

Prayer- Petition

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 November 2024

Preacher: Robin Silson

[0 : 00] This is the final thing, sort of one of the four parts that we're going to be thinking about prayer. Like I said, it's about petition. Now, we all know what a petition is.

I don't know if you've signed one. I'm sure we've all, if you haven't, most of you maybe have, you've all been asked to sign a petition. The one that is perhaps more local here is that they have a petition for the village train station that has been ongoing.

But if you didn't know about that one, there's actually a website where there's a whole host of government petitions. And if you sign it and there's over 100,000 signatures, the issue gets debated in Parliament.

When you sign a petition, you do it because what you want is you want something to change. That is the reason that you sign it. You're saying, with a government petition or whatever it is, you're saying, we want you to do something about this issue.

This is the thing that we want to change. And we're telling you as a group of people that we want this thing, whatever it is, to change. Petitioning in prayer is the same.

[1 : 15] It's going to God with a need and saying, we're petitioning you, we're asking you, we want you to make change to something, whatever it is.

We saw that in the Lord's Prayer. We read it today. It's slightly briefer in Luke's account. We looked at it in Matthew's Gospel a couple of weeks ago.

And we saw the second half of the Lord's Prayer is all about asking for daily needs, daily bread and spiritual needs, forgiveness and to be kept from temptation.

So we're picking that idea up again. We're going to spend our time looking at from verses 5 to 13.

Thinking, why does God answer our petitions? Remember, we thought about having, the reason we can have confidence in having access and to be able to speak to God, to be in his presence, is because we come through the middleman, the mediator, Jesus.

We come in his name, which means he has to listen to us because we come with the same, we can approach him in the same way Jesus can speak to his own father. He's obligated to hear us.

[2 : 24] There is another reason we can have confidence in God, which we'll think about. Not only is the living God obligated to listen to us because we're his children, but alongside that, he answers not only for our sake, but he answers for his own sake.

He answers for, you might say, for the sake, for the fame of his own name. Now, I don't want you to mishear me.

He does answer for you. He does, there's a dual thing going on here. He does want to bless you.

He does care about you. But he does also do it for his own name's sake.

That's the first thing that we're going to think about for the sake of God's name. I'm going to repeat that just so we get it clear. There's two reasons God will answer our petitions. To bless us for our good, because he blesses us with what is good for us, but also for the fame, for the sake, or you might even say the promotion of his own name.

Jesus explains this side to God in prayer in the form of a parable. We read from verse 5, a parable, as we might have heard it mentioned before, a story with a deeper spiritual meaning.

[3 : 41] Verse 5, we read the parable. Suppose you have a friend and you go to him at midnight and say, friend, lend me three loaves of bread. A friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have no food to offer him.

Normally, it's true today, but it's even more so true back then that people would travel in the daytime. But, however, it was not uncommon, because of the way it worked, because of the heat in that part of the world, it was not uncommon for people to set off in the evening to avoid the heat.

However, this friend who arrives at this friend's door, it catches the host off guard. He's not expecting anyone to knock on his door at that time.

You go to a friend in the middle of the night and that sounds sort of, you might not expect that. But the focus here, actually, is not on the one, the focus here is not on the one coming to the man. The focus is on the host. That is the emphasis of that parable.

[4 : 52] The answer, the friend who doesn't answer, it's not actually about the man coming to him. We read there, doesn't we, we talk of that shameless audacity.

There is, there's a little bit of a sort of a technical thing going on here. Is that actually, when we read it, it comes across like the shameless audacity is from the man who's coming.

But actually, it's referring not to the friend who's coming, but it's referring to the shamelessness of the host. You see, the friend who doesn't answer would be shamed for not providing.

That's what happens. The friend who says at first that he's not going to answer, he would be shamed for not providing. It's not audacious, but it would be normal in that time to ask for food after travelling a long way in that culture, almost expected.

We see the response from the friend initially, verse 7. Don't bother me. The door's already locked and my children are in bed. I can't up and give you anything. In our Western mindset, that actually makes sense to us, doesn't it?

[6 : 11] Providing hospitality at all hours to unexpected guests sounds a little bit ridiculous. It sounds like a lot is being asked. If I turned up at your house and knocked you up from sleeping at midnight and said, have you got any bread?

