

Message #53**Luke 11:11-13**

Many years ago I saw a father do something that made me very angry. A little boy was standing on a dock and his father was standing out in the water. The boy walked to the end of the dock and his father encouraged him to jump in. The boy was afraid, so the father assured him that he would catch him if he jumped. The boy jumped and the father did not catch him but let him go to the bottom and the little boy came up afraid and screaming and the father was laughing.

Another time I saw a father tell his son that a very hot pepper was a pickle. The son totally believed his dad and bit into the hot pepper. He let out a scream, grabbed a glass of water and gulped it down, all while the father sat there laughing.

I don't see anything funny about a father who lies to his children or scares his children. Now I like to laugh and joke around, but some things are not funny. There is nothing humorous about playing some sadistic mind game on little innocent, trusting children.

In fact, Jesus gives a warning that if someone hurts a child and prevents them from coming to Him, it would be better for them if a millstone was hung on their necks and they were drowned in a sea rather than facing His judgment (Matt. 18:6; Luke 17:2).

Jesus Christ wanted all to understand that God the Father will never operate like that with His children. God is a God who will always be good to His children. He does not play games with them and He does not promise them one thing and then do another. God never goes back on His word. He is a perfect God who perfectly cares for His children.

One of the ways that God demonstrates His care for His children is the provision of prayer. God did not have to come up with a way to have sinful people talk to Him so He would listen to them. He didn't owe any of His people that. This is pure grace. God the Father has made it possible for His family to come to Him with their requests and He has promised to answer.

Now there are many ways God may answer prayer:

- 1) He may give an immediate answer of yes.
- 2) He may give an immediate answer of no.
- 3) He may give an initial answer to temporarily wait.
- 4) He may give an answer to immediately work.

God's children may know that God will always answer the prayers of His people. His answers will be according to His time, according to His will and it will always be according to what is best.

The disciples of Jesus Christ had asked Him to teach them to pray (11:1). He taught them to focus on the majestic sovereignty of God (11:1-4). He also taught them to continually pray (11:5-10). Now He gives them their final lesson:

GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE THE BEST ANSWERS TO THOSE WHO CONTINUALLY AND FAITHFULLY PRAY IN HARMONY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Jesus says, God the Father will not ever give some useless, senseless, deceitful, dangerous and trick answers to prayer. God's children can know with certainty that God does not play games with His children when it comes to prayer. God will not do mean things. God will not give bad answers to the requests of His family. God will always do what is the best.

God's answers will always be good and they will always be the best. There are three key prayer teachings brought out in this text:

TEACHING #1 – Our earthly fathers do not answer our requests in bizarre or harmful ways.
11:11-12

In the last few years, we have seen a terrible rise in child abuse. We are living in a time in which some fathers do harmful and horrible things to their children. This shows you how depraved this world has become because in Christ's day, especially in the Jewish world, this was unthinkable.

Christ uses the analogy here of a normal earthly father to make a key point about prayer to God, our heavenly father. The point He drives home is that God does not play games when it comes to answering the prayer requests of His people.

Now we may recall that Jesus began this section teaching on the subject of praying for "daily bread" (11:3). It is clear that the food illustrations that he uses here are not about bread, they are about fish and eggs.

There are two prayer implications that Christ makes in using this earthly analogy:

Implication #1 - Earthly fathers will not answer requests in a ridiculous or deceptive way.
11:11

If a son were to ask his father for a fish, he would not attempt to substitute a snake for it. The word "snake" is not one that refers to a deadly snake; it just refers to a snake in general. Some historical researchers suggest that in the Middle East there is a great similarity of resemblance between some snakes and some fish. To substitute a snake for a fish would be a possible substitution. However, such a substitution would mean that the father was playing a ridiculous trick on his son.

In fact, it is interesting that many times the word "snake" is used in the context of cunning deception (i.e. II Cor. 11:3). So it is most probable that this is precisely the point.

Christ's point is that when we pray, we may be certain that God will not ever give us some ridiculous or deceptive answer to our requests. God is not out to deceive us or play games with us. He will always give us what is best.

When our boys were younger, they wanted a football for Christmas. Suppose I went to various stores looking for a good football at a good price. I noticed that in some grocery stores, they had watermelons that were kind of shaped like a football. What if I would have said well the boys want a football but this watermelon is kind of shaped like one and is a lot cheaper? So I'll take two and wrap them up and wish them Merry Christmas. Had I done that those children would have said what kind of idiotic gift is this. We asked for a football and you get us a watermelon.

That is the point Jesus is making here. God is not about to answer the requests of His children in some ridiculous or deceptive way. He will answer according to what is best.

Implication #2 - Earthly fathers will not answer requests in a harmful way. **11:12**

No father in his right mind would give his child a scorpion, when he asked for an egg. A scorpion had a very harmful sting and, at times, could be lethal. No father in his right mind would do such a dastardly thing to his son.

The obvious point is that God will not answer a request from His child in a harmful way. When we take our requests to God, we may be certain that our requests will be answered in a non-harmful way. His answer will be the one that is always best for us.

