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Prayer in the Kingdom – *Luke 11:1-13*

Introduction – Luke has made clear that Jesus is a Person of prayer (3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 28-29). That in itself teaches us that we, in imitating Jesus, are to be people of prayer. And like the disciples, we need to learn from Jesus how to pray. As we have become a people who pray this prayer, are we learning to pray?

The Lord's Prayer (vv1-4) – A few years ago we spent many weeks on the Lord's Prayer from Matt 6. We will not dig into the details of all the meaning of this prayer at that level this time. From the narrative, there are several things noteworthy about this prayer:

Jesus intends for us to learn to pray through imitation.

The prayer He teaches us is brief, not wordy. And while it is profound, it is simple.

Jesus teaches us to address His Father by the same name He does (10:21-22).

The prayer is covenantal; we address "our" Father, and request that He give "us."

The prayer is kingdom-oriented and directed worldwide.

It seems to presuppose an optimistic view of the salvation of the world.

The prayer is also personal and comprehensive of our needs.

It presupposes an open, honesty before God ("forgive, as we forgive...").

The Lord's Catechism on Prayer (vv5-13) – All of the most famous catechisms have a section of questions and answers on prayer. Yet none of them are like this catechism on prayer by Jesus. While it is important to understand all of the meaning in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus wants to emphasize our need to persist and the assurance of our Father's answers.

Persistence in Prayer – In this little story we see that Jesus expects that oftentimes it will feel to us as though God is slow to answer (Ps 13:1). It may even seem as though He is asleep (Ps 44:23). And when we feel this way, the Lord teaches us what to do and what to expect. God will arise (Ps 78:65) and we will come to realize that He was always hearing our prayer and always in control.

Assurance in Prayer – We are to learn not to despair when we don't get instant answers to our prayers. We are to learn what it means to persist, to ask and keep asking, to seek and keep seeking, and so on. We are to learn what it means to "strive" and "labor fervently" and "wrestle" in prayer (Rom 15:30, Col 4:12, Eph 6:12, 18). This drives us to deeper dependence upon God, not a lessening of our faith, when we do so with and by the Word and all of its promises (Rom 8:31). Jesus makes clear to His disciples that our heavenly Father is more generous than any earthly father could ever be.

The Holy Spirit (v13) – Just as Jesus had introduced to his followers language for God consistent with His own (call Him "Father"), so now He anticipates the giving of the Holy Spirit in some fashion consistent with His own Spirit-anointing (3:21-22, 4:18-19). The disciples are invited to share with Jesus the same relationship with God the Father that He has, and they are promised the same relationship with the Holy Spirit that He has. In other words, the disciples of Jesus Christ are brought into the perfect love and glory of the relationship of the Triune God.

The Nicene Creed teaches us that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord and Giver of Life." All of life and health and every good come to us from the Father through the Spirit. The ministry of Christ, and therefore of the church, is a ministry empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1:8). Every good gift, every expansion of the kingdom, every personal need, every bit of grace in every trial, comes from and through the Holy Spirit. And Jesus promises us that everyone who asks the Father will receive this Spirit.

Prayer – Prayer is a covenantal act, and so it is something that we will do together. It is also an individual act, and so it is something that each of us is to cultivate in our lives (1 Thess 5:17). We see Jesus pray and so we ask that He would teach us to pray like He does. And He says, "*when you pray*" say these things. We would do well to listen to our Lord.

The Work of Prayer – The discipline of prayer is elusive. In His wisdom, God has made prayer hard, like work. Yet Jesus would have us know that our Father hears us and will answer us. Eyes of faith will see prayer no longer as a heavy obligation

but rather as a heavenly opportunity.

“...after we have learned by faith to know that whatever is necessary for us or defective in us is supplied in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, that we may thence draw as from an inexhaustible fountain, it remains for us to seek and in prayer implore of him what we have learned to be in him.” – John Calvin.

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