

# Faithful Father

We are into a new chapter of Luke; chapter 11 begins with something that likely sounds familiar.

Shall we get right to it?

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

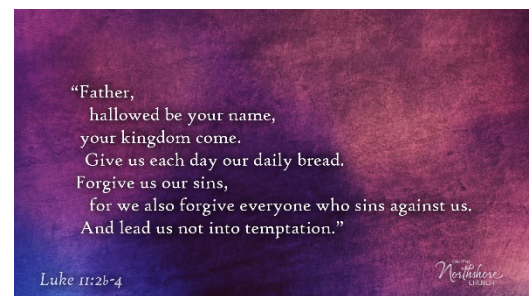
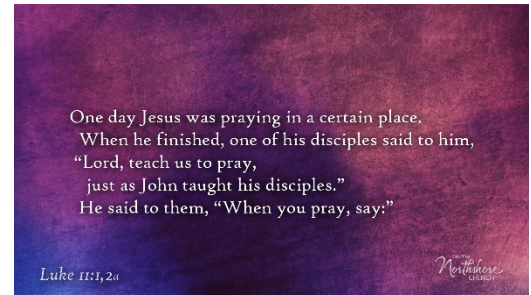
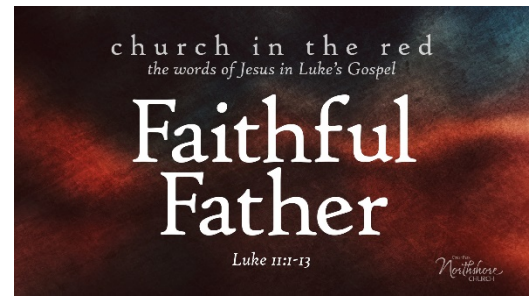
<sup>2</sup> He said to them, “When you pray, say:

“ Father,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.  
<sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread.  
<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins,  
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. <sup>5</sup>  
And lead us not into temptation.’ ” <sup>1</sup>

“Our Father in heaven.” We often call this the Lord’s Prayer. I know some refer to it as “the Our Father.” It shows up a couple of times in the Gospels; the version in Matthew is a bit longer, and that is the one we usually use... but we’re here in Luke today.

When asked for a pattern of prayer, Jesus responded by beginning “Father.” Jesus had previously revealed Himself as the Son of God (confirmed by the Father with an audible voice from Heaven); now Jesus invites His Disciples to join Him as children of God. It may have been a little uncomfortable to pray like that for the Disciples; while not unheard of, it was not usual to address God as Father in Jewish prayer.

It may have been uncomfortable for them, and it may be uncomfortable for us.



<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:1–4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Cases have been made for preachers to *back off* from depicting God as Father, because for some people, father figures aren't all that awesome. For many, thoughts of a father, whether memories or current realities, are filled with pain, fear, or anger. Fathers often fail (I know I have failed as a father from time to time). I have been warned to be careful depicting God as Father because for many such a depiction could be confusing... even detrimental.

Human fathers fail... so much so that there are all sorts of powerful movements and systems that seem to have given up on fathers. Marxist and Communist movements seem to respond by trying to replace fathers with government programs. Powerful, current movements, very active in today's culture, are anti-father (anti-patriarchy), against what we might consider traditional family values.

I get it. If all you have known is the failure of fathers, you might try to come up with a better plan. If it appears that fathers so routinely fail, let's come up with another plan. Problem is, it does not work. All sorts of systems and governments throughout the ages have tried to replace the family; none endure.

So, do we back off from depicting God as father? I might, except I have this one problem. Jesus said,

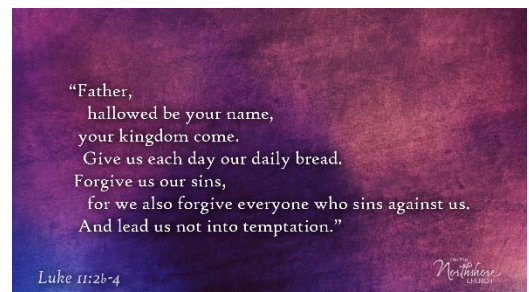
"When you pray, say:

" 'Father, <sup>2</sup>

When our understanding of a word or concept collides with the Bible, we should expect the Bible to prevail. So, in this case, if our understanding of father collides with the Bible's depiction of God as Father, we must change our understanding. Let's allow God's Word to define what it means for God to be known as Our Faithful Father.

" 'Father,  
hallowed be your name, <sup>3</sup>

More literally the prayer is "make Your Name holy." God is holy. He can't be any more holy than He already is, nor any less. Doesn't it seem kind of silly to ask the definition of holiness to make Himself holy?



