

Uncommon Love 3) Leaning on the Father

Luke 11:1-13 • August 18, 2019 • Pentecost 10



Smart speakers are great. At least I think so. It's really convenient to just waltz into the living room and then to ask it something. You can ask it to play music and it will begin playing music on your speakers. You can ask it a question and it will at any moments notice give you an answer as best it is able. Funny thing is that they don't always get it right. For one thing they are always listening for their command word. Sometimes they mistake your speech and think you've addressed them with a command. They're not so smart when they blurt out something in response when they weren't even asked. They can also sometimes give you a little different answer than desired. Sometimes I'll ask it to play a certain type of music or song and it will totally miss the mark. Instead of hearing relaxing evening music it might start to play the soundtrack to the latest mission impossible movie or a loud pop song. I even wonder if it is really not smart or just being smart and playing some sort of joke. I tell it that's not what I meant, and it apologizes and stops the music. Do you ever feel that way when it comes to trying to make requests to your God? Maybe you make a request in prayer and just think to yourself, "I'm not sure he's really set to answer that type of a request for me." Or maybe it feels like you asked for something relaxing and good from him but found your life turning into a rollercoaster ride instead. Today we see Jesus teaching us about prayer. And as we finish our three-part series on the uncommon love, we have from our Triune God we learn what it means to lean on the Father.

Isn't it interesting to note what we see Jesus doing at the start of today's gospel account? Jesus certainly modeled a life of leaning on the Father. As true man he lived according to his human nature just like we do. He placed himself under God the Father and approached the Father as a true man in prayer. We read at the start of Luke 11 that Jesus was praying. He often did this during his time walking on earth as a man. Prayer is important! Even Jesus who lived as true God didn't act like prayer was optional for the believer. He regarded it as very much worth his time. He would even spend hours in prayer it seems. How could we ever think lightly of prayer when we see Jesus himself praying so often?

His example wasn't without effect on his disciples. If their Lord wanted to pray and valued it, so did they. Some of those disciples following Jesus, upon seeing him return from prayer asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray." Yes, they no doubt knew the prayers passed on by their spiritual forefathers in ancient Israel. No doubt they heard the Psalms read and heard the prayers of the inspired authors. There were even some prayers of the prophets recorded for them to hear and read. But with prayer being so important, they asked the Lord himself to teach them more about it. We have the same examples of prayer recorded for us. We even have much of Jesus' praying recorded for our learning. And prayer is something that ever believer will naturally do. We've prayed a few times already this morning. But our attitude should remain like Jesus' disciples who ask, "Lord, teach us to pray."

"Lord, teach us to pray," 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." Jesus here repeats and summarizes the Lord's Prayer, which he taught in the Sermon on the Mount. It's a familiar prayer to most Christians. We could spend much time on each part of this prayer. But today I want us to focus on two particular aspects. First, we have to notice who Jesus instructs to pray. Where is the "me, me, me" in the prayer our Lord teaches us? It includes not only requests for spiritual blessings, but it includes those blessings to be for all. And please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying it is wrong to pray in the first person, saying "Me, my, and I." BUT are our prayers primarily focused on OUR needs, our requests, or do we remember to often include needs and requests for others as well? We hear his prayer, we compare it with ours and we must say "Lord, teach us to pray for not just ourselves, but for all."

The second aspect we will focus on for today is what Jesus teaches us to pray for. Is it for spiritual blessings or the lesser blessings? God's name, God's divine reign, forgiveness of sins, protection and strength in the face of temptation are all things that deal with our spiritual life. And when it does mention non-spiritual things, it is nothing more than "give me what I need to survive and be content for the day." What do we most often pray for? The greater blessings or what are really the lesser blessings? "Lord, teach us to pray for what really matters most."

