

OpenTheo

Luke 10:21 - 11:13



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this section of his teachings, Steve Gregg delves into Luke 10:21 through 11:13, where he focuses on Jesus' words about the Father and the importance of loving one's neighbor. He emphasizes the Samaritan as an example of someone who recognizes the responsibilities of being a good neighbor despite his cultural differences with the injured man. Steve also highlights the importance of prayer and the concept of asking persistently to receive from God. He wraps up by discussing Jesus' teachings on hospitality and the shamelessness of avoiding shame when offering help to others.

Transcript

We left off last time in Luke chapter 10, actually in the midst, almost the exact center of the chapter. The 70 were sent out and also returned in the section we read. They had done a short-term outreach.

We don't know how long it was. It may have been a few weeks even. But when they came back, they were particularly impressed with the fact that demons had been subject to them.

Jesus made some comments somewhat to calm them down about that, but also to encourage them that he had given them authority over all the power of the enemy. In terms of direct assault, the enemy cannot do any, I think he would suggest, permanent mortal harm to you. I don't mean physical harm, but your soul is safe if you're walking in the authority of Christ.

Now, some people say Christians, therefore, can't be demonized, and some would even go further and say the devil can't do anything to you. But that's not necessarily true. I mean, think of the things the devil did to Job.

He was a man of God. Because God may allow you to be tested. He may allow you to get sick, or he may allow you to be persecuted, or he may allow you to even die.

That is not necessarily something that cannot be in God's plans for you. But in terms of carrying out the warfare for the kingdom of God against the kingdom of darkness, we

definitely have the advantage. We have the authority of Christ, which is why the gospel has advanced into every territory, and why it does make its conquests that it does.

So, Jesus told them about the authority they had, but he did say you shouldn't be rejoicing primarily about demons being subject to you, but rather that God is on your side. Your rejoicing should not be with reference to your relationship to the demons, but with reference to your relationship to God, obviously. In verse 21, And the one to whom the Son wills to reveal him.

And he turned to his disciples and said privately, Blessed are your eyes, for they see things, your eyes, which see the things you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear and have not heard it. Now, here Jesus is reflecting, of course, on the fact that some people are tuned in.

Some people actually are aware of what God is doing in establishing the kingdom of God and bringing the Messiah at this time. It was a unique time in history, obviously, one which prophets and kings had desired to see. Those kings probably meaning the righteous kings like David and maybe Jehoshaphat and so forth.

People who were godly people greater than you, who didn't get to see it. Even the wise and the prudent who are greater than you don't see it. It's hidden from them.

But you have blessed eyes because you, even though you are babes, which means, of course, probably simple people. Probably, I mean, they're contrasted from the wise and the prudent. So babes must mean unsophisticated people.

You see these things. God has shown them to the babes and hidden them from the wise and prudent. Their eyes have seen what the eyes of prophets and kings would love to have seen but have not seen them.

Now, in the midst of this, this verse 22 sounds extremely Johannine, meaning it sounds like something from the Gospel of John. This to me is so obvious and frankly most commentators do not avoid mentioning it because anyone who studies the Gospels very much easily picks up a difference in the flavor of the Gospel of John from other Gospels. If you read the three synoptic Gospels and then you read John, you feel like you've stepped into kind of another realm.

The synoptic Gospels are all earthly stuff. I mean, Jesus' birth on earth and Jesus' activities on earth and so forth. Sure, he talks about heaven sometimes, but it's essentially a story about things that happen on earth.

When you come to the Gospel of John, you're in the beginning, the word was God, the word was with God and you're kind of in the heavenly realms. And then when Jesus is talking, he's always talking about the Father is, you know, and I are one and that kind of

stuff. John's Gospel is full of more, I don't know, ethereal, maybe more theological concepts than the more practical teaching of Jesus in the synoptics.