D. L. Moody told the story of a little girl whose mother and father died. She was taken to another home and on her first night in the home she asked if she could kneel and pray as her mother had taught her. The people said certainly. So the little girl prayed: "O God, make these people as kind to me as my father and mother were." She then paused and said, "God, of course you will because you are a good God."

That is what Jesus wants His children to know about prayer. God will not play games with His children, nor will He hurt them. He is a good God and He will always do what is good.

TEACHING #2 – Our earthly fathers are not nearly as good as our heavenly father. **11:13a**

Christ's analysis of people in this world is not flattering. It is honest and accurate. All earthly people have an "evil" bent to them. All earthly people have hearts that are deceitful and desperately wicked and they have natures that are evil. This includes every father and mother.

Christ's point here is if an earthly father with an evil sin nature knows how to give good gifts to his children, how much more our heavenly father knows to do that.

It is noteworthy to grammatically point out that the participle "being" is present tense, indicating a continual time element. The word literally means to be in a continual state of existence. What Christ is saying is if human fathers, who have a continual state of existence with a nature that is evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will the sovereign, Holy God of the Bible give good gifts to His children.

I must admit there were times in our lives when I was envious of what some fathers were able to give to their children. I knew of one father who could care less about God who was able to give his daughter a new expensive car for graduation. There have been many times when I have seen something like that and wished I would have been in a position to do that. If such a man who is godless knows how to give good gifts to his children, how much more will the Holy God do that for those who ask Him for something? If we pray for a good job, God is not going to say let's give him the most horrible job I can give him.

Donald Grey Barnhouse told an interesting story of how his son was in college and was in a chemistry laboratory working on some experiment and the boy next to his son broke a beaker of acid and it spilled on the suit of Barnhouse's son. This was back at a time when people in college wore suit and tie. So the Barnhouse son went to the college co-op store and ordered one. Then he wrote his dad a letter, explaining what had happened and asked his dad for \$50. Mr. Barnhouse said he didn't bat an eye. He immediately wrote out a check and sent it to his son because he believed it was his obligation as a father to provide for his son. Dr. Barnhouse said when he thought about that, he said that he concluded here I am a sinful man and I recognize my responsibility to answer the request of my son, how much more will the Holy God be quick to answer the requests of His children. Barnhouse said in thinking about the fact that I was willing to instantly answer the request, I concluded that we should be quick to "go boldly to the throne of His grace."

If a sinful, earthly father knows how to do good things for his children when they ask, how much more does the Holy Sovereign God know.

TEACHING #3 – Our heavenly father will always give the best spiritual answer to the request of His children. **11:13b**

Jesus Christ is teaching His disciples an extremely important point and that is they need to pray realizing the importance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary and critical to a proper, powerful, Biblical prayer life.

Now we need to realize a critical dispensational point here. When Christ said these words, the Holy Spirit had not been given to each of them to indwell them. The Spirit of God would not come until Jesus Christ was glorified (John 7:37-39). This did not happen completely until Pentecost in Acts 2. Today the Holy Spirit is given the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1, 5; I Cor. 12:13; Acts 11:16-17). **When Christ challenges them to pray in the Holy Spirit, He is not only teaching them the key to prayer, but also to power (Luke 24:49).**

Once a child of God learns to ask God for the right things by work of the Holy Spirit in one's life, he will be the recipient of seeing God answer in powerful ways.

We do not pray for the Spirit of God to come today. In fact, Paul made it clear that if a person does not have the Spirit of God, he is lost (Rom. 8:9). Obviously, these disciples were not lost.

They were in need of getting the Spirit of God so they could pray and accomplish powerful things.

There is no question that a major key to a powerful prayer life is the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit even prays on our behalf when we reach those moments when we don't even know what to say or pray (Rom. 8:26).

The point Christ is making here is if one wants a powerful prayer life, he must be in close touch with the Holy Spirit. One who grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30); one who quenches the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 5:19) will never have a powerful life of prayer and will never see God answer in powerful ways.

On the other hand, one who walks in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), is one who will demonstrate a powerful life of answered prayer and victory. A critical key to God answering prayer is prayer that is made in symmetry with the Holy Spirit.

When Paul had a thorn in his flesh, he asked God three times to remove it. Paul was a great, spiritual man of God and yet God knew that to take that thorn away would be something that would diminish Paul's reliance on His grace. So God's answer was this. I will not take the thorn away, but I will give you sufficient grace to live with it. For Paul, that was the best answer that could have been given to him. God, by His Spirit, not only gave Paul the ability to cope with the thorn, but also glory in the infirmity.

If you ask God to catch you, He will not drop you. If you ask God for pickles, He won't give you peppers. But what God will always do is what is best for His children. He will always give His best answers to those of His family who talk to Him.

If you can depend on a sinful and earthly father to give good things to his children, you can certainly depend on a Holy, Heavenly Father to give good things to His children.

PRACTICAL LESSONS ABOUT PRAYER:

- 1. Praise God every day—acknowledge His greatness and sovereignty.**
- 2. Pray to God every day.**
- 3. Ask God to permit the Holy Spirit to lead you every day.**
- 4. Be persistent in praying about your requests.**
- 5. Trust that God will always answer your prayers in good ways.**