

Title: PERSISTENT PRAYER, LUKE 11:1-13.
(Chatham, NJ; 07/25/10, AM) [Pc – Two-part Outline]

Theme: Not only does Jesus teach his disciples the elementary words of effective, appropriate prayer but he also insists that prayer must be a persistent habit.

Purpose: To encourage the truth that God hears and answers the prayers of his people.

Introduction:

1. Prayer is not a habit meant only for clerics and cloistered religious professionals.
2. There remains among many Christians the belief that prayer is something the religious professional does best and should do more than others.
3. In the 16th century when the Catholic Jesuits were founded they raised some controversy by adopting a shorter daily period of prayer than the other religious orders—from three hours to one.
4. They knew prayer was important, but they also needed sufficient time to perform ministry.
5. The controversy raises the question of whether the religious life can be determined simply by the amount of time a person engages in prayer.
6. Amount of time is not the issue; persistence in prayer is.
7. This opens it up to all of us; in fact prayer becomes an essential activity for all Christians.
8. Daily life no matter what our profession should be regulated by persistent prayer.
9. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. He includes the words and format of prayer along with the expectation that they will persist in it, Luke 11:1-13.

I. The Lord's Prayer – a symphony in three movements.

- A. First movement: honor God and his sovereign rule (kingdom).
 1. A relationship with God and all moral behavior stem directly from an attitude of worship.
 2. Sundays express the worship that we carry out everyday.
 3. It is not an isolated event or merely a fulfillment of a religious obligation.
 4. Our daily prayers reflect the same attitude of worship: "hallowed be your name."
 5. Nothing is more radical than bringing a life of worship to every day of the week.
 6. Some want to keep religion and the worship of God strictly a private matter.
 7. Addressing God with an attitude of worship and praying for the advance of his Kingdom applies to all that we do every day.
- B. Second movement: recognize Our Father's dominion over life, 3.
 1. He alone preserves our lives: Give us our daily bread.
 2. Physical necessities include food, clothing, and work.
 3. Whereas in Matthew we read about how we should seek first the Kingdom and the rest will be added, in Luke we see this prayer juxtaposed with Martha's anxiety over the dinner preparations (10:40-41).
 4. God knows what we need, but we need more than anything else to recognize that those things come from his loving concern for his creation.
- C. Third movement: recognize our most important spiritual needs, 4.
 1. First, forgiveness sets up the entire spiritual life.
 2. That we are sinners constitutes the one spiritual truth that will set us free, John 8:31-34.
 3. It is also the one thing needed for our relationships to thrive; a community cannot effectively survive without forgiveness and mercy.
 4. Second, the need for guidance stems from the fact that we are sinners.
 5. Our minds and hearts have been darkened by sin and need guidance.
 6. Protection is also implied: lead us not into temptation.

II. Say Your Prayers with This Story in Mind (5-13): Be Persistent (2xs in Luke: Is it hard to persist in prayer?)

- A. As if a friend is inconvenienced and doesn't want to help.
 - 1. He gets up only to get rid of you.
 - 2. God, by contrast, is a willing participant.
 - 3. Maybe we don't need to persist in order to get God's attention but rather because it develops spiritual fortitude.
 - 4. "Ask and you'll receive" is not a yes answer to all requests or an immediate resolution to all problems; it is an exercise in faith and patience.
 - 5. We must ask!

- B. As if you won't let him say no.
 - 1. Be persistent, even insistent.
 - 2. Remember the story of the Unjust Judge also, Luke 18:1-8.
 - 3. David came before the Lord "morning by morning," Psalm 5:3.
 - 4. Daniel prayed regularly 3xs a day.

- C. As if you will not go away empty-handed.
 - 1. God is not evil like our earthly fathers; if they give good things, how much more will God also give good things.
 - 2. Mt. 7:11 says that God will give "good things." Luke (13) changes it to the "Holy Spirit."
 - 3. Luke's version reminds us of the essential goal of the prayer life: spiritual union with God and spiritual growth.
 - 4. All our requests must be tempered by the notion that God does not exist simply to fulfill our desires, heal our diseases, or make us happy.
 - 5. The life of prayer fulfills our deepest needs and awakens us to the presence and plan of God.

Conclusion:

- 1. Prayer is a must for the Christian.
- 2. It is not simply wish fulfillment but worship.
- 3. We recognize and rejoice at God's dominion over us.
- 4. We rejoice because he is a God whose love transcends even that which an earthly father can bestow on his children.
- 5. Develop a regular habit of prayer; be persistent.
- 6. God invites you to come into his presence.
- 7. God will guide and provide if only you have the faith to do so.