

**Series:** Pray20

**Sermon 3:** Persistent Prayer (Mercy Independence Campus)

**Text:** Luke

Intro –

Good morning! Today we will be continuing in our series called Pray20. In this series we have been inviting you to deepen your relationship with the Lord in the area of prayer. The idea behind this series is that we want every single person to encounter the power and presence of God. The cool part about this series is that I know that every single Christian would say, yes, I do want to grow in prayer. But the problem is that prayer can be hard! We live in an age of distraction and in a time when dependency on the Lord isn't our natural response. In our context, we don't always feel the need to pray. Some of us have a lot of material wealth, and we aren't assaulted with the everyday reality that some of our brothers and sisters around the world are faced with. Some are praying that they will simply have something to eat that day. That's not most our realities. Our problem, often times, is that we've been lulled into a spiritual slumber that turns us into spiritual sleepwalkers who go through life without a real, meaningful, dependence on God. And when we lack in dependence, one thing is sure. We will not be people who is persistent in prayer.

Today, we also live in a culture where we are less and less persistent. We just don't really stick to things. We ask for something don't get it and start to complain. You didn't make the baseball team, and instead of practicing the whole next

year you quit and just say that the coach is an idiot. A lack of persistence is certainly true of us in prayer. We will pray for something and when that prayer isn't answered after a week we throw our hands up and get frustrated with God. I can't tell you how many times I've done this (give an example). I pray long and hard for a week or so and after a week I still feel like I haven't been answered so I lose heart, get discouraged, and get mad at God. Instead of persisting and clinging to God in prayer, I just stop. I think we can all relate to that!

In today's sermon, we're going to be in Luke 11. Jesus is going to call us to be persistent in prayer. He's going to show us what persistence looks like and that when we persist in prayer he will answer us. So, we will be in Luke 11:5-13. As you're turning there let me give you some context on where we are in this passage. In verses 1-4, The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray here is the big idea he gave the: 1) they needed see God as a father & 2) prayer calls for the hallowing of his name in all the earth. We will see more about this later, but if we're going to understand how to honor God with our prayer lives then we have to see him as a father and we have to understand that prayer is for hallowing of his name all over the earth.

Then right after teaching them to pray, he jumps into a parable on persistence. It's not surprising that he decides to teach the disciples about persistence because Jesus' entire life has been marked by persistent prayer. At one point Jesus prayed for 40 days while being tempted by the devil.

And then we get to verses 5-8. Again, taught them to pray and then immediately gives them an example through a parable. Let's read it.

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

### **1. Jesus calls us to bold and persistent prayer.**

Ok, so Jesus starts off by telling them this parable. A persistent friend asking for bread at a horrible time of night. We all need to understand that this request is wildly inconvenient. Houses in Palestine during this time were not 4-5 bedrooms with 2 ½ baths. No, you gotta get this picture in your mind. This is a 1-bedroom house. Everyone is sleeping on mats together. We have parents and kids all in the same room. The guy showing up at your door is going to wake up all the kids. It's like... bro, do you understand how long it takes to get a 2-year old to sleep when everyone is in the same room? We just got this little guy down and now

you're showing up asking me for bread?! I promise, if you wake the kids my wife will track you down. You gotta go! It reminds me of an old TV show called Martin. It starred Martin Lawrence and he had a friend named "Bruh man." Bruh man lived on the fifth floor and would climb in Martin's widow from the fire escape and ask for food. He always wanted some sandwiches. That's who this guy reminds me of. He was the Bruh man of Palestine. Just busting in at any time of the night with ridiculous requests. And this particular request for three loaves of bread was also crazy because it's not like people had bread sitting around to eat. People typically bought what they need for the family each day. Needless to say, this guy is bold and he's persistent.

This is what the Jesus is calling us to this kind of persistent prayer. Jesus is giving us a picture of a bold and shameless guy who isn't afraid to go and ask for the world. He's not calling us to a quiet little knock on the door type of prayer, he's calling us to persistent bold prayer.