And because of that, many skeptics who also have seen this difference have said, you know, John is writing a different story, a different Jesus than the others. And they actually suspect that the Gospel of John is more of a fabrication because it's so different than the Jesus the synoptic Gospels portray. But it's really just showing Jesus in a different set of circumstances, dealing with a different kind of audience.

The synoptics have Jesus actually dealing with babes, dealing with peasants, dealing with the uneducated, dealing with simple, you know, fishermen and farmers and people like that. Whereas in John's Gospel, most of the conversations are between Jesus and the scholars. Now we know Jesus was quite capable of speaking at their level.

Remember when he was 12 years old? He was definitely able to speak even then at the level of the scholars. He was also able to speak at the level of the peasant. And John records many of his conversations with the scholars and is definitely a different level.

It's a different level of communication. But in having a single verse like verse 22, in the synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke both have this verse. It makes it very clear that the same Jesus that they are describing was quite capable of and actually sometimes did speak the way that John records him speaking.

So it's really kind of a wonderful case. It's about the only case in the synoptics where we find such a specimen of Jesus' commentary that looks like it's lifted directly from the Gospel of John, but it isn't. Which shows that the Gospel of John really is representing the way Jesus talked sometimes.

Notwithstanding the skeptics' denials of it. In that verse he says, all things have been delivered to me by my Father. In John chapter 5, Jesus said, all judgment has been committed to me, to the Son, by the Father.

He says, and no one knows who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. One of the things that makes this Johannine, or like John's Gospel, is that it's wordy. It's kind of, in some ways, convoluted.

I mean, it obviously makes sense, but no one knows who the Son is but the Father, no one knows who the Father is but the Son. It's not like Jesus is saying, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. And this kind of way that Jesus talks in John, he's talking that way here.

The main point here, of course, is that the wise and the prudent to whom these things have not been revealed were the Pharisees and the lawyers and the religious leaders of his day. And they thought they knew who God was. He said, really, no one does know who God is except me and the people I reveal it to.

And I have revealed it, or the Father has revealed it through me, not to the wise and the prudent, but to the babes. And so Jesus is kind of just marveling at that. He's rejoicing in his spirit over this irony and this, I think, almost this poetic justice that the proud and arrogant scholars are left out in the dark.

And the humble and unsophisticated are brought into God's confidence. Verse 25, And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said to him, What is written in the law? What is your reading of it? So he answered and said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. And your neighbors yourself.

Now, it's interesting that the lawyer said this because that's exactly what Jesus said on an occasion when a lawyer asked him what the great commandment is. A different occasion, a different lawyer came to Jesus and said, What is the great commandment? He said, Well, the great commandment is, you know, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And there's another like it, which is you shall love your neighbors yourself.

What's interesting about this is that Jesus picked those two commandments and this lawyer apparently on a separate occasion independently decided that's how he would also summarize what's in the law. It's also interesting to note that it's not these are not commandments found in the Ten Commandments at all. One of them is found in Deuteronomy.

The other is found in Leviticus. Neither of them is found in the Ten Commandments. And so it's striking that a Jewish lawyer would pick a verse out of Deuteronomy and one in Leviticus that that so well summarized the whole duty of man and which Jesus himself used to summarize it.

Now, it is possible that this lawyer had heard Jesus give this very answer on some occasion previously, and he's basically expressing his agreement with Jesus on this. We don't know. I mean, whether this man independently from Jesus came up with the same answer Jesus gave or whether it's not so independent that he had been a student of Jesus, observing him, listening to Jesus interact with people and had heard Jesus, you know, identified these two commandments also as the core of the law and the prophets.

We really cannot say. But it could be that he'd heard Jesus say this and agreed with him. Because actually the lawyer who did ask Jesus and who did receive this answer, which is found elsewhere, I believe it's in Mark, responded to Jesus when Jesus gave this answer.

He said, you've said well, teacher, you know, because to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbor as yourself is the whole duty of man. I mean, the lawyer who asked Jesus about it and received this answer agreed with Jesus. Jesus

said, well, that's a good answer, Jesus.

