you have the love of God in your heart?

I've studied this passage for many years, and I'm convinced that what Jesus is teaching, in light of the parable and what's in Matthew and in the whole teaching of Scripture, is that the greatest blessings come to you from the Spirit. He's talking to Christians, and He's saying that the greatest blessings come from the Holy Spirit. Have you ever read about the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, goodness, temperance, self-control, faithfulness.

All that God wants us to be comes from prayer. Prayer changes us because it brings us into time exposure with God, and we come under the influence of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus is saying is, "Pray for the Spirit's blessings. Pray for the blessings of the Spirit." Literally in Matthew it would be translated that way: "all the blessings of the Spirit."

He's not telling us that we need the Holy Spirit; He's telling us that we need the blessings of the Spirit. We need His love and His joy and His peace and His power in our lives. That's why I said the most important part of prayer is not getting what we want but becoming the people that God wants us to be.

Now if I'm to summarize this whole text, it is that we pray with reverence to God as our Father, we pray with dependence on God and we pray with confidence in God. Commenting on prayer, John Newton said:

"Thou art coming to a King,

Large petitions with thee bring;

For His grace and power are such,

None can ever ask too much."

"Lord, teach us to pray." Amen.