

## **SERMON FOR JULY 28, 2013**

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)  
7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: **Luke 11:1-13 (The VOICE Bible)**

Message: ***"It's Okay to 'Pester' GOD with  
Our Prayers!"***

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## Gathering in the Word

There are many people around who have never attended church but still know **The Lord's Prayer**. I remember having to memorize it when I was very young at Haili Church in Hilo. Those were the days when we memorized lots of scriptures in Hawaiian as well as in English!

In our Gospel of Luke 11:1-13—Luke's simple version of this **prayer formula** helps us to focus us on the things that really matter: **GOD's presence; GOD's provision—the things that GOD provides; and GOD's forgiveness.**

## Hearing the Word

**LUKE 11:1-13** – The VOICE Bible

11 Another time Jesus was praying, and when He finished, one of His disciples approached Him.

**Disciple:** Teacher, would you teach us your way of prayer? John taught his disciples his way of prayer, *and we're hoping you'll do the same.*

**Jesus:** <sup>2</sup> Here's how to pray:

Father [in heaven], may your name be revered.

May your kingdom come.

[May your will be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.]

<sup>3</sup> Give us the food we need for tomorrow,

<sup>4</sup> And forgive us for our wrongs,  
for we forgive those who wrong us.

And lead us away from temptation.

[And save us from the evil one.]

<sup>5</sup> Imagine that one of your friends comes over at midnight. He bangs on the door and shouts, "Friend, will you lend me three loaves of bread?" <sup>6</sup> A friend of mine just showed up unexpectedly from a journey, and I don't have anything to feed him." <sup>7</sup> Would you shout out from your bed, "I'm already in bed, and so are the kids. I already locked the door. I can't be bothered"? <sup>8</sup> You know this as well as I do: even if you didn't care that this fellow was your friend, if he keeps knocking long enough, you'll get up and give him whatever he needs simply because of his brash persistence!

<sup>9</sup> So listen: Keep on asking, and you will receive. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup> All who keep asking will receive, all who keep seeking will find, and doors will open to those who keep knocking.

<sup>11</sup> Some of you are fathers, so ask yourselves this: if your son comes up to you and asks for a fish for dinner, will you give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> If your boy wants an egg to eat, will you give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> Look, all of you are flawed in so many ways, yet in spite of all your faults, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to all who ask!

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**The Lord's Prayer** is the most famous prayer ever! It was estimated that on Easter Sunday 2007—2 billion people all over the world said the Lord's Prayer in hundreds of different languages and churches!

Luke is very casual what he says that Jesus teaches this **model prayer**. The disciples often saw Jesus praying so regularly. In fact—Jesus prayed all the time—so much so that the disciples wanted to know how to pray themselves. The disciples were not looking for a set or a model prayer or a check list of how and what to pray.

**What they were asking Jesus was how they could pray like Jesus and turn their lives into an extended act of prayer like Jesus!**

It is interesting for us this morning that the Lord's Prayer has become a "*work-for-word-memorized-form-of-prayer.*"

What do we pray for?

*The hallowing of GOD's very name.*

What do we pray for?

*The coming of the Kingdom.*

What do we pray for?

*Daily bread and ongoing forgiveness—we pray to be forgiven on the basis of the fact that we are ourselves are to engage in acts of forgiveness all the time.*

What do we pray for?

*That we not be led into temptation. And when is that we don't want to be tempted?*

- ✓ *Is it just for the next 30 minutes or so?*
- ✓ *Is it for the balance of this particular day?*
- ✓ *Just tomorrow?*
- ✓ *Or is temptation something we want to avoid forever as well as right now?*

**Prayer isn't always polite!** Prayer can't be hidden away in some quiet corner of our life. Life is bumpy and unpredictable—and so will our prayers. In our understanding about prayer—whoever taught us about prayer—we tend to think that the **content** and **substance** of our prayer is the key.

**But in truth—Jesus always seemed more interested in the incessant, ceaseless, and persistent nature of prayer and its never-ending desire to stay connected to GOD—who alone gives us all good things!**

The *model prayer* Jesus gave was all about bread, forgiveness, and the avoidance of temptation. Then in verse 13—Jesus says that GOD will give “the Holy Spirit” to all who ask! But where in the twelve verses that led up to this last line is there any mention of the Holy Spirit? Jesus' **model prayer** doesn't mention the Holy Spirit. So why the mention of the Holy Spirit?

**Maybe the answer is that whether we know it or not—in all our praying, in our asking and begging and pleading with GOD—what we are really asking for—and what we for sure we'll receive in the end—is nothing less than the indwelling Spirit of the Living GOD!**

**We pray in the power of this Spirit—who is our sacred companion that brings to us the fullness of Jesus in our hearts! And when we pray in the power of the Spirit—we find that same Spirit living in us and assuring us that no matter what**

**happens—we serve a loving GOD who holds us tenderly every moment of our lives—no matter what!**

**This—perhaps—is the best piece of news in Luke 11!**

Today's Luke 11 lesson began with the disciples asking Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus did that wonderfully and laid out the specifics—but in these final words Jesus tells them/us that it was the Holy Spirit we have been seeking all along!

When Jesus tells us to ask, to seek, to knock and then says that we will be answered, that what we seek will be found, that the door will be open—**Jesus' talking about the Spirit of GOD!**

So if it is indeed the Holy Spirit we receive in and through all of our praying—then we can understand Jesus' words here a little better without getting forever hung up on the counter-examples and stuff people mention all the time to us.

So if GOD gives us the Holy Spirit every time we pray—then even when a prayer goes “unanswered,” GOD has provided a deeper answer after all! God's love for us is not less because our prayer was not answered. The proof of that is the ongoing and abiding love that comes through the gentle ministry of the Spirit—assuring us that the Gospel is still true, the hope of the resurrection is still real, and the Jesus remains in our hearts by his Spirit!

In our lives—our every prayer contributes to the thankfulness we owe to GOD. Even at our most disappointed times—the Holy Spirit is in us and we receive the further anointing of that same Spirit every time we pray!

## **Doing the Word**

So what is the Word of God for us this morning?

### **1.ONE: Our prayers gain power from our motivation and orientation—when we turn to GOD, we become godlike in our care for others!**

- We forgive as we have been forgiven and live in the Spirit!
- We can boldly ask, seek, and knock—and expect as well as accept miracles at the hand of our generous GOD!
- GOD gives us the Holy Spirit, and with the Spirit's presence—we receive everything we need to flourish and to serve GOD!

### **2.TWO: GOD IS THE BEST OF PARENTS:**

- GOD gives us grace and kōkua/support long before we ask!
- GOD does not compete with humankind in terms of power—but wants us to claim our power as GOD's beloved children!

### **3.THREE: JESUS' WORDS INVITE US TO HAVE GREAT EXPECTATIONS:**

- To trust GOD for the ultimate issues and see prayer as our natural response to everyday as well as dramatic events in our lives!

- Ask, Seek, Knock is good advice—not magical thinking—our our quests and seeking opens us up to great inflows of divine energy and greater openness to fully experience GOD aloha!

## **Sent in the Word**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER by Ralph Milton-REPEAT

Our Father in heaven,  
Your name is holy.  
May your peace come.  
May we live on earth,  
As you live in heaven.  
Give us enough to eat each day.  
Forgive us the bad things we have done,  
As we forgive those who have done bad  
things to us.  
Don't test us with things too hard for us,  
And save us from evil. Amen.