<sup>2</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>3</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

It is only silly if we think that prayer is primarily our effort to move God, to get God to work for us. It seems that is pretty much how we think of prayer in our culture, our Christian culture, and our broader culture. We think of prayer as something like magic, an incantation to supernaturally get something we want... to make our obstacles disappear and our luxuries appear.

If that is our primary perspective in prayer, then “make your name holy” seems like a strange way to start.

But if we change our perspective, making our perspective right, realizing that prayer is meant to move us and change us and align us with God’s purposes in us and through us... then we might see that making God’s name holy is not a matter of repairing damage to His holiness, but more a matter of repairing damage we have made to our perception of His holiness. Whether by outright blasphemy or neglect, our perception of God’s holiness, His very identity, dims and falls out of focus.

Why must God sanctify his name? Because it has been profaned by God’s own people<sup>4</sup>

When we pray, “make your name holy” it isn’t a matter of sanctifying His name, but sanctifying our perception of God... to snap our attention on Him, to turn on the lights, and sharpen the focus so that our image of Him is as sharp and true as possible.

hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come. <sup>5</sup>

“Your kingdom come” should change our perspective as well. It adds another infinitely powerful dimension to our image of God... seeing Him not only in our now but expanding it to forever. Rather than demanding God to perform in our now, we shift our focus to what He is calling us to be with Him forever... forever in relationship with Our Faithful Father.

<sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread. <sup>6</sup>

This one seems like the most incantational, a request for food to appear. But, rightly understood, this is a call for us to walk with God in faith. It is less a demand on God to produce, and more an expectation on us to trust.

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<sup>4</sup> Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 442). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>5</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Lk 11:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>6</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Lk 11:3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

When our sons were young and growing, it would have been ridiculous for them to present their list of needs to us each day, demanding their need for shelter, and clothing, and safety, and meals, and such. They are our sons; I am their father. All they need do is trust in that, day by day.

By positioning God as Father in our hearts and minds, we see Him in authority, and we know Him in love, nurture, mercy, and delight.

Forgive us our sins,

That, of course, is the thing we need more than anything else: forgiveness of sins.

We can find bread somewhere else. Food, water, clothing, shelter, safety... the list is long of the stuff we want and need that we can find for ourselves.

But forgiveness of sins... there is only one place to find forgiveness of sins.

By placing this in this prayer, Jesus gives us this great gift, assurance that, indeed, there is forgiveness of sins. We can know that our Faithful Father forgives sins. What a profound and marvelous gift!

But notice, of course, that forgiveness of sins is accompanied by this powerful result and expectation:

<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins,  
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. <sup>8</sup> <sup>7</sup>

This is a call to imitation... to be like Our Father.

As a father there is hardly anything more delightful than when people can see that my sons are my sons. With Donny, we look a lot alike. With Alex, we think a lot alike. When people are paying attention, it doesn't take long at all to perceive the relationship. I've had people tell me that they think they know me, just because they know one (or both) of my sons.

When people know God's children, noticing our behavior and priorities, what conclusion do we expect from them in terms of what God is like?

I've thought a lot about this during these times of stinkin' COVID. I wonder how people see God based on the actions of His children. Do they see God as caring or condemning? Do they see God as outward focused or selfish? Do they see God as at war with the culture or serving people with the aim to redeem?

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<sup>7</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

We weren't thinking in these terms as we were going about our business, but looking back, I think we did things in the right order when we opened the building back up.

We were back to worshipping in the building, for those who felt comfortable doing so, as soon as it was permitted in King County. But do you know what was the first thing to open? It was our Food Bank; we only missed one Monday-night of distribution (and still remained available to people with emergency needs). I'm glad for the work of the Food Bank, but in the grand scheme of things it is just a tiny effort to serve people and combat hunger. But, it does a great job of helping us keep our priorities in alignment. And I hope it helps people see the qualities and characteristics of our Father as we go about our work of serving people, and worshipping God, and proclaiming the Gospel.

And lead us not into temptation.' ”<sup>8</sup>

The prayer ends with a confession that there is opposition; there are forces pulling us away from God... both internal and external forces.

