



## St John Lutheran Church

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Luke 11: 1-13

### Right Prayer

**Jesus says in today's Gospel, "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; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:9-10). With these Divine and holy Words, your Lord gives you both a command and a promise... a command that you have no choice but to obey ...and a promise that is as eternal and unfailing as the God who spoke it.**

**"Ask. seek. knock." These are not suggestions... but these are commands... obligations that God demands of you. Simply stated... YOU MUST PRAY! Asking, seeking, and knocking are what the 2nd Commandment is all about. When God commands, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God" (Exodus 20:7), He means that you shall "call upon [His Name] in every trouble, PRAY, praise and give thanks" (Small Catechism, Explanation to 2nd Commandment).**

**"Ask, and it will be given to you" (Luke 11:9). You must be careful that you use your asking to serve your God and your neighbor, rather than yourself... that your prayers express your love for God and your love for your neighbor rather than your love for yourself. Note this well... I am not telling you that you ought not pray for yourself, because Jesus tells you in today's Gospel that you must pray for yourself... praying that God would give you daily bread and lead you out of temptation, etc.**

**What I am telling you is that when you ask... as you are commanded... you are not pray selfishly... you are not pray motivated by your own "evil desire" (James 1:14). St. James writes, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:4). St. Paul adds, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).**

**That is why Christians do not pray that they may become fabulously wealthy... but they pray, "Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 1:3)... food, clothing and protection sufficient for that day. This is why Christians pray with the voice of the Proverb, "give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8). For what good is food to you, other than to strengthen you so that you may love and serve your neighbor... whether it be your wife and children... your relatives... or those you do not even know? What good are material possessions to you? They serve only one purpose... that you may use them to love your neighbor.**

**Your Lord Jesus, in commanding you to ask, also commands you to seek and to knock: "Seek and you will find," He says. "Knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). Again, you have no choice in this. You are seek and you must knock because your Lord demands it of you.**

**Only be sure that you knock on the right door... and that you seek your Lord Jesus in places where He promises to be found. "Seek Him in His temple," says the psalmist. Seek Him in His Holy Scriptures... for**

Right Prayer

**Jesus** says that these "**testify about Me**" (John 5:39). **Seek Him as** He comes to you this day in this Body and Blood of Communion... **shed for** you for the forgiveness of sins.

**Your ascended Jesus** now "**fills everything in every way,**" (Ephesians 1:23)... **He has** promised to be "**with you always**" (Matthew 28:20). **But even though** He is present everywhere... **our human** senses, dulled by sin, cannot perceive Him everywhere. **We must therefore** seek Him in His gifts and find Him where He has promised we can find Him... **in His** Word and in the holy gifts of Baptism and Communion.

**This you must do: Ask.** in service to God and in love for your neighbor...

**Seek. and knock** in the places where God in Christ has promised to be found.

**Prayer is hard work. Luther Illustration: This hard labor** of prayer that your Lord casts upon you is a difficult and lonely job. **In fact, Luther** rightly said that prayer is "**far more difficult than preaching the Word or performing other official duties in the Church. this is the reason why it is also very rare.**" **Prayer requires your concentration and attention,** because it is easy to let your thoughts wander away. **Busyness continually tempts you to cut your prayers short and leave them incomplete. It is easy to put prayer off until a better time, only never to get around to it. Satan also wishes to hinder your prayers, and he most effectively does so by the probing thoughts, Why pray, if God already knows all needs? Why pray, especially if prayers so often seem to go unanswered? Why pray, since it feels like my words simply go out into space and never return?"**

**Why pray? Because your God** has commanded it. **Why pray? Because your God** has also attached His eternal and unshakable promise to it. **As it is written, "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened"** (Luke 11:10). **These Words of Jesus** Promise and assure you beyond all suspicion and doubt that your Father in Heaven hears your prayers. **No Christian prayer** goes unanswered! **To be sure,** you may not get the answer you personally demand... **God may** say "No" to your prayers... **but He** always hears and He always answers: "**My grace is sufficient for you**" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

**And there is** but one reason God hears and answers your prayers... **the Lord** Jesus Christ. **God does not** refuse your prayers because He doesn't like you as well as someone else... **and He** does not answer them because He likes you better than most. **Scripture says, "God does not show favoritism"** (Acts 10:34).

**Your prayers really** have nothing to do with you... **but they** have everything to do with the Christ who died for you... **who,** as you heard in today's Epistle, "**forgave us all our sins**" (Colossians 2:13) and "**disarmed the powers and authorities [that oppose your prayers, making] a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross**" (Colossians 2:15).

**You see our** Lord Commands us to pray...**and He** Promises to hear our prayers! **Your prayers do** not depend on "**how strong your faith is**"... **or how** well crafted and poetic your prayer might be. **Your prayer has** nothing at all to do with "**how good a Christian**" you might be. **Your prayer being** effective is solely dependent on our Lord's Command to pray and His Promise to hear that prayer! **Our Lord cannot** deny Himself...**He cannot** ignore His Command or His Promise ...**your prayers** are heard and answered because He can do no other. **He too lives** by His Word and Promise...**and His** Promise is that He WILL hear and act upon your prayers!

**The very reason** you exist is because of Jesus. **The very reason** that you have become a child of God is because of Jesus! **The reason you** now stand fully forgiven in the presence of God is Jesus Christ... **His Cross**

and Resurrection. **The reason God** answers your prayers is the very same... **Jesus Christ... His Cross** and Resurrection. **"No one comes to the Father except through [Him]"** (John 14:6).

**Your Lord Jesus** has already brought you to the Father. **Because He has... He now** promises that you may ask **"anything in [His] name"** (John 14:14, John 16:23-24). **When you ask... you have** this assurance from Jesus: **"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Of if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you the, 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 you and] to those who ask Him!"** (Luke 11:11-13).

**"God made you alive in Christ"** (Colossians 2:13). **This is what** makes you able to pray... **this is** what gives confidence to your prayers. **In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen**

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