Someone's just arrived at my house. Perhaps you'd say, what on earth are you doing here? Just like, wait till the next morning. That does sound a bit ridiculous. But in the Middle East, it wouldn't be unusual for people to arrive at that unexpected hour without warning.

Perhaps a better way to understand it would be, imagine a friend turns up at your door at midnight and says, my wife's just gone into labour.

I need to get her to the hospital right away, but my car won't start. Can I borrow yours? And you say, don't bother me. The car keys are upstairs in the kids' room.

I don't want to wake them up and help you out. When you frame it like that, you kind of get a better picture of what's going on. Now, I'm taking that no one would actually say that if someone arrived at your door and said, my wife's in labour.

[7 : 24] You just go and help as much as you could. That's what the friend knocking expects. He expects. He's been travelling all day, probably on thought. He expects hospitality to be fed.

That's normal. Even though he doesn't want to help, he does in the end. Verse 8, I tell you, though he will not give up to give you the bread because of friendship.

And it's slightly different, it's translated slightly different to as it does in the NIV. It says because of the shameless audacity of the one approaching. I think that shamelessness word is actually attached to the host.

So I'm going to translate, yet because of his shamelessness, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. It's the shamelessness of the host.

The reason the man decides to help his friend and get up is not because of his persistence. He only asks once. It's not because of his audacity. It's because if he doesn't get up, he knows that his name, he knows that his family will be shamed by the community.

[8 : 35] He knows the community will be shamed if the unexpected guest is not fed and that gets out. If he'd have dug his heels in and refused, news would travel fast, he would be shamed.

Can you believe so-and-so travelling up from his door and just didn't help him out at all? The community, that village over there, they're really unkind.

He preserves his name in the community and he preserves the community's good name. You can imagine that with the example I said, wouldn't you? If you did refuse to help out your friend whose wife was in labour and people found out, there would be a bit of shaming and gossip in the community, the fact that you wouldn't help them out.

So he gets up and he gives the man nothing on his door as much as he needs. There is expectation of this man. What does this say about God?

Why is this, what's the point of this parable? The point is the living God has a name to protect. And because of that, we can have expectations when we go to him in prayer.

[9 : 50] He has to listen to us because we come in the name of Jesus as his children. He always listens to his children. He has to because of his character. He will not let his name be shamed.

There are things that we come to with God that he has to listen to. Even things that he has to answer. But we're left with a question.

I think we're left with a question. Or at least we should be. In this instance, it was socially acceptable for a travelling friend to turn up at midnight and ask for food. It was expected that he would be provided for.

Yet of course, of course, if we push this a little bit further, the expectation was for food. There would be genuine reasons where he could have been turned away, right?

There would be genuine reasons. If he'd have knocked on the door at midnight and asked for something, not for food, but he'd asked for something obscene, vulgar, or something that had led to sin. I don't know.

[10 : 48] Knocked on the door. I've been travelling. Do you fancy going and having a skinful down the local boozer? If he'd have said that at midnight, the man being woken up at midnight would have had every right in refusing the request.

There are some expectations of the man that always come with a yes. In this instance, it's food. Come in, I'll give you some food. But there are instances where the host would say, no, I'm not doing that.

We should expect that of God. There are instances where he will definitely answer. There were instances where he will definitely say, no, no, that's not for me.

You'll go and have to find somebody else. That should lead us with a question. It should lead us with a question. If this is referring to coming to God, what are the prayers we know that for the sake of his name he'll always say yes to?

I'll say that again. If this is referring to coming to God, what are the prayers we know, we know we can have absolute, 100% confidence, that for the sake of his name he has to say yes to?

[11 : 57] That he'll answer. We know there's things that he might say no to, but we need to know about those as well. And perhaps there's things in the middle that we neither know yes or no.

The prayers that he will definitely say yes to. That just like the man knocking on the door, we should expect of the living God. It comes, I think, in the next few verses.

Up in the main verses 9 and 10. These verses are not referring to everything that you ask of God. Jesus has something very specific in us. You see, it harks back to the covenant that the living God made for his people. The word covenant, very, very biblical word used all the way through.