Let's look at verse 8:

<sup>8</sup> I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Let's focus on this word impudence for a second because it's the key to the passage. The word for impudence is a combination of persistence and a lack of sensitivity to what

is proper etiquette <sup>1</sup>. It's almost like what we would feel with someone who is bold mixed with a lack of social awareness. It's like when my sister had recently become single and my friend said, "So, can I ask your sister out?" what?! No, dude read the room! Some of you are like Huh, I've never experienced that. Well, maybe you're the awkward one. If you're wondering if that's you, Pastor Rashard told me that he would talk with you. And, that he would be happy to tell you if you're awkward. Haha.

So, what's the picture here? The picture we need to see is that because of his shameless persistence, this friend is giving him what he's asking for. This is what Jesus is calling us to. To Bold and persistent prayer. We have to be bold and persistent with the Lord. We need to be like the woman in Luke 18, <sup>2</sup> He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' <sup>4</sup> For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?"

You want bold and persistent? This, woman's request wasn't answered so she was like, ok, I'll just wait in front of his house! I'll get him when he's coming out of the office.

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<sup>1</sup> ESV study bible

She wore him down. It's this kind of persistence God wants from us.

But, upon first glance of this passage you might be saying to yourself, "Ok, so I see that in this parable this guy is persistent. And I see that Jesus is saying that I need to be like this guy in my prayers, but is Jesus saying God is like this grouchy borderline uncooperative neighbor?" No, Jesus is contrasting this neighbor with God. God is different from this neighbor in this parable! So if this neighbor is willing to answer the request of this persistent friend, how much more will God be willing to answer us as persistent children? But, I think if we're honest too many of us actually view God like this annoyed neighbor so we're afraid to persist in prayer. We don't annoy God with our prayers, he's not like this neighbor. He is gracious and wants to hear from us. We need to stop acting like God is inconvenienced by us. Some of us are like, "Lord, I know you have a lot of things up there. But, so I'll just leave you alone. No! He loves receiving prayers from us and he promises to answer our prayers. How do we know that? Look at the next verse...

<sup>9</sup> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup>

## 2. Persistent prayer is guaranteed to succeed.

We will get to this in a little while, it is guaranteed to succeed, but it may not look exactly the way we think. He promises to answer us but it may look way different than you thought. We will get to that later. Jesus starts by telling them, "And I tell you...". Right there Jesus is basically saying. Guys, its me telling you this, I'm telling you that if ask, seek and knock your prayers will be answered. Jesus is appealing to his authority here. He's saying me, Jesus, the son of man, the omnipotent one, the creator and sustainer is telling you that if you persist in prayer you will be answered. And because it's him, because he's the one saying this you can trust him. That's what he's telling his disciples and that's what he's telling us.

We also see that there is three different types of prayer here. All are legitimate and honor God. It's good to think of these different prayers as prayers for different stages of desperation. Some for small requests, some for larger & weightier requests. He said ask, seek, and knock. We see this progressive desperation types of prayer that we can lift up to God. In the Greek all of these words are present imperatives, which means that they are continuous actions. Meaning that if you ask, ask continually. If you seek, seek continually. If you knock, knock continuously. And when you do, he will answer you. Jesus saying this here should give us permission to ask him and bug him. He wants us to try and bother him with our prayers

And here is where some of you might be feeling the tension of this passage. Some of you might be saying, Pastor Scott,

I've asked and haven't received. I've sought God and never found. I've knocked and the door has remained closed. Jesus is telling you to persist! Keep asking, keep knocking. Keep seeking him! I think every person in this room feels this tension. Even around this room I've sat in many of you in your living rooms knocking and knocking waiting for God to answer, yet it seems like we're met with silence. We beg for Jesus to save your friend, but it hasn't happened. We beg God for your wife to be healed from her cancer filled body. We've all prayed these so what does this mean? I'm going to get to show us an answer from scripture in a few minutes but before I show you an answer, I feel like as one of your pastors, I need to pause and acknowledge something. There are some things that we will never know. I don't know why certain things happen. God doesn't always give us insight on why specific prayers go unanswered. I don't know why we see and experience evil the ways that we do. Theologically, I know and you know that we live in a fallen world. Sin has distorted and broken everything. As Christians, we know that but often times we are left wanting answers. Especially, when we pray for something that seems to be a no brainer, and it seemingly unanswered. This is such a big topic that Pastor Spence is going to devote an entire sermon to this idea. But, I do think that Jesus helps us here in verses 11-12.