And if this lawyer happened to be in the crowd or have been heard through the grapevine that Jesus had given such a good answer, then on this occasion where he and Jesus are conversing and Jesus says, well, what's the law say? He may have been repeating ideas that he'd gotten from having heard Jesus say it for all we know. I just think it's interesting that this man would come up with the same two isolated texts from different books of the Torah and have hit on exactly the same words that Jesus would have used. Now, there is a possibility also that some rabbis had already distilled the law down to these two statements and that Jesus, when he gave it, was not disagreeing with him, was stating something that the better rabbis had already said and simply giving his approval of it.

We don't know. In any case, I point this out because he's not quoting from the Ten Commandments. He's quoting from much more broad commandments that would be inclusive of all ten of the Ten Commandments if you take both of these together.

And as Jesus put us with all the law and the prophets. Now, when the man said this, Jesus said to him, you have answered rightly. Do this and you will live.

But he, the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? What do you mean justify himself? Well, he obviously didn't love everybody. And he wanted to be a law keeper. He's a lawyer.

And he had just admitted in answer to his question that one of the things you've got to do to keep the law is to love your neighbor as yourself. But there were certain neighbors he probably wasn't all that fond of. Like the neighboring Samaritans.

And maybe the neighbor publican who lived down the street from him. Or other people that just rubbed him the wrong way and he didn't like them. And he realized he didn't love everybody.

And he didn't want to condemn himself. He wanted to find some way to justify his present attitude. I don't love everybody, but I think this can be justified if we define neighbor narrowly enough.

I do love my neighbors. The people who think like I do, who are at my social status, the people who are in my neighborhood, I love those people. But if I have to expand the definition of neighbor broader than that, maybe I'm not so good at this.

And he wanted to narrow the definition as much as he could so that he could justify his own limitations, no doubt, of his love. So he says, to justify himself, who is my neighbor? Okay, I've got to love my neighbor, but can we put a finer point on that? Who am I supposed to regard as my neighbor? Because obviously whatever the answer to that is, is that's who I have to love. And so Jesus answered and said, a certain man went down

from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves.

That mountainous area between Jerusalem and Jericho is very wild. And on many, in many wilderness areas, thieves would just wait for travelers and beat them up, maybe even kill them and take their stuff. That was a very common danger in the old days.

So along most roads, if you traveled anywhere very far, and it's not that far from Jerusalem to Jericho, but the region is such mountainous and there's rocks and it's easy to conceal oneself and to rob someone without people very far away being able to see you and so forth. This is not an uncommon thing. The situation was very typical.

This man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among thieves who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Likewise, a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

And he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said to him, take care of him and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you. So, which of these three do you think was the neighbor to him who fell among the thieves? And the lawyer said, he who showed mercy on him.

Then Jesus said to him, go and do likewise. Now, this story is so well known, it doesn't need to be retold here or expounded. I think the picture is clear.

The man who fell among thieves, it is assumed is Jewish. That's important. Because if he was a Samaritan, let us say, then there's no surprise that the priest Levi would pass him up and that the Samaritan would help him.

The assumption is a certain man leaving Jerusalem is nine times out of ten going to be a Jew. And that's the assumption. This is a Jewish man and it's his own countrymen, his own religious leaders that leave him unattended.

And it may be because they were concerned about their religious duties. After all, he looked dead. He was covered with blood.

A Jew, if they came into contact with blood, they'd be unclean. If they touched a dead body, they'd be unclean. In order to retain their ceremonial cleanness and be able to continue in their priestly and Levitical duties at the temple, they would want to remain undefiled.

In this case, they would be showing again the same kind of wrong priorities as Jesus rebuked when he pointed out to them that David had violated ceremonial law by eating the show bread, but it was okay because there was, you know, extenuating circumstances. Well, seeing a man who's fallen among thieves and is half dead or maybe even dead, those are extenuating circumstances. And care for another man is more important to God than ceremonial exactness.