But aren't those requests all really the boldest type of requests? I have to admit, when I pray that my heavenly Father's name be revered in this world, I'm feel like I'm asking a lot. His name is tossed around lightly by so many. And I'm asking such a great request that even the person who curses with God's name will revere it and worship the Lord? Could that person who now says "Jesus Christ" as an explicative alongside vulgar cussing ever say it in reverence? That's asking a lot. And when I ask my Father to have his kingdom come, I ask that he not only rule in my heart, but rule in the hearts of all people. I'm asking that even those who hate, steal, and kill will become members of his kingdom. Can God reign in such hearts? Will he grant my request? Then after he tells us to ask that we have our daily bread—a bold request if you consider who we don't deserve it- we ask our Father to forgive us. We ask for the greatest spiritual blessing we can have—pardon from God for thoughts and deeds made against his will. Why should he forgive us? What have I or others I know done to deserve God's forgiveness? That is a bold prayer! Then we ask that he give us all strength in temptation that we

don't fall away, that –as the Lord's Prayer includes from the Sermon on the Mount says "deliver us from the evil one." The Lord teaches us to make bold requests!

Are we confident that he will answer such bold requests? "Maybe God will just hear me a little. Maybe when I pray that he strengthen my loved one as a member of his kingdom, give spiritual blessing and strength in faith, Maybe, he might answer.. a little." Or sometimes it might be "Why bother praying? Do I really expect the Lord to give great spiritual blessing in this case?" We treat him like a smart speaker that's either not listening or not equipped to answer us.

But the Lord is always listening! And he teaches us to pray no matter how bold the request may be! *5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.* It is not that our Father in heaven is sleeping, nor is our request so trivial as some quick bread. Nor does he hesitate to act to give us anything. And he is not simply a friend, but our loving Father, who has called us his dear children. Should we not be all the bolder in making our requests?

On top of all that Jesus adds: *9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."* This is a promise! We are invited by our God to pray boldly! Does it seem like it is too much to ask for? Asking not only that God give material blessings, but spiritual richness and eternal blessings –does it seem like too much to ask! Ask. Ask knowing God promises to answer that prayer.

Sometimes when I talk to my smart speaker I'm still surprised when it answers fast and spot on. I'm pleasantly surprised when it answers with something better than what I've asked. But should we view our Father's answers like that? And we don't just ask hoping for the best, expecting the least. We can ask with a full confidence that he will give only his very best. He knows what is best and promises to give it. *11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you 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!"*

What sort of things do you find difficult to pray with confidence? How will remembering your new status before God give you boldness and confidence? Look at what we read earlier about Abraham. He knew these things. His prayer was for others, and for their status before God. Look at the boldness it gave Abraham as he asked God to spare an entire city of wicked men due to a handful of believers! He was bold. He knew God would answer, and answer with the best blessing. He sent his angels to bring out Lot and his family.

Together we all pray boldly BECAUSE Jesus teaches us to do so, promises to answer, and to answer with good gifts!

We know we can lean on the Father. The Son of God tells us so! Jesus who loved us so much that he came to this world to make us children of God. He came not only to teach us to pray, but to give us the right to pray. Jesus made it possible for us to pray his model prayer in every way. "Forgive us our sins." "God's kingdom come." "God's name being regarded as holy." All these are done because of Jesus. He has made it possible that we can now boldly pray "forgive us our sins." In Jesus Christ God has promised that our sins are forever removed from us. The great debt we owed to God is gone. And Jesus sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts, calls us his own. And this same Jesus who forgives us our sins now says "pray, pray boldly, pray knowing you will receive good gifts." Smart speakers coldly listen and automatically respond when you say the command word to activate them. God our Father listens with warm, loving, deep concern for all who approach him through Jesus his Son.

Jesus as our Lord, the Son of God died for our sins. Jesus invites us to pray, promises to answer lovingly, so pray making the boldest requests for the greatest blessing, not just for self, but "Your kingdom come." Will not God also not give us with Jesus and his kingdom all things? The apostle Paul reminds us that he will give us even more than we could ever ask or imagine. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work with us, to him be glory..." (Ephesians 3:20,21).

We've been going through a three-part series on the uncommon love which we find from our Triune God. We saw in the first week how the Holy Spirit brings us to know the freedom we now have with forgiveness. Living by the Spirit we then produce fruits of the Spirit with a new life. Living by the Spirit we find uncommon love. Then we looked together at how a Christian has uncommon love from God as they realize that there is something even more important than serving others. We recognize the greater need to be served and to feed on the Word of Christ. Listening to the Son we find uncommon love. Now today we have turned our attention to the God the Father and have learned what uncommon love we find as we lean on him. His is our Father. We can boldly make request not just as a friend, but as dearly loved children. We have a love that is unlike any other. It is an uncommon love that comes from leaning on the Father.