Covenant means an agreement. Or you might say a binding promise. The closest thing we have that we could talk about when it comes to covenant is a marriage relationship.

[13 : 19] It's called a marriage covenant. It's binding promises that spouses make to each other and they make it to God about how they're going to love and care for one another. A covenant is binding.

It is something that, when we talk about God's covenant, it is something that he has an agreement that he has promised to his people. That if he failed on that, he would not be God.

If he failed to be true to his promises. So he never will and he never has. He's always been faithful to his covenant promises. He's always faithful to these binding promises he made.

And if we look in the covenant, the law, what we call it, in Deuteronomy. This is what he says. He uses the words, seek and find. If from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

You see, he's promised, in his covenant promise, the ones that he's bound to keep. That if you seek after God, if you ask for him, you will receive him and you will find him.

[14 : 27] You see what Jesus is saying here? He's saying, if you want me, if you want the living God to help you, if you seek him and you're lost. And if you do it with all your heart, he's saying, I will always be with you.

That the door will always be open for me to come and be with you. What does he say? He says, seek. That word again.

Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. I'm not talking about coming to him for things, but coming to him for him.

He is and he will always be there. He is obligated by his promises to always give you himself when you come to him with all your heart. This is true if you've never sought Jesus before.

If you've never asked to him in your life. Or you've never knocked on his door that he's beckoning and urging you. To come and he will. When you seek him.

[15:33] When you ask him. When you knock on his door. He will open it and he will come into your heart. But it's true for each of us whether we've been following Jesus five minutes or for 20 years.

Day to day. Life at times. At times. It is hard, isn't it? We all go through moments, don't we? We're weary, burnt out, like everything is a slum. Work's hard.

You have no peace. You're in need of rest. You feel lonely, tired. Fed up. And doesn't it feel sometimes like you're spinning plates and there's always one that seems to be ready to smash? The five minutes we do get to pray. It's just firefighting the circumstances of life. Jesus is saying here, what you need is not all the circumstances of your life worked out.

You just need to seek him. You seek him and his kingdom. His forgiveness, his love, his peace, his joy, deep repentance and that relationship.

[16:37] Growing relationship with your saviour. If you petition God for more of him, he is bound by his promise to give you what you ask. To be found by you.

To open the door to you. For the sake of his own name. For the sake of his own name. God always gives himself to you.

He will never stop giving himself to you. So we thought about God answers prayer.

He answers petitions for the sake of his own name. And the reason, one of the petitions that we can always be sure of because he's promised. Is that if we seek him, if we look for him, if we ask him, we seek his kingdom in all our hearts.

He will always answer that prayer. He will always give us himself. Final thing that I want to now look at is that God always works. He always works.

[17:38] In our final few verses we almost get like a, I don't know if you can call it like a mini parable. Or an illustration you might say. Verse 11. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? The question and answer is supposed to be shocking. You picture a child hungry, goes to his dad, I'm starving, is there any chance?

We could have a chippy for tea. A fish supper. And the dad hears it not as a son in need of asking politely a reasonable request.

But wants to teach his son a lesson for being so demanding. And ungrateful for what he does have. Places a live, venomous snake on his plate. It's ridiculous. Asks for a boiled egg and a scorpion is put in his place.

It is shocking, not only has the father failed to provide for the child's needs, but gives him something dangerous. Instead, the child's still hungry, but also in danger of his life.

[18:43] What kind of father would do that? The question in this, like I said, mini parable, it's supposed to be shocking. The answer is no one would do that. No one.

It's damn like evil. It's purposefully OTT. Because everyone knows that's the answer. If and when a child asks for food, the father's duty is to provide some at least suitable nourishment to protect from danger.

And not to replace it with danger. You can imagine, can't you, when Jesus says this, everyone in the crowd shouting back at Jesus in the same way. No, we'd give our son a fish.

Of course we would. And we'd give him bread as well. We'd give him an egg. That principle, it goes without saying, is understood from the most morally upright in society all the way down.

Fathers, parents, know how to provide good things to their children. Verse 13. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

[19:51] If you pray. If you pray. This is what it means. If you pray for the Holy Spirit either for yourself or for God's Spirit to be at work, you can trust that he is.