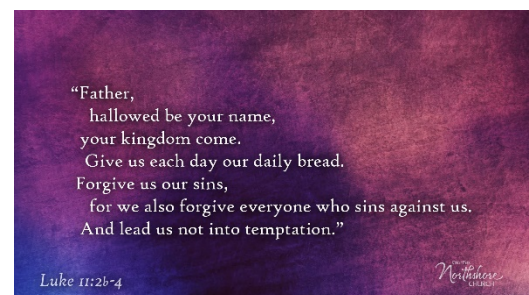
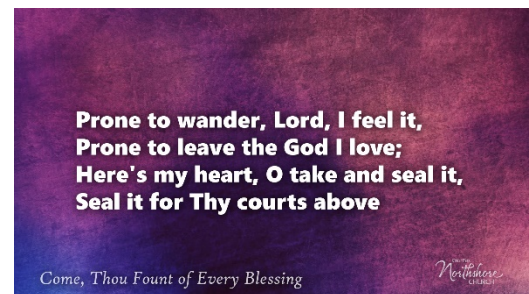
Words from an old hymn come to mind:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above

We wander; we look to our Father to lead us to Him, in His ways and in His will. We pray for the Father's leadership because we know that we can trust His direction over our own.

And, we confess that there is external opposition. There are temptations intended to pull us away from God, to destroy us.

Consider the context. As Jesus led His followers on a long journey from the Galilean region to Jerusalem, opposition was rising. There was real temptation to give up or give in. This prayer calls for steadfastness rooted in trust in Our Faithful Father.



<sup>8</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

These red letters that follow are Jesus continuing to teach on prayer. It is as if He said, here are the words you can pray, and how here is the understanding, the mindset and intention, that should go with the words.

What we know as *The Lord's Prayer* could be considered the technology of prayer, the words and order and such. What follows here might be considered the art of prayer.

Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread'<sup>9</sup>

As a result of my reading and research on the passage, I think we're losing a bit of the meaning in translation. When we read a word like suppose it is usually meant for us to open our minds for consideration of what comes next, that there are no conclusions yet to be drawn. But we would likely do better to substitute for the word suppose our expression, "Can you imagine?" From the very beginning, Jesus appears to be setting up this scene as out of the ordinary, perhaps even ridiculous.

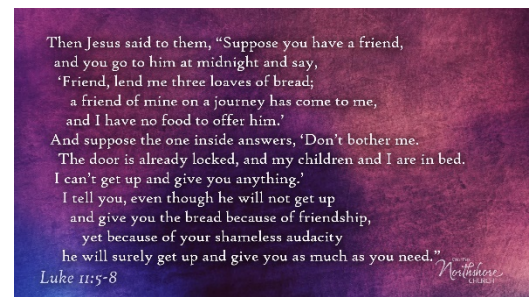
Can you imagine...

you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.'<sup>10</sup>

In our culture, that would have been the outrageous part of the story; in 2020 America, nobody should show up at midnight looking for three loaves of bread.

I want you to find me at midnight if you truly have an emergency and I can help; bread is not an emergency.

But in that culture, there is nothing ridiculous about this story. There are two elements that stand out. First there is this matter of a traveler showing up with the expectation of hospitality. There were no Holiday Inns or Marriotts, not even a Motel 6... and no Denny's either... not even a 7/11. Hospitality was expected; their economy depended on it.



<sup>9</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>10</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:5-6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Second, there is this expectation of sharing. This setting was almost certain to be understood as a peasant village. I know it wasn't all that long ago that I bashed Communism, but this peasant village likely operated as a commune. The daily bread was, in many ways, community bread. They likely harvested the grain from a community field, milled it as a community, and baked it as a community. The portion left over in one friend's possession may have been the portion due him, but the community expected all to hold their possessions loosely. There was an expectation of sharing; their economy depended on it.

In my experience, the poor often more freely share than the wealthy. It is certainly not a universal truism. I know a lot of very generous wealthy people, and I know some very stingy poor people. But overall, generally speaking, I have found the poor better at sharing than the rich.

I worked with my dad throughout my teenage years, primarily in other people's homes. We worked in poor homes and rich homes, poor neighborhoods and wealthy neighborhoods. Again, generally speaking, I noticed more generosity among the poor. It seems that they were just more accustomed to joyfully sharing. The wealthy seemed more concerned with what was theirs and what other people might owe them.

So, it wasn't the neighbor's late-night expectation of sharing that was outlandish, it was the response.

Can you imagine...

the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'<sup>11</sup>

How rude?! While that may seem like a perfectly reasonable response in our 2020, American culture, this would have been the epitome of rudeness in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Palestine.

We might wonder, where is our Faithful Father in this lesson? Well... I suppose it is the one who has the bread. But the lesson is not about the character of the one with the bread, the lesson is about the understanding, expectancy, and intentions of the one asking. We read on:

<sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>12</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:8). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Shameless audacity... I don't have a Fantasy Football team this year, but if I did I might give it that Biblical name: Shameless Audacity.

That is what Jesus is calling for: Shameless Audacity. No shame, because we understand the relationships and expectations. Audacity, because there is grounds for boldness.