But what we see here is that Jesus is calling us to persist anyway. We may not understand, but keep asking, seeking, and knocking. Why? Because he's a good father who gives good gifts to his kids.

Let's read 11-12: 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? "

**3. To persist in prayer, we have to view God as a good father.**

So, now Jesus is bringing back this fatherhood of God idea. He started with that in verses 1-4. He's saying that in prayer, you are praying to a good father. You're praying to a daddy who loves his kids. He said, what father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg will give him a scorpion? He's saying that good fathers wouldn't do that! When fathers are asked for fish, they don't put their kids in harms way they give them what's good for them. We have to understand this, that if we don't view God as a good father then we will never persist in prayer. I mean why would we? We're not going to continuously pray to someone that we don't fully trust.

Some of us had a great dad and you should praise God for that. And yet, for many of us in the room. All your father has given you your whole life has been snakes! You ask for an egg and my earthly father put me in a position to be stung by scorpions my whole life. Day after day, year after year, nothing but harm! So, viewing God as a father is hard for you. And to that, I say, yes. That makes sense. Or maybe

you asked your dad for a fish and you were ignored. Maybe you ran up to your dad day after day and he was simply too busy. He was never there for you emotionally, he was never present. He was only around when there was something in it for him. And to that, I say, it makes sense that trusting God as a father would be hard. Or, finally, maybe you have never had a dad. Maybe he passed away before you were born and all are left with his pictures. It may not be his fault that he's around but because he's been absent, this idea of God is father is cloudy. Or you have a dad, but he gone. He left you, he left your mom, and he abandoned you. He left you out in the cold to fend for yourselves. And know this isn't true intellectually, but deep down you wonder if he left because of you. Is it my fault?! So when you hear that we need to pray to a God that is a good father, it's just hard to believe. That makes sense.

If any of that has been your experience with your earthly father, I am so sorry! Sin is so devastating. That is not how God designed fathers to be. Fathers are to be nurture, protect, and speak life into their kids. And the thought of hurting them would grieve them. Your dad's job was to teach you how to know, love, and follow Jesus. But, for many that's not what happened. So hearing that "To persist in prayer, we have to view God as a good father" is difficult to hear. Persist in prayer, I have a hard enough time just praying once to him. I understand that. In fact, God understands that.

But, even though you might struggle with viewing God as a father it doesn't make it any less true that a good father is

who he is. Yes, it makes it harder to believe. But, when we look at the scriptures, God the father has chosen to reveal himself as a good father who loves you. He wants you. He wants you has his child so badly he sent his only son to come and die for you. He wants to hear you, pay attention to you, and hear your prayers. This may be your homework for this week, y'all. Asking God to help you in this space, because until you see him rightly, it will be really hard to trust him.

Going back to the parable, God was contrasting himself with the annoyed grouchy neighbor. What he's saying is that God's not like that. And in 11-13 he's saying God's not like a father who would give a snake or a scorpion. He's a God that wants to answer our persistent prayers. But, the question that all of us has been wondering is how does he answer us? Are these verses saying that God will answer all of my prayers? Because some of you have been asking and asking, seeking and seeking, and knocking and knocking, yet it seems like God isn't answering you. What's going on there?

At face value, when you read this it does seem like Jesus is saying that when we pray he will answer us. According to whatever we want. I think you're right, this passage in isolation can be a little confusing. How does God answer our prayers? He answers our prayers by giving us himself! Let's look at verse 13.

13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? ”

#### **4. The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's answer to persistent prayer.**

He said if you, sinful fathers have the capacity to give good gifts to your kids, how much more with the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. That is amazing! He's saying that the gift he has chosen to give us is the Holy Spirit! Now if you're like me, when you first read this you're like, woah... No, no, give me the gifts! I want all of my prayers answered! That's what I want. I get that but lean in with me... God giving us the Holy Spirit is better than having all of our prayers answered. You have to think about this for a second. The Holy Spirit, the third-person of the trinity, is God's gift to us. Church, there is no greater gift that God could have ever given us than that! That is God lavishing is grace upon us! The answer to our prayers is God giving us himself!

