

September 24, 2023,
God's Good News Story
Jesus and His Parables
Pt. 1: Prayer

In our year long series ‘*God’s Good News Story*’ we have traced the work of God to bring mankind into a right relationship with Him. It has been a story of obedience and disobedience of light and darkness.

The key tool for this year’s theme is the story telling component. Some scholars say that nearly 70% of the Bibel is story in nature. Please don’t confuse ‘*story*’ with fairy tales or myths. Story is a style of writing that translates content and meaning in a personal and relatable manner. Most of the ‘story’ content in the Bible is historical based factual events, there are some ‘story’ sections that are not technically based on events that happened but are realistically possible. They are just as “inspired” as other scripture as they teach a truth from God intended for us. A parable is the best-known example. Listen to what gotquestions.com site has to say on this subject.

“A parable is a story told to illustrate a truth. Jesus’ parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies, comparing two things or ideas. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
Counts of the parables in the Bible differ because

categorizing various teaching tools is a subjective undertaking. Some parables in the Bible are clearly labeled as such. Others are not specified as parables, but they clearly match any reasonable definition of the word. If we define parable loosely enough to include all parabolic instruction (such as Proverbs 25:11), the number of “parables” naturally rises. Some count about 100 parables in the Bible; others see over 250. There are over 30 parables of Jesus recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (the Gospel of John has none). All parables are short, but some are quite brief”.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parables-in-the-Bible.html>

Jesus told many parables; in fact, at least for a time in His ministry, Jesus relied heavily on story-telling: “***He did not say anything to them without using a parable***” (Mark 4:34). (gotquestions)

Today I am going to share three (3) of the parables Jesus used in His preaching and teaching.

The topic is a very familiar one, one that all Christians know is vital and necessary, but most times we don’t really understand it or put it into practice like we should. The subject I am talking about is PRAYER. There are about 334 references to prayer in the bible. That’s a lot! The first instance of prayer in the 1st book of the Bible and is found **Genesis 20:7** and the last reference is in the last book of the Bible - Revelation 8:4

(Portions adapted from sermoncentral.com Persistent Prayer and <https://www.jesusteam.org/blog/prayer-lessons-from-parables/>)

Let's revisit the passage on prayer that Jesus Himself shared with us as found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:5-13...

⁵ *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.*

⁸ *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. (For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.) Amen*

The basic lessons here are:

1. Do not use prayer as a means to gain attention or in spiritual pride.
2. Don't try to impress people with your words.
3. God wants us to call Him Father.
4. God's name is deserving of the highest honor.
5. God wants to reign in our hearts and lives.

6. God wants us to depend on Him for everything.
7. God alone can forgive sin and remove guilt.
8. God alone protects us from temptation and the enemy.

With those brief lessons in mind, let's look at three parables that Jesus told to give us additional guidance on prayer so that we could truly be “salt & light” and gain power to continue ‘Sharing God’s Good News Story’ with power and effectiveness.

Parable No. 1 – The Bold & Fearless Prayer

Luke 11:5-10

Parable No. 2 – The Persistent and Precise Prayer

Luke 18:1-8

Parable No. 3 – The Earnest & Humble Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

You may not realize it but the “Lord’s Prayer” in in both Matthew 6 and in Luke 11. In Luke’s version Jesus follows His directions on prayer with this parable.

Parable No. 1 – The Bold & Fearless Prayer

Luke 11:5-10

“Then 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; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.” And suppose 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." 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. "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. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened"' (Luke 11:5-10, NIV).

Key Lesson: Be Bold & Fearless

(Just remember there are three lessons today and the 3rd one is on humility... there must be a balance!)

As Warren Wiersbe states in his commentary "In this parable, Jesus is not saying that God is like this grouchy neighbor. In fact, He is using a compare and contrast method. Let's look back at last week's Sermon on the Mount where Jesus clarifies this point...

Matthew 7:9-12...⁹ "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ 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 good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

What we have here is Jesus saying if a sinful parent would give good gifts when asked, and a grouchy old

neighbor who has a great supply of things will give what you need (for other reasons than parents of course) ... then just think what a loving Heavenly Parent...GOD, Who has access to EVERYTHING we could ever need... Just think what He can do for us!

Prayer not only changes things, but it also changes us. God may be trying to teach us that if we truly trust and believe in God and that He can, is able and is willing to meet our needs, then we must show Him that we are willing to be bold and fearless in asking for our needs.

Listen to what the Holy Spirit led the writer of Hebrews to write for us...

Hebrews 4:14-16...¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Checkpoint...Remember that we are to pray according to the will of God and for His glory. This bold and fearless prayer is applied to genuine needs and requests that are in line with the Will and Glory of God. Our bold and fearless prayer becomes obstinate audacious entitlement if we forget those key points. It is not 'Name-it-and-claim it'.

Parable No. 2 – The Persistent and Precise Prayer

Luke 18:1-8

Luke 18:1-8... “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary”. For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’ “And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you; he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?’” (NIV).

Key point: Pray persistently & precisely!

In this parable Jesus continues the same theme from the first one in Luke 11 – bold & fearless – and adds the new elements of PERSISTENCE & PRECISENESS.

Sometimes Jewish disputes were elevated beyond Jewish elders, and judges from Herod or Rome had to intervene. These judges were almost always on the take, so if you were poor, you didn’t have a chance of having the court rule in your favor.

Jesus chooses a widow as the hero of this story because she has no one of influence to fight on her behalf. The only possible way that she could ever get the judge to rule in her favor would be to annoy him day and night until he gives up and gives her what she wants.

Don’t read this parable and think that God is like the judge in this story. Jesus isn’t saying that. He’s contrasting God and the judge. He’s saying that if the widow’s persistence swayed the judge, how much more is God persuaded by the passionate and tenacious prayers of His children?

Slide: “There is nothing more powerful than persistent, intentional and faithful prayer”

Let’s look again at what Jesus preached about in the Sermon on the Mount...I’ll reread just verses 7 & 8.

Matthew 7:7 & 8... ⁷ “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Listen to how the Amplified Bible translates vs. 7 & 8: **“Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened.**

Then what Peter has to say about the subject...

2 Peter 3:8,9...⁸ But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

We cannot grow weary of praying the same prayers.

Parable No. 3 – The Earnest & Humble Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14... “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get”. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted’” (Luke 18:9-14).

Praying with earnest humility!

“Prayer is more than asking for the right things; it’s about assuming the proper posture before God. We have a hard time grasping the significance of this parable because we’re so used to seeing the Pharisees as the villains of the gospel.

It’s important to remember that in Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were the heroes. It was tax collectors who were considered evil. They were Jewish citizens who collected taxes for Rome and often extorted more than necessary to line their pockets.

Jesus doesn’t excuse the tax collector’s behavior. Instead, He responds to the humble way the tax collector approaches Him. Unlike the Pharisee who shows up full of himself, comparing himself to others, and reminding God how good he is, the tax collector approached God with a sense of self-reflection.

We find the correct posture in prayer when we stop comparing ourselves to other people and begin comparing ourselves to God”. (sermoncentral. Persistent prayer)

In Conclusion:

Prayer is a wonderful gift and a powerful tool to grow in our relationship with God. But we must follow His principles. Let’s become Bolf, fearless, persistent, precise, earnest, and humble people of prayer. In faith let’s trust that God will hear and respond...According to HIS WILL!