



‘But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’
2 Peter 3:18

July 25

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel reading: Luke 11:1-13

Pray for growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus and **read** the passage together...

Looking around

Immediate context

Our present passage occurs after the account of Jesus’ interaction with Mary and Martha, which challenges the followers of Christ to check their priorities.

In the next part of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, Jesus tangles with some people over the question of the source of his authority to drive out demons.

Its place in the structure of the Book

Back in Luke 9:51 Jesus “resolutely set out for Jerusalem”. Since then Luke has been describing this journey as “the way”. The present passage shows us that prayer was integral to Jesus’ way and that of his followers.

Its contribution to the message and purpose of the book

This passage gives us another glimpse of what it will look like for disciples of Christ to ‘to take up our cross daily and follow him’ (Luke 9:23). Disciples of Jesus are to be people of prayer. This passage encourages us to pray, showing us a model prayer and urging us to be bold and to be assured that God answers prayer.

The book’s message is that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. Our passage reveals the scope and wonder of his salvation: his followers know God as their Father!

Is the passage or part of it quoted elsewhere in the Bible or does it quote other parts of the Bible?

The petition of verse 3 alludes to God’s provision of “daily bread” (manna) for his people after he first redeemed them from Egypt (Ex 16:4).

A slightly longer version of the prayer (The Lord's Prayer) is given in Matthew 6:9-13. Given that it is a model prayer and a pattern that Jesus encouraged his followers to use, it is highly likely that he gave this prayer with slight variation more than once.

Verses 9 to 13 are found in Matthew 7:7-11. In Luke's account, the 'good things' that the heavenly Father gives to those who ask him (Matt 7:11) are singled out as being the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13).

How the passage contributes to our understanding of God, Jesus, humanity, God's salvation, life together as Christians, discipleship.

Verse 1 of this passage shows us that Jesus lived a life of prayer. His prayers at critical moments and times (such as the Garden of Gethsemane; Lk 22:41-44 and his baptism; Lk 3:21) are well known. However, here Luke shows us that prayer was Jesus' regular practice (cf. Mk 1:35; Lk 6:12). It was one that the disciples wished to emulate.

Jesus then teaches his disciples how to pray, with the 'model' prayer of verses 2-4. As you will see from this prayer, or the longer version of the Lord's Prayer that Matthew included in Matthew 6:9-13, the model we are given is one that goes beyond the 'shopping list' of requests that our prayer can, at times, degenerate into. The focus is clearly on praising God first and seeking to bring all of our life under His Lordship (verse 2). Then we can freely bring our petitions before him, seeking his provision, forgiveness and protection, as we commit to forgiving others.

Moreover, all the pronouns in this prayer are plural. While it is acceptable to pray this prayer (or something like it) privately, it is essentially a corporate prayer to be prayed by Jesus' followers together. This corrects and challenges our Western private Christianity. The movement that Jesus started is a corporate one. We follow him on 'the way' together.

Jesus also teaches that we can be confident in our prayers. His teaching that we are to pray with the persistence of the friend in the parable doesn't mean that God needs to be 'nagged'. Rather, this illustrates that our part in prayer is to keep praying! Particularly when we realize that there is a battle on, at times prayer will be a struggle, but one that we must persist with. Jesus is encouraging genuine prayer that truly seeks and doesn't give up. Its persistent nature is underscored by the present (continuous) tenses in verse 9.

God's part in prayer is developed further in the next part of the passage. Here we learn that our heavenly Father is good and trustworthy and knows what we need. He is in one way like any good father and provides us with what we need, but is also much greater than our earthly fathers, giving us life in the Spirit (Lk 11:13). The Father's desire to answer our prayers is underscored by the repetition of verse 9 in verse 10 and by the comparison between earthly fathers and the heavenly Father. If they who are innately evil know how to give good things to their children, *how much more* will the heavenly Father give what we need.

All of this should spur Jesus' disciples on to be people who pray together – regularly, persistently and with great confidence.

Looking Behind

Relevant historical, political, social, geographical information helpful for understanding the passage.

11:2 God's name would be "hallowed", "sanctified," "shown holy," in the time of the end, when his kingdom would come (Isa 5:16; 29:23; Ezek 36:23; 38:23; 39:7, 27; cf. Zech 14:9). In the present, God's people could hallow his name by living rightly; if they lived wrongly, Jewish teachers observed, they would "profane" his name, or bring it into disrepute among the nations.

11:3 Prayers for God to supply basic needs—of which bread and water were seen as the ultimate examples—were common (see Prov 30:8).

11:4 Parallels with ancient Jewish prayers suggest that "Lead us not into temptation" means "Let us not sin when we are tested"—rather than "Let us not be tested".

11:5–6 Hospitality was a crucial obligation; the host must feed the traveler who has graced his or her home by coming to spend the night.

11:7 The children would sleep on mats on the floor of the one-room dwelling. Unbolting the heavy bar that was laid through rings attached to the door was a bother and would make noise that would awaken them (and possibly their animals, too!).

11:11–13 Most people believed that the Holy Spirit (1) had departed, (2) was available only to several of the holiest people, or (3) belonged to the community (cf. the Dead Sea Scrolls [Qumran] community). Thus the promise of verse 13 would have sounded profound. Given common beliefs about the Spirit in ancient Judaism (based on the Old Testament), this was essentially a promise that God would make them prophets, anointed spokespersons for God.

Looking within

Movements or structure in the passage

Vv.1-4 Jesus teaches his disciples to pray.

Vv.5-8 Jesus tells them a humorous parable to encourage prayer.

Vv.9-13 Jesus explains and applies the parable.

Important or repeated words, ideas, themes

"How much more" (Lk 11:13) was a standard type of Jewish argument. Here it is used to highlight the contrast between our love of our children, which comes from an imperfect lover, and God's amazing love for us.

***Important contrasting words (but, although, whereas, whilst)
explanatory words (therefore, so that, for, because, since, in order that),
timing words (next immediately, after, when)***

The explanatory 'for' in verse 10 introduces the reason for Jesus' encouragement to pray in verse 9. We are to ask, see, knock because the Father gives and answers.

Looking clearly

Using all of the above, work out the passage's main idea and supporting ideas:

Main idea

Supporting ideas

Try to summarise these in a clear, succinct statement:

Try to represent what the passage **says** and **means** with a drawing. No art show entries necessary! Invite *willing* people to explain their drawings, unpacking what is being said and the meaning.

Looking at Jesus

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

How has this study enlarged or enriched your understanding of Jesus and his claims, call and promises?

How do you respond to Him?

Looking in the mirror

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What personal and corporate (your home group or church) beliefs you hold does this study confirm to be true?

What personal and corporate beliefs has this study challenged and corrected?

What personal and corporate values, attitudes and priorities has this study reinforced or challenged?

What personal and corporate behaviour and traditions has this study endorsed or challenged?

Looking forward

Doing this helps grow disciples of Jesus...

What encouragements, comforts and changes will you or your group take with you today?

Resolve to help one another move forward in repentance and faith.

Prayer and praise