I will have mercy rather than sacrifice is an Old Testament verse that Jesus quoted twice in Matthew against the Pharisees because they placed ceremonial issues above mercy, showing mercy. Now, here's a priest and Levite, excellent examples of this. They're trying to retain their ceremonial cleanness in all likelihood.

They also may be self-serving in some respects. They may be afraid that, hey, this place is infested by thieves. I need to get through here as fast as I can, not slow down and try to help this guy.

They may be still around. Who knows what else they were thinking? The point is they didn't do anything and they should have. And they are contrasted with another man who is not a religious leader, not even of the right religion at all, not even of the right race.

He's a Samaritan. He's got the wrong religion. He's the wrong race.

And he's not particularly, I mean, he is particularly offensive to the Jewish listener, especially a teacher of the law, such as Jesus was talking to. A Samaritan would be somebody who's of a rival religion, who rejects the validity of everything this teacher of the law stands for, and therefore a pagan and a bad man. And yet this Samaritan comes along.

And when Jesus introduces that, a certain Samaritan, just the mention of the Samaritan must have, you know, evoked certain emotions in the Jewish hearer, especially the lawyer. But that Samaritan had compassion on him and did what he could. Now Jesus gives a lot of details.

He put him on his beast. He washed his wounds. He took him to the inn.

He even tells how much money the guy gave and that he'd come back and pay more. These details seem relatively unnecessary to make the general point that the man helped him where the others would not. But apparently by emphasizing all these things, he's allowing the listener to dwell on the process of, you know, inconveniencing oneself, impoverishing oneself in some measure, making a commitment even long-term to help this man.

If the amount I've given so far isn't enough, I'll pay more later. This is just kind of amplifying on the degree to which this man was willing to show practical mercy to someone in need. It's interesting because when Jesus said at the end of it, which of these

three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among thieves? The man had asked, who is my neighbor? And in this, that is, who am I required to love? Well, in the parable, you'd think the man who fell among thieves is the neighbor who needs to be loved, who needs to be helped.

But Jesus doesn't say which person regarded the man as a neighbor, but which man was a neighbor. The person made himself a neighbor. By many definitions, a Samaritan would not be a neighbor.

I mean, he's in a neighboring country, but he's not a near neighbor. He's not even of the same faith or the same citizenship or the same nationality. He's in every way not close.

He's in every way not a neighbor, except in the most general and broad definition. He shares the planet with us. And that's the sense in which Jesus means it.

This Samaritan regarded himself as a neighbor to this man who had need. That is, the Samaritan, if he was guided by love your neighbors yourself, he was including that Jew as his neighbor and loving him as he would love himself, doing what he would want done himself to himself. So in other words, Jesus is saying, you want to know who your neighbor is who you have to love.

It's pretty much everybody, like the Samaritan, who acted like the neighbor, who recognized his neighborly responsibilities here. And it's interesting that the lawyer didn't say the Samaritan. I think he couldn't bring himself to even utter the word in a positive sense.

Jesus is saying, who's the good guy here? He dare not say the Samaritan. How could he ever say a Samaritan was a good guy? He says, I suppose he who showed mercy on him. He who showed mercy on him.

Well, that was a Samaritan, but he doesn't want to say that. It's just obviously he's got to give an answer. And mercy was shown through the kind acts done.

And Jesus said, go and do likewise. In other words, you're supposed to love your neighbors yourself, do it this way. This is how it's done.

You don't be a respecter of persons. You don't decide somebody's, you know, he's not similar to me enough. His race, his religion, his culture, even his zip code, it's not close enough to mine to be called a neighbor.

But he is, and you need to regard him as a neighbor. There should be nobody that you think is too far removed for you to have compassion on them if you have the opportunity to help them. And this principle is, of course, what has caused Christians throughout history to send more charity than any other group of people has ever done to, you know, Africa or, you know, tsunami victims across the country or somewhere else in the world.