<sup>9</sup> "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. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>13</sup>

Shameless Audacity: ask, seek, and knock.

Confidence in prayer: receiving, finding, and opening.

This reveals something vitally important about our relationship to God and our part in the work of God in and through us.

You might remember that Merlin, reflecting from work on his book-in-progress, gave us a few minutes in our live-stream a few weeks ago. He explained that while we are God's children, we are expected to act like God's adult children. There is the expectation that we step up to the responsibility as adults, and take part in the work.

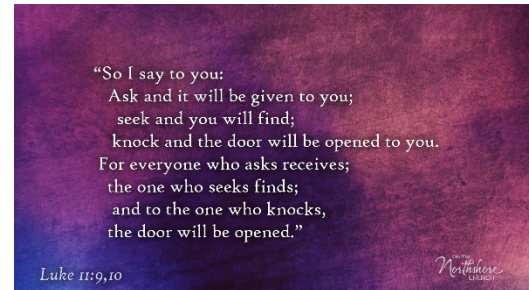
If prayer were simply magic, and we were simply babies, then we'd expect to be bottle fed. But here is part of the mystery of prayer: shameless audacity... asking, seeking, knocking. We are called to pray with a commitment to work and confidence in our position.

Jesus went on: Can you imagine one

of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>14</sup>

There is not a lot of cultural nuance here. We see the ridiculousness of the proposition. When a child asks for food (something needed to nourish), we do not respond with something that would harm.

<sup>13</sup> 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!" <sup>15</sup>



<sup>13</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:9–10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>14</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:11–12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>15</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.



The implication is that the Our Faithful Father provides what we need.

That is a vital perspective for prayer, isn't it? When we come to Our Faithful Father, we come with the confidence that He knows what we need... better than even we know what we need.

Parents know this well. Children are dumb. They would kill themselves on candy and donuts if we would let them (I know because I could so easily kill myself on candy and donuts, even as an adult). We can't just give babies what they want, let kids do or go where they want. If we did, the State would likely and rightly charge us with criminal neglect.

Our Faithful Father knows what we need... and what do we need? We need the Holy Spirit, the very power and presence of God working in and through our lives. Let's not waste our asking, seeking, and knocking on stuff... luxuries and comforts that last only for a moment in view of eternity. We ask and seek and knock for the power and presence of God in and through our lives. We receive, and find, and are opened to the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded again that this Gospel of Luke is the first in a two-volume work. In this first, the Gospel of Luke, the focus is on the red-letters, on the Words, and Work, and Person of Jesus. In the second volume, the focus shifts to the Body of Christ, His Church, and the Holy Spirit's work in and through the Church.

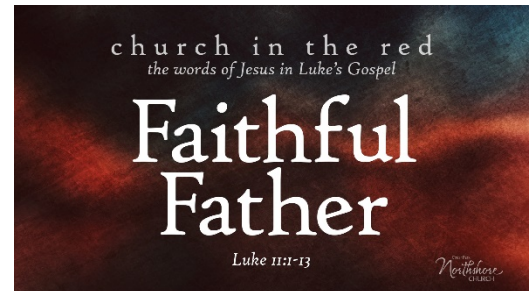
We began this passage seeing that Jesus passes His relationship to God to His followers; we, like Jesus, address God as Father. Here at the end of this passage, we see Jesus passing His power from God to His followers; we, like Jesus, operate in and by the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Friends, we have this Faithful Father.

We have this love and care, this power and provision.

Today is a day to believe, to acknowledge God as Our Faithful Father again, or again after a long time, or perhaps for a first time. Make today your day, with me, and believe. Let's trust Our Faithful Father, together as His people, His family.

Normally I would close in prayer, leading myself, and encouraging you to pray with me... but today it seems we ought to simply pray, out loud, together, as Jesus instructed.

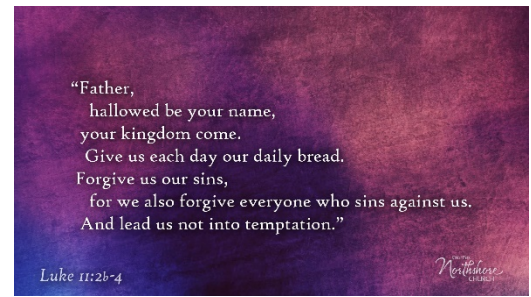


## Pray with me now:

“ ‘Father,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.

<sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread.

<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins,  
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. <sup>8</sup>  
And lead us not into temptation.’ ” <sup>16</sup>



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<sup>16</sup> [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 11:2–4). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.