

I have included a sermon brief to help you either follow along or reflect on the message, some links to helpful resources for further study, and then discussion questions. I hope it helps!

Sermon Brief

Luke 11:1

“Prioritizing Prayer”

1. We are going to be looking at Luke 11:1-13 the next several weeks and talking about prayer. But first, I thought we could begin today with an explanation of why we are going to be spending so much time talking about how to pray.
2. And the way I want to do that primarily is just by asking Luke why does he think we need to learn about prayer. If you were going to ask Luke why do you think we should spend the next several weeks learning from Jesus how to pray, what would he have to say?
3. **First, prayer is an essential part of following Jesus.** And while that sounds obvious, I want to show you how Luke shows us that in the way he even structures this gospel. In other words, Luke 11 is placed where it is for a reason and to understand the significance of this specific section, you need to understand how it fits into the overall argument Luke is making throughout his book. Beginning in Luke 9, Jesus is showing his disciples how the way God is going about saving us through His work on the cross should influence the way we follow Him. First, because God is saving people through Jesus' work on the cross our first priority as His disciples is not solving all the problems of the universe ourselves but listening to God's Word because that's where we actually find God's solution. And second, because we are depending on God for salvation through Jesus we should live our lives in dependence crying out to Him in prayer to accomplish what He's promised He would.
4. **Second, prayer must be an essential priority for us as followers of Jesus because prayer was an essential priority for Jesus.** Out of all the gospel writers, Luke places the most emphasis on the prayer life of Jesus. There probably are a number of reasons why Luke does this. But one reason may have to do with the goal of his gospel which is that we might be certain. As Jesus lives his life as a human, he is showing us how to live our lives, and how did Jesus live his life, he lived his life dependent on God in prayer, and what happened as he prayed, what God was accomplishing through Jesus became clearer and clearer.
5. **A third reason Luke would say we should spend serious time thinking about what Jesus says about prayer is because prayer is something we need to learn.** It is not enough for us just to say we need to pray, because it is possible to get prayer wrong. That's clear when you look at the religious leadership of Jesus' day. They prayed a lot. But they prayed in ways that God hated. Prayer is not just talking. It's linked with God's promised solution to the problem of human rebellion, it's basically a faith response to His great promise plan, and so, what's going on in Luke 11, is that Jesus has just revealed the next great decisive step in the way God is accomplishing salvation, and now, we need instruction learning to pray in light of that.

6. We need to spend some time learning to pray because we believe praying is a key characteristic of a disciple of Jesus, because we believe Jesus prayed and because the way we pray ultimately is a reflection of what we believe about Jesus.

Links:

1. [Gary Millar Interview on Prayer](#) - This gives some really interesting insights into a biblical theology of prayer.
2. [A Summary Theology of Prayer](#) - A simple summary of what prayer is and what is happening when we pray.
3. [Lessons from the School of Prayer](#) - D.A. Carson gives a number of practical tips to help with common struggles in prayer.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the things you think when you hear that your church is going through a series of messages on prayer?
2. As Christians we know prayer is important. But we are living in a culture that doesn't think much of prayer. If you say to someone that you want to really do something that will make an impact on the world and so you are going to make a priority out of prayer, how would many people respond? What are some things they might say?
3. That can even impact the way we think about church. If I say, we really want to be a church that does something, that is radical for Christ, and so we need to...what would many people think I would talk about next? Many people would be surprised if I talked about prayer. Do you think there is any way that kind of thinking about prayer can impact even good churches?
4. What three ways does Luke demonstrate that it is important we think seriously about Jesus' instructions on prayer?
5. What theme is Luke talking about in Luke 9 through 19? When he talks about this theme, what two priorities does Luke say should be true of us?
6. Now, you are going to have to think a bit for this one. Jesus has explained to the disciples that the cross is an essential part of God's plan for accomplishing salvation and he is applying that reality to what it means to follow him. How does what Jesus is teaching in the story of Mary and Martha connect to this idea? (This may be a difficult one that will require some meditation, but that is ok.) Maybe I can ask the question another way. If you don't believe that God is going to reverse the curse through Jesus, what are you going to think is the primary thing you need to do to solve the problems of the universe? If you do believe that, how is that going to change your approach?
7. So, that was priority number one, reading the Word and priority number two is Luke 11, prayer. Really understanding the gospel and what it says about the cross and how God is accomplishing salvation will cause us to be people who take prayer seriously. A second way Luke shows the significance of prayer is by emphasizing the priority Jesus made out of praying. What are some of the things that stand out in Luke about Jesus' prayer life? When you think about Jesus praying, what are some thoughts that come to your mind?

8. Finally, we said that one reason we need to take some time to think about prayer is because we don't pray well naturally. We need to actually learn to pray. This may sound funny because many people around the world pray, even unbelievers. Why would you need to learn to talk to God? Can you think of any reasons?
9. One reason we need to learn to pray is because it's possible to pray wrong. What are some illustrations of praying that God hates? Why is that kind of praying so evil?
10. Another reason we need to learn to pray is because of what praying is. In the Bible, praying is often connected to God's promises of what He is accomplishing through the Messiah. How does understanding that help you understand why this particular section of Luke comes where it does? (Again, this may be a difficult question. But in Luke 9, Jesus tells his disciples about the cross for the first time. So, if a big part of praying is pleading with God regarding the promises He's made about how He is going to save through the Messiah and a new somewhat surprising step forward in that plan has just been revealed, why does it make sense to have this particular section here?)
11. We said on Sunday that praying is important because we believe followers of Jesus pray, because Jesus prayed, and because praying reveals what you believe! What do we mean when we say how you pray reveals what you believe, and what does the way you pray reveal about what you believe?