Christians understand that the whole world is our neighborhood and loving everyone on it and being compassionate and faithful and merciful to them is what it means to love your neighbor as yourself even if he's not a near neighbor. You know, Paul went throughout the Gentile churches which were across the Mediterranean from Israel and he took up a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And most of the Gentiles who were contributing to this to help the poor saints in Jerusalem themselves never went to Jerusalem, probably didn't know anyone from Jerusalem, might never have any contact with them.

They were part of, frankly, in a different part of the world. But Paul indicated that the Gentile Christians were very generous and eager to help with the ministry to the saints in Jerusalem. And this is simply the Christian attitude that Jesus recommends.

The Jews did not have that attitude because they were racist and they were, you know, against people of another religion and they were particularly against the Samaritans. And so this was a considerable rebuke to a pious Jew who acknowledged that his duty was to love his neighbors himself but wasn't really eager to do it by God's definitions. Now, we have to also realize that stories like this also provide some information as to Jesus' understanding of God because we're supposed to love people because God does.

We're not supposed to love them more than God does or less. We're supposed to love them as God does. God is our model for this.

And that being so, we have to say that God is like this Samaritan. He's not like the priest and the Levite. And just today, a few minutes ago on my radio show, someone was talking about Calvinism and about how God is different in Calvinism than elsewhere.

And I think this is the way that it is, mostly so. The God of Calvinism doesn't love everybody equally. He loves some and others he sees in just as great need as the ones that he loves.

And he doesn't love them enough to do anything for them. Older Calvinists said that God foreordains some to be saved and he foreordains some to be damned. Modern Calvinists don't like to say that God foreordains some to be damned but they have to say he passes over the ones he doesn't elect.

He loves some enough to save the rest. He doesn't damn them but he passes over them. He doesn't do for them the same thing.

Which is a way of saying he's like the priest or the Levite in this story. He sees people who desperately need to be saved and who have suffered great harm from the enemy and are facing even more danger and he can do something for them but he passes by on the other side of the road. This is not a picture of God that Jesus would endorse.

Of course, he's not here talking about God's behavior. He's talking about ours but ours is

to be a model of God's behavior or vice versa. We're supposed to mimic God's behavior.

You know in Ephesians 5 verses 1 and 2 says, Therefore be followers or imitators of God as dear children and walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us and so forth. So we're supposed to mimic God. We're supposed to imitate God in particular in walking in love as Christ has.

So loving your neighbor as this parable is designed to amplify upon is really just a way of being expected to love the way God does. And that means that the way Jesus teaches us to love is the way he understands God to love and the way he loves. We're supposed to love as he loved us and imitate God.

So here we have not only the picture of the Christian duty to love all people but in a sense a declaration that God loves all people and would save all people and would not certainly pass by without doing all he can for those in so great a need. John, remember, said in 1 John in verse 17 of 1 John 3 or we could start at verse 16 1 John 3, 16 and 17 By this we know love because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Very clearly the love that God exhibits is the love we're supposed to mimic.

But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart from him how does the love of God abide in him? Now, if you see someone in need and you can help them but you don't then you don't have the love of God. That is, God's love is not like yours. His love would not shut up his heart from those that he sees in need that he can help.

And if someone says, well then why doesn't God just save everybody if he loves everybody like that? Well, I'm sure he would if he could. In my understanding, God will save everybody that he can. But that requires some acquiescence on their part because salvation is a relationship and there's no such thing as a one-sided relationship that's a real relationship.

You've got to have both parties involved. So God's ready. It's for man to now respond and also be ready to be in that relationship.

So God saves all that he can but obviously if salvation means being in a relationship you can only be in a relationship with people who will agree to be in a relationship with you. And that's why some are not saved. Not at this point.

Some who are not saved now will be saved later when they come to that point of agreeing to be in such a relationship. Verse 38. Now it happened as they went that he entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But

Martha was distracted with much serving. And she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.

