

**Luke 11:5-10**

*Knock, Knock, Knocking on Heaven's Door*

**Main idea:** God invites us to know Him, having a real relationship with Him.

[The band plays "Knocking on Heaven's Door" by Bob Dylan]

Mama, take this badge off of me  
I can't use it anymore.  
It's gettin' dark, too dark to see  
I feel I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door

Mama, put my guns in the ground  
I can't shoot them anymore.  
That long black cloud is comin' down  
I feel I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door  
Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door

When you hear the phrase, "Knocking on Heaven's Door," what do you think about? Bob Dylan thought about death. That song was originally written by Bob Dylan for the soundtrack for the movie "Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid." You can hear the song as the background music during a shootout in which at least one person was killed, and another was mortally wounded. So the phrase, "Knocking on Heaven's Door" was included by Bob Dylan in a song about death.

Which is interesting, because when Jesus first gave us the mental image of knocking, presumably on the doors of heaven, God's door, Jesus wasn't talking about death, but about prayer. So while the phrase, "Knocking on Heaven's Door," should probably cause us to think about prayer, it made Bob Dylan think about dying.

But maybe prayer and death aren't all that different. Maybe prayer and death have a few things in common. It seems like some people would rather die than pray, or feel like prayer is painful, and maybe you feel that way sometimes. But in a more positive way, when you think about it, death itself allows us to enter into an eternal state of prayer, because in heaven we'll be in perfect communion with God forever.

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But as for now, while we're on this earth, and still in the flesh, our communion with God is broken by our sin. So the way people often think it works is that when we sin, our relationship with God is severed, so we need to confess our sin and ask Him for forgiveness, which He gives, but then we sin again, so our relationship with God is severed again, so we need to confess our sin again, and ask Him for forgiveness again, and again, and again.

But I'm going to suggest to you this morning that this is not the way that it works. Because if it were, then would salvation depend on us, or on God? I mean, sure God is the one who grants forgiveness, but according to that model, He only does it because we were the ones who were smart enough, or humble enough to ask, so the difference between a forgiven person and an unforgiven person isn't the grace of God, but the asking of the person.

So the way Christians often think about prayer is that it's our way of repairing our relationship with God. It's like, by praying, we're working to make ourselves acceptable to God.

But the kind of prayer that God invites us to participate in isn't work, but grace.

Luke chapter 11, verses 5 through 10.

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Luke 11:5-10)

*Father, thank You for inviting us to knock on Your door, and thank You for the promise that You will always answer. Knowing that, teach us to pray. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

This passage begins with Jesus telling a story, a story in which He invites His disciples to picture themselves in. So right now, I want you to picture yourself in this story. Ok, so, imagine you have a friend. That shouldn't be too hard for you to imagine, because we're all friends here. But if you sometimes feel like you don't have a friend, I want you to know that God always loves you, and because He loves you, I love you, so I'll be your friend, okay?

So imagine me as your friend in this story. So you call me at midnight and say, "Pastor Chris, a friend of mine just got here, and I don't have anything to feed him."

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And I'm like, "Wait a minute, didn't you know he was coming? Surely this friend of yours didn't just show up out of the blue at midnight! No, no, no, you knew he was coming, and you probably had a while to prepare for him to come, because it says in verse 6, "a friend of mine has arrived on a journey," which implies that he came a great distance, it wasn't unexpected company, you knew he was coming, and you didn't go to the grocery store first to buy some food? And now you're calling me at midnight because you were unprepared for your guest? What's your problem? Besides, it's midnight! I'm already in bed! Go to sleep, call me tomorrow morning, no, make it tomorrow afternoon, because I'm sleeping in after this phone call, calling me at midnight, what's the matter with you? In fact, don't call me back at all! We're done! Hop in the car, head to Kroger, and wait seven hours for them to open at 7 am, and buy your own stinking food for your stinking guest!"

Is that how it would go down? No! If you called me at midnight needing help, I'd get up and help. And not merely because you're my friend, but because if you're calling me at midnight, it must be really important to you. And even if it was your fault that you were unprepared to begin with, it took a lot of humility and shamelessness to beg me to help.

Verse 8 says, "yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs." Some translations say, "because of his shamelessness" he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

At that moment, he's just a poor, humble, shameless beggar.

You know, when it comes to knocking on God's door, we're all a bunch of beggars. And if we think that we're anything else, like we're actually going to be accepted by God because of how prepared we are in life or something, then we don't yet understand our condition or the gospel.

Our condition is like that of the man going to his friend for help at midnight. We're unprepared. We're shameless. We don't have the means to help ourselves, to save ourselves, all we can do is cry out to God for help.

And then God doesn't accept us because of our good we are, but because of how good He is. God doesn't answer prayer because we got all the words right, or because we have our lives just right, but because He is right. Because Jesus is righteous. And by grace through faith in Him, we have a relationship with God. And because our relationship with God isn't based on anything that we've done, but on everything that Jesus has done for us, then we can know that when we pray, God hears and always answers.

So when you pray, do you expect God to answer? Or do you pray, expecting Him not to answer? Or do you not pray, because you don't think He'll answer anyway?

Jesus says this in verses 9 and 10:

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Luke 11:9-10)

“Ask, and it will be given to you.” Do we really believe that? Because if we really believed that, we’d be asking all the time! If we really believed that God gives us whatever we ask for, we’d never stop asking Him for what we want, right?

“God, give us today our daily bread. God, give our church all the money we need for ministry. God, give me a new lamborghini! Gimme, gimme gimme!”

Of course, that doesn’t sound like the kind of asking that God wants us to do. So maybe we need to consider it in light of the next thing Jesus said.

“Seek, and you will find.” So maybe our asking needs to be in the context of our seeking. What should we be seeking? Jesus said in another place,

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

So we’re to seek the kingdom of God. We’re to desire first, above everything else, more than food, money, or lamborghinis that God would be our King, that we would be clothed in His righteousness. That He would rule over us, and that we would be His servants. And Jesus said, “Seek, and you will find.” So if you seek first the kingdom of God, you will find the kingdom of God, or rather, be found in the kingdom of God, and you will become a servant of God, your King.

But what does a servant dare ask of his king? Throughout much of history, kings had all the power. Their commands were law. They had the authority to punish and to sentence to death, so it was a fearful thing to come before the king with a request.

But our God says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” In other words, as we find our purpose not in the things of this world, in our own kingdom, but in God, in His kingdom, in His righteousness, then He will provide all our needs. And even our desires, the things that we’ll want to ask Him for, will begin to conform to His will for us, so that His desires will become our desires, and so that when we ask, we will receive, and everything we desire in Christ will be added to us, because what we desire most is Christ Himself.

So maybe prayer is kind of like dying. It’s like dying to yourself, your desires, and beginning to want God’s desires, what God desires for you. Beginning to want, above all things, communion with God.

In the song by Bob Dylan, he sang that he was putting his guns in the ground because he couldn't shoot them anymore. You see, when we lay everything down, our guns, our goals, our desires, our very lives, and die to self, that's when we live in Christ.

I think so many who confess to know Christ as Savior, especially in the United States, have this all wrong. They think that being a Christian is just about having your sins forgiven so that one day you can go to heaven when you die. It's not about dying to self. It's not about living for Christ. It's not even about a relationship with God, because so many who call themselves Christians don't even have a relationship with God. They don't live for God. They don't pray. They don't even read God's word, except on Sunday morning at church, if they even go at all.

But I'm no better. Because too often, I have it all wrong, too. I catch myself thinking, "God, I'm doing the best I can here, trying to serve You and all, so why don't you step in and fix everything!" Which is kind of absurd when you think about it, telling God that He's not doing it right. And it's pretty silly of me to think that if God were just to fix this problem, then everything would be okay, because we all know there's another problem right around the corner.

You see, Christianity is far more than having our problems fixed, whether in this life or the life to come. God doesn't invite us to have a relationship with Him merely to fix our problems, so that we can give Him our laundry list of prayer requests so that He'll take care of them for us. And God doesn't invite us to have a relationship with Him someday in the future, when you finally die and go to heaven. I mean, it's true that in heaven we'll have perfect communion with God, and that's like the greatest prayer life imaginable, and we should long for that, but we don't have to wait until then to have a relationship with God! God invites you to have a relationship with Him today! Now! Because right now, God is good, and He knows what you're going through, and no matter what it is, He'll be there with you to strengthen you, and to give you peace, so He invites you rest in Him even today, and pray.

Jesus said, "Knock, and it will be opened to you." That's an invitation. A door is the entrance to someone's home. When you knock on God's door, He doesn't shut you out! He opens the door! So you can have confidence that when you seek to draw near to God, He draws near to you. He loves you.

But I want you to know something, because a lot of my sermon this morning has focused on how we should pray, and how we should think about prayer, and how when we pray, God answers. But I want to remind you of this again, as I said from the start: your relationship with God doesn't depend on you! Your relationship with God depends on Jesus.

Check this out. Verse 10 starts this way, "Everyone who asks receives." But then it switches. "And the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Did you catch that? In the middle of verse 10, it switches from talking about "everyone" to start talking about "the one." So who is the one who seeks? Specifically, who is the one who seeks the kingdom of God and his righteousness?

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Well, Psalm 14 says this.

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. (Psalms 14:2-3)

So, apparently, no one seeks God. No one seeks His righteousness. We've all sinned. We've all disobeyed. None of us seek God, and therefore none of us can find God.

But there is One who seeks us. Jesus said this about Himself in another place.

For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

You see, we didn't seek God, but God sought us. And the One who seeks finds, so we are found by Jesus Himself. And not only that, but Jesus is the One who knocks. Jesus says this in Revelation.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

You see, Jesus seeks you, and knocks on the door of your heart. And He's going to keep on knocking until you open the door and let Him in. He'll never give up on you. He just loves you too much. So much, that even though we would never seek Him because of our sin, even while we were yet sinners, He died for us on the cross.

And on that cross, it's interesting, that Jesus asked for something in prayer.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

It's like Jesus became the shameless man, just asking God, begging God to feed his friends. Jesus made Himself nothing. He emptied Himself, and shamelessly asked, "Father, forgive them."

And everyone who asks receives. So you are forgiven not because you ask, seek, and knock, but because Jesus asks, seeks, and knocks. He asked for you, for your forgiveness, He sought the lost, and He knocks on every sinner's heart.

You see, our prayer life is less about us and more about Jesus. It's not primarily about our work, but about Jesus's finished work for us on the cross, which is grace.

So, you see, the kind of prayer that God invites us to participate in with Him isn't work, but grace, because the work has already been done by Jesus, who may be knocking even now on the door of your heart.

So open the door, invite Jesus in, have a relationship with God by His grace.

*God, when we pray, when we knock on Your door, thank You for hearing us. Thank you for answering the door, for answering prayer, and that, because You love us. And as if that's not enough, thank You for knocking on our door, and even barging in In Jesus's name, Amen.*

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