

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 11:5-13

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 11. Today, we will read verses 5-13.

Yesterday we read that when the disciples came to ask Jesus how they could become people of prayer like Him, Jesus first gave them a principle: in the priorities of our daily life, we must first care for the things of God, and then for our own matters. When we ask God for forgiveness, we must ask whether we have already forgiven those who have wronged us. After this, Jesus gave a parable.

Verses 5–7: “And He said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.’”

This man had a friend, and the friend's request was somewhat unreasonable. In the middle of the night, when people were asleep, he came knocking on the door. What did he come to borrow? Three loaves of bread. Why did he need to borrow them? Because another friend had arrived at his house after traveling, and he had nothing to set before him. Since the guest was hungry and needed food, he went to borrow bread.

But the man inside had already gone to bed. His children were with him in bed, so his first response was, “Do not trouble me. The door is already shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.”

Verse 8: “I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.”

Under normal circumstances, he would not get up, because the request was unreasonable. But because the man kept persistently asking—continually knocking and pleading—he eventually reached a point where the man inside could no longer bear the disturbance. Therefore, he rose and gave him whatever he needed.

Jesus was describing a human situation. Among people it can be like this: when a friend makes an unreasonable request, you may not want to grant it. But if that friend continues to ask again and again without giving up, eventually you may feel so disturbed that you simply give in. If this is how people behave, how much more so with God?

However, we often misunderstand this passage. We may think that God is like the man already lying in bed, unwilling to answer our prayers, and that because we repeatedly disturb Him with persistent prayer, He finally has no choice but to grant our request. But this is not Luke’s meaning here. Jesus simply uses human behavior as a comparison: even when a person is unwilling, persistence may move him to act. In contrast, our heavenly Father is not like that.

Verse 9: “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Here Luke uses three different verbs. The first is ask. This is more general. When you come before God with a matter and pray to Him, you are asking. “Ask, and it will be given to you.”

Next is seek. When you seek, you already know what you are looking for. It is more definite and focused than asking. You clearly tell God what you are seeking. “Seek, and you will find.”

Then comes knock, which is even more urgent. You are not merely searching; you are standing at a door and knocking repeatedly. It carries a sense of urgency and insistence. “Knock, and it will be opened to you.”

Verse 10: “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

Thus, the previous example contrasts human behavior with God. People may sometimes refuse because it is inconvenient for them. But God is the opposite: when you ask, you receive; when you seek, you find; when you knock, the door is opened.

Yet in our experience of prayer, it often seems that we have asked but not received, sought but not found, and knocked but the door has not been opened. In response to this situation, Jesus used another comparison to explain it to His disciples.

Verses 11–13a: “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...”

When your child asks you for something good, you will not give him something harmful. If he asks for bread, you will not give him a stone. If he asks for a fish, you will not give him a serpent. If he asks for an egg, you will not give him a scorpion. As parents, we naturally want to give good things to our children.

But consider the reverse situation: if a son asks for a stone, a snake, or a scorpion, what would you give him? In fact, this reflects the experience many of us have. We may ask God for something for a long time and yet not receive it, because we do not clearly understand our own condition or our real needs.

Jesus used this comparison to teach us that when a child asks his father, the father gives what is good.

Verse 13b: "...how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Luke concludes this passage beautifully. When we ask God for many things, and God sees that these things would not be good for us, He instead gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. We know that in our life of following God, many things have already been arranged by Him. God has a particular will for each of us—what we might call His best will. Yet many times, because we do not understand or see clearly, we ask for stones, snakes, and scorpions. Because God loves us, He is willing to give us more of the Holy Spirit instead.

If we are willing to be humble and open to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us, then by being one with the Spirit we can gradually understand God's will for our lives. Then we will be willing to submit to God's leading and accept the arrangements He has for us, submitting to His best will.

But many times we cannot overcome our natural self or our strong insistence on certain things. Therefore we keep asking God to accomplish things that are not actually His best will. Sometimes, because of our persistent pleading, God may permit it. This is what we call God's permissive will.

May each of us learn to recognize God's leading in our lives and be willing to submit to the best will that He gives us. To become a person of prayer means that the Holy Spirit is often present with us. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can understand what God is doing in our lives, in our circumstances, in our church, and in our family. As we cooperate with God and submit to Him, His will can be carried out in our lives.

Of course, if we can spend time each day personally before God—having intimate fellowship with Him and building a close relationship with Him—we will more

quickly recognize His leading. Through our daily prayers, He gives us the Holy Spirit abundantly. Whenever we are willing to ask, seek, and knock, what we actually receive is the Holy Spirit.

Throughout Luke chapter 11, the Holy Spirit may be considered the key word of the chapter. In each example, we eventually see the work of the Holy Spirit. When we are fully in harmony with the Holy Spirit, we will know God's leading and understand His will for us.

Let us pray together: Lord, teach us how to become people of prayer. Help us each day to set apart a period of time to come before You and have intimate fellowship and prayer with You. Through our prayers, may You grant us the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit may reign in us and help us understand each step of Your leading in our lives. Bless our lives today. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.