And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her. Now Mary and Martha are not mentioned together in very many places in the scripture.

Just about two or three places we read of them and it's brief stories about them usually. But don't you feel like you know them? I mean, it's really amazing how with so few words you can get such a picture of people. The scripture is so good, not only about them but other people, Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the rich young ruler.

You just feel like you get a few sentences about them and you feel like, I know this person. I feel familiar with that person. I feel like I can see them there.

The stories are so real, so graphic, and the characters so true to life. And they are true to life because they were true characters. I just always think it's amazing that just this little brief pericope makes me feel like I know these women.

But of course there's a couple others. There's the time when their brother Lazarus, same two women, their brother Lazarus died and Jesus hadn't shown up to help and they both are, you know, sullen about it and disheartened. And when Jesus approaches, Martha leaves the house where the mourners are and she goes out to speak with Jesus first and Mary's sitting in the house and she doesn't go until a messenger comes later and says, the Lord's calling for you.

And then she goes. But, I mean, there's just something about these women. This is also the Mary who broke an alabaster jar of perfume over Jesus' head when he was in her house on another occasion.

And she knew what was going on. No one else did. Even the disciples didn't know what was going on.

And Jesus said, leave her alone. She's anointed my body for burial. She's the only one there who knew he was going to be dying and buried.

And so she came and anointed him. The others were clueless. Why? Because she was somebody who apparently characteristically, whenever she had the chance, sat at the feet of Jesus.

Now, these women lived in Bethany with their brother Lazarus. It is here said to be Martha's house. Now, where this happened, well, not this story, but another story in Martha's house, one of the Gospels says it was in the house of Simon the leper.

Now, we know that Lazarus and Mary Martha apparently lived together and apparently Simon the leper too. Since it was Martha's house, probably Simon the leper was her husband. We know nothing about Simon the leper except that this was his house, but the fact he's called a leper almost certainly means that he had been healed of leprosy, unless he was still living elsewhere.

But in other words, if he was still a leper, he wouldn't be at home. But it is possible that Martha's husband was a leper and wasn't at home, but more likely he was a leper that Jesus had healed. And that may, that'd be a story that we haven't read about, but was perhaps the back story to the relationship that Jesus and his family had, that the husband of the family had been a leper, Jesus had healed him, Martha, you know, forever afterward made her home a hospitable place for Jesus and the disciples when they were in the area.

It's almost certain that during the Passion Week, Jesus spent every night at this particular house because the Bible says he would preach in Jerusalem and then every night he'd go to Bethany, which is two miles away on the slopes of the Mount of Olives and he'd stay the night in Bethany, and this is almost certainly where he stayed. These people were good friends of Jesus. We have no evidence that they ever followed him around, nor that they were required to.

We don't have any evidence that Jesus called them to leave their homes and follow him, but they were true disciples, obviously. And Mary in particular was a listener and a learner. And when Jesus was there, she forgot all other duties.

She just was enamored and hanging on his every word, which might be why at a later date she knew he was going to die and no one else did. And she anointed him for burial when everyone else was clueless. She tended to listen, and rather focused listening, apparently, because I'm sure that since she was not a bad woman, she normally would be accustomed to serving along with her sister, not leaving the load entirely on Martha's shoulders.

The fact that Mary was in fact not serving must have been perhaps because she knew Jesus' priorities. She knew because she listened. Martha was doing what a hostess would always do.

She's not doing a bad thing. She's doing what every hostess would do when you've got guests. Now she's served.

You make food, you serve your guests, you make them feel at home. But she was being overburdened. She's got 13 guests or more in her house.

And she's working alone. And there's an able-bodied sister there, adult sister, who should be helping, she thought. And so she was, of course, feeling a little grumpy that Mary

wasn't doing as much work as she was.