Here's why that's the greatest answer to our prayers, because not all of our prayers would actually end up being for our good. James 4:3 says: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." We have prayed for some foolish things. Haven't we? We didn't know they were foolish. Seemed like common sense at the time, but now 10 years later we praise God for these unanswered prayers. How many of you saw that Justin Bieber interview over the weekend? Some of y'all need to

lay off my boy Justin. Questioning and judging him. Give the man some grace, new believers ain't gonna be perfect in year. Yeah, he'll curse a little but give the Spirit time to work. Aren't you glad your sanctification process wasn't put on blast everyday on social media. Rant over. Well, Justin Bieber in this interview was sharing how Christ saved him and how he was basically on the brink of death and God pulled him out of the depths of his sin. He shared in this interview that basically his whole life, no one has said "no" to him his whole life. He likened it to being put in a room by himself and on the kitchen table is nothing but candy and sweets. His whole life has been nothing but doing what he wanted and what seemed right in our own eyes. And as Justin is looking back, he's so thankful for God's protection because it could have ended badly. Since he was a little kid, he did whatever he wanted whenever he wanted and it brought him to the brink of ruin. That's what it would be like if God said yes to all of our prayers. We would be in absolute ruin.

As a dad, I care more for my kids long-term growth than I do their momentary happiness. God cares more about you than you care for yourself. Because of that, he doesn't just answer every whim you have. Instead he gives you the indwelt Holy Spirit! You have to catch this. God is for your Good. He is for our sanctification. He is for our growth in holiness as we see in 1 Thess. 4. The will of God for our lives is our sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the best gift for us because he ensures our good, because he sanctifies us into the image of God. Us growing into Christlikeness is the best thing for us!

Romans 8:28 says, <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because <sup>[g]</sup> the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, <sup>[a]</sup> for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God may not have answered some of our prayers the way you may have wanted, but God answered our greatest prayer, "Lord, save me!" He saved you when you cried to him and for that we can trust your good heavenly father and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I also think verse 13 should change how we pray. As I said earlier, the Holy Spirit is God's answer to persistent prayer. Let me read the second half of 13 "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Some of you need to start praying for the Holy Spirit to help fuel you to pray the will of God. If you try to persist in your own strength and pray prayers that will be aligned with God's

will you're doomed. We need him to fuel us and to shape our prayers. So, Ask him for the strength to persist in prayer, and that he would help shape the content of your prayers. Look what 1 John 5:14 says: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." We can't pray the will of God without the Holy Spirit's help. He will remind us of truth and help us recall God's word.

As you know, a few weeks back, Pastor Chris Gaynor was here preaching for us on a Sunday. But, he also stayed on Monday and did a training on prayer for our staff. It was incredible. He was telling us a story about his kids. Often times his kids will come up to him and will ask him for things and often times he will get it for them. But sometimes, the things they ask him for would not be for their good so he says no. And they get mad. Haha, much like we do with God sometimes. So, when that happens he asks them four questions. And I thought it was brilliant so here is some uncle Chris wisdom for you.

- 1) Do you know that I love you?
- 2) Have I done enough for you to be convinced that I am for your good?
- 3) Are you willing to admit that I know some things that you don't know?
- 4) Are you willing to trust me?

Listen, I don't know your story or how you walked in here today but I thought I'd close with this story from my life. When I was a kid, 8 year old missionary kid living overseas.

One day I was walking home from somewhere and waiting in front of my house were three kids. And these three kids, who I thought were friends beat me up. I didn't know why, but they did. And, in that moment, all I wanted was for my dad to see what was happening and for him to run out and save me. But, he didn't. He wasn't even home. All I wanted was for him to run out and save me. I had a great dad. My good dad wasn't omnipresent. But, our heavenly father is and he knows everything. He is calling you to persist in prayer even if you're getting beat down. He has given us the Holy Spirit as a helper in our time of need. And, unlike many of your fathers, our heavenly father is coming back one day. And he's coming back on a cloud and he's going to bring justice to all that is wrong. He's going to right every wrong and bring you home with him.

Church, that is who our God is. Persist in prayer until he comes! Let's pray.

Congregational Prayer Points:

1. Share with God the ways you have seen his fatherly love toward you.
2. Admit you don't know everything, but you'll trust him anyways.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you persist in seemingly unanswered prayers.
4. Thank Jesus for his sacrifice on the cross and for the gift of the Holy Spirit.