Doubt can get a hold of us. Doubt can get a hold of us. In our world, we've prayed about some of this stuff already. We see terrible things in the world.

We experience immense difficulties ourselves, which lead to us questioning his goodness. We've prayed for God. We've prayed for his Spirit to be at work and we don't see answers and it makes us ask questions.

Maybe there's ongoing sin in your life that you battle and repeatedly feel like you fail. You keep on turning, repenting and asking for him to change you, but it seems like a battle that has just been going on for years.

A never-ending battle. You can wonder. I've asked for spiritual change. Where is the Holy Spirit working?

[21 : 04] Maybe you've prayed for the Spirit to be at work in a friend or a family member who don't know Jesus. You've been praying for them for years and yet they still turn away.

You can start to doubt. Maybe you've experienced sickness or suffering. Maybe in either with yourself or from a loved one.

You've asked God to heal them. Maybe you've prayed for them. You've prayed for them. You've prayed for them. You've prayed for them. You've prayed for them. But he hasn't. It's real experiences, which we've all had.

This is the reassurance we all need today in prayer. That if you pray maybe for the first time, for the Holy Spirit to come to you, he won't refuse.

But also if you're praying for God's Spirit to be at work continually in your life, he will. Now that might not mean that he'll give it in the way you expect.

[22 : 13] If you're stuck in sin, it might not mean that you immediately transform. He might not heal someone. He might not heal a broken relationship.

He may. But he may not. But the reassurance or the assurance that we need is that when you ask, the Holy Spirit is still at work.

But perhaps in ways more magnificent and more mysterious than we could ever know, imagine or dream. See, the living God, when we pray in this way, always works.

He's always at work. Even when we can't see it. The Spirit's always at work. And he's directed. He's directed by your prayers.

When you ask. He will always give you good things. So as we come into the landing, we've thought about why God will answer prayers.

[23 : 23] And you answer for the fame of his own name. His name deserves to be honoured. And so if he fails on the promises he's made, he fails to be who he is. And his name would be discredited. Because they'd say, well, that's not the God who said what he's like.

He will always be faithful to his character and the promises he's made. We can be assured that when we pray, according to his promises, he will answer faithfully. Just as an aside, really.

You know, that means that when you read any promise in the Word of God, you can pray that promise back to him. You can do that. You can petition him on the basis of his promise.

You can pray with great force. Lord, you promised that you would do this. And my experience in life is that I see your promises. I know your character. But I'm not seeing this in my experience of my life.

You can pray the promises back to him. In days gone by, the former Christians, called the Puritans, they used to have a phrase for it.

[24 : 29] They used to say, suing God for his promises. Take the promises and pray them back to him. Secondly, God always gives himself.

He always gives. When we come and we pray, we seek him with all our hearts. He will never not give us himself to comfort and to be with us, to bless us, that we would grow spiritually.

And he always works. His Holy Spirit will always work. We can be filled with doubt, but be reassured that he is working, often in ways that we can't see, but he is there.

And he's working things for his glory and for your good. Thanks, brother. Almighty God, we come to you.

There's so much going on in our lives. We just want to confess our frailty, our limitedness, our weakness. Lord, there's so often when we try to be strong and try to present to one another and to others that we've got it all together.

[25 : 36] And you know our experience of life where things happen and we want you to just make it right. And Lord, when we pray, it feels like there's so much going on and we can't have a handle on it all.

We feel overwhelmed. Lord Jesus, we just come to you and we ask for more of you. We just seek you and we come to you for you. And we come to you and we seek you and your kingdom.

And we pray that all the other things that we have going on in life, that we can... I pray that we would rest in your goodness, knowing that you will work these things out for your goodness and mercy and grace.

That you have a handle... Where we don't have a handle on our lives, you do. You have a total handle on everything that's going on. Help us to rest in your care, your sovereign care, that we can bring all our burdens and weariness to you and know that you make...

That your yoke is easy. Your burden is light. And so we come to you and I pray that we'd grow in prayer. I pray that we'd come to you with all manner of circumstances and situations.

[26 : 47] I pray that we'd come with all of... Everything that we are and offer the little we have, knowing that you will bless it. We thank you that we can speak to you and ask for your goodness and mercy to follow us through the week and into the rest of today.

We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen.