**Lord, Teach Us to Pray**
*(Luke 11:1–13)*

A woman prayed every day for years that she’d win the lottery.
Finally, in frustration, she cried out, *“Lord, why won’t you answer my prayer?”*
And a voice came from heaven:
*"My daughter, help me out here—buy a ticket!"*

What are your prayers like? What do you pray for?

It’s really interesting that in our gospel reading today, the disciples didn’t ask Jesus to teach them to perform miracles, or how to preach more powerfully, or even how to better understand the scriptures. They asked Him, *"Lord, teach us to pray." I wonder why?*

They had just heard the Sermon on the Mount. They had witnessed the power of His teaching and the authority with which He healed the sick. But what seems to have captured their imagination most… was watching Jesus pray. I don’t know about you, but I find that quite surprising.

“Jesus was praying in a certain place,” Luke tells us, “and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’”

What did they see? What had they experienced?

What was it like to watch the Son of God communicate with His Father? What was it like to see Jesus *at prayer*? Was there a stillness, a depth, a love that radiated from Him in those moments? Was there a sense of peace and presence so captivating that they couldn’t help but want to be a part of it?

I’ve found myself really intrigued trying to imagine that moment. Close your eyes with me for a second, and imagine being there… not hearing the words Jesus says, but watching Him. The reverence. The intimacy. The calm assurance.

Have you ever sat on the edge of a conversation between two people who clearly have a deep bond—who know and trust each other so completely that it almost feels sacred just to be near them?

When I was studying at King’s College in London, I remember sitting in class with some brilliant people—intelligent, insightful, wise, and full of life experience. I just sat there, soaking it in, thinking: “If I can just absorb a little of this, I’ll be doing well.” That’s what I think it was like for the disciples watching Jesus pray. They were drawn in. They weren’t content to be spectators—they wanted to participate. *“Lord, teach us to pray.”*

And so Jesus does something radical. He doesn’t give them techniques. He doesn’t offer breathing exercises or ancient mystical postures. He simply gives them *relationship*. He says, *“When you pray, say, ‘Our Father.’”*

Our Father.

Not “the God of the universe.” Not “Eternal Being.” Not even “Holy One.” But *Father*. And not just *My* Father, but *Our* Father. Jesus invites them, and us, into the relationship *He* has with God.

In other words, we don’t just come to God with our own prayers, our own ideas. We come to *join in with Jesus’ own prayer*. Prayer isn’t just us sending up thoughts like balloons and hoping they pop into heaven. It’s entering into the ongoing conversation between the Son and the Father. Jesus, even now, prays for us and with us. And we are welcomed to share in *His* relationship with the Father.

This is not a performance. It’s not about having the right words, or perfect posture. If that were the case, prayer would be a test—and most of us would fail.

I’m reminded of a small child who wants to tell his dad something important. The child doesn’t stand on a stool and try to shout. The dad bends down. He picks the child up. And he holds them as he listens to their inarticulate noises which may not yet even form sentences. That’s prayer. God, in Jesus Christ, *bends down*. He draws us into His embrace. He makes His ear available to our stammering, half-formed sentences. And He hears them as the most precious sounds in the world.

**The Presence of Jesus in Prayer**

So when we pray, we are not starting from scratch. We are stepping into the presence of the Son, who is already in communion with the Father. We are joining a relationship already full of love, already full of grace. Prayer, at its heart, is being *with* Jesus—*in His prayer*, not just bringing our own.

And what a difference that makes. Because then we’re not alone, trying to summon God down from the clouds. We are with Jesus, who says, “Come. Let me show you what it’s like to be heard. Let me carry your words in my heart to the Father.”

“Prayer is not so much a way to find God as a way of resting in Him… who loves us, who is near to us, who comes to us to draw us to Himself.”
— *Thomas Merton*

**The Role of the Holy Spirit**

Now, here’s the extraordinary part: Jesus doesn’t stop with the words “Our Father.” He tells a story about a man knocking on his neighbour’s door in the middle of the night, and ends the whole thing by saying, *"how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Isn’t that interesting? The final answer to prayer isn’t just getting stuff from God—it’s receiving *God Himself*, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

That’s the ultimate gift.

We ask for help, and God gives us His Spirit. We ask for direction, and the Spirit becomes our guide. We ask for comfort, and the Spirit is our comforter. It’s not always what we expect—but it is always what we need.

And the Spirit, Paul says in Romans 8, actually *prays with us too*:

“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

Even when you feel like your prayer life is a mess—when your words dry up, when all you have are sighs or silence—the Holy Spirit takes your inarticulate longings and offers them up perfectly to God. There’s divine teamwork happening when we pray.

So to recap: we pray *with Jesus*, and we pray *in the Spirit*—and that means prayer is not an activity we do for God, but a relationship we live *with* God.

A young boy, who was staying with relatives just before Christmas, was kneeling by his bed one night praying loudly: *“Dear God, please bring me a new bike! A Nintendo Switch! And a puppy!”*
His mum leaned in and said, “Son, you don’t need to shout. God’s not deaf.”
The boy looked at her and whispered, *“I know, but Grandma is.”*

**The Call to Persistence**

We may feel, like the little boy, that we’re shouting loudly and no one is hearing, but there’s one more thing Jesus emphasizes here, and it’s this: *persistence*.

He tells the story of a man who knocks at his friend’s door late at night, and keeps knocking. The friend says, “Don’t bother me, I’m in bed,” but because of the man's persistence, he gets up and helps.

Jesus isn’t saying God is like a grumpy friend or indeed a deaf grandma who needs to be badgered into helping. No—He’s saying if even a human will respond to persistence, how much more will your heavenly Father respond to your prayers?

Keep knocking.

Keep asking.

Keep seeking.

Sometimes answers don’t come quickly. Sometimes we pray for healing, for reconciliation, for hope—and nothing seems to change. But remember: prayer is first about *being with God*, not getting things from God. And when we stay with Him, when we persist, we grow in love and trust, even if the circumstances around us don’t immediately change.

**Sarah Collins**

*It’s quite a common thing for people – of all faiths and none – to turn to prayer in times of need; when they or a loved one is ill, particularly.  When I was in hospital 27 years ago, fighting for my life, there were, I was told, a lot of people – many of whom I’d never met – praying for me.  Although I initially struggled with what had happened to me – that I’d been left paralysed from my waist down – I soon realized that prayers had been answered; I was alive.  As I began to come to terms with how my life had changed, I never asked why ME, but rather, WHY me; I asked God to show me what he wanted me to do now I was in a wheelchair; there must be a purpose for my life as it was now – I just needed God to show me what that purpose was.  Has that prayer been answered?  Yes, very definitely.  My life took on a very different path 27 years ago and I truly believe it is what and where God wanted me to be.  Don’t get me wrong – I’d love to be able to leap up and walk!  And I never give up hope, but for now, I am where God wants me to be.*

So as we finish, let’s recap, sometimes our prayers might sound like shopping lists, we may feel like we’re shouting at God and he’s not hearing. But Jesus teaches us something far better: a relationship, not a transaction.

As we say: *“Lord, teach us to pray.”*

We know that that’s a prayer in itself. If that’s all you can manage today, it’s enough.

Remember, however inarticulate you are, however hard you find prayer, or maybe you’ve not tried in yet, or recently…

Pray with Jesus. Rest in the Father’s embrace. Allow the Holy Spirit to carry even your silence to God’s heart. Keep asking. Keep knocking. Be bold. Be real.

Because prayer is not about eloquence—it’s about *presence*. It’s not about us making something happen—it’s about us being with the One who already loves us more than we could ever imagine.

And in that place, prayer becomes not a task—but a gift.

Amen.