And perhaps that's not only a lesson for people who tend to be Martha's, as we say today, but also for just Christians in general being concerned that I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. How come that person's not doing what they're supposed to do? And you know, maybe being too critical of somebody else because they're not doing what we are doing and think they should be doing. But Mary, of course, was doing what she was supposed to be doing.

And Jesus made that very clear. Mary has chosen the right thing. Martha, you're the one bothered by a lot of stuff, trouble, worried about a lot of things.

Now, I'm sure this was a gentle rebuke because Martha was just trying to be a good hostess and certainly Jesus couldn't be upset with her about that. But he was saying, there's something you're missing here. You think when I arrive that you know what I want you to do and so you go about it without listening and finding out if that's what I want.

You assume I'm like everybody else and what I care about is food. What I care about is being served. You haven't listened to me enough to find out even what my priorities are.

Mary is listening. Mary knows my priorities. She knows I'd rather have you here sitting at my feet than bringing food to me.

She knows that serving me is not the only thing I want you to do. I want you to listen to me too. I'm sure you know that Mary, as she listened to Jesus, if she heard anything that indicated that he wanted her to do something, she would have gone and done it.

But Jesus wasn't as concerned as maybe many guests would be about being served. Martha was a good hostess. But she was just doing automatically what she assumed was the right thing to do.

And she had not waited to see whether her guest really was blessed by what she was doing, whether it's really what he wanted her to be doing or not. And Mary was much more pleasing in this situation to Jesus because she actually realized, you know, I shouldn't just do what I think he wants. I should listen and find out what he wants.

And so also, of course, there's that attitude that we can easily have in serving God. We can just assume we know what needs to be done and begin doing it. And maybe it is what needs to be done.

Maybe God is leading us. But if we find someone else isn't doing it and we think they should be, well, it's not really our place. Like Paul said in Romans 14, he said, who are you, O man, to judge another man's servant to his own master? His stands are false.

You know, everyone is God's servant and answers to God directly for their obedience. And it's not like Mary was sinning. I mean, if Mary was actually committing sins, then some kind of a rebuke would be in place.

Mary was not doing something bad. She just wasn't doing as many things that Martha thought were good. And so Jesus is basically saying, you know, you've got a lot of things that you're worried about.

You're being pulled lots of different directions. That's why you're overwhelmed and that's why you're getting upset with your sister. But really, Mary is doing the one thing that really needs to be done.

Well, what is it? He doesn't actually say what that one thing is. We just have to deduce it. She was listening to him.

And in so doing, she was not being disobedient to him. She was waiting to find out what it is he wanted. She was learning him.

She was getting to know him. She was hanging on his every word. She was not one who believed in living by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of Jesus.

And so, in a sense, she was valuing fellowship with him more than working for him. Not that she wouldn't work for him, but to cultivate the relationship seemed to be something God appreciated her doing more than remaining ignorant and oblivious to what he cared about. And just doing work just because it's the thing that society and culture would suggest that you ought to do.

Martha was doing that. Mary was doing something better than that. And he says, I'm not going to take that from her.

I'm not going to tell her to go in the kitchen. She's doing what's right. I'm not going to take that privilege that she's now enjoying from her.

That's not going to be taken away from her. Chapter 11 And it came to pass as he was praying in a certain place when he ceased that one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples. Now, we don't read about John teaching his disciples.

That must have been one of the things in John's curriculum to his disciples, teaching them how to pray. These disciples, maybe some of them had been John's disciples before and maybe had even learned from John how to pray, but they were more interested now in learning how Jesus prayed. They saw him praying.

He had been praying. That's what we're told here. He was praying in a certain place and

when he was done, ooh, but he ceased.

Doesn't the Bible say pray without ceasing? But Jesus was praying and then he ceased. Some people think you're supposed to be praying around the clock. And that's not really always that practical.

Pray without ceasing is actually a term that's used a couple times. It's used in 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul says to pray without ceasing. Also, Paul says to the Romans in Romans 1, I pray without ceasing.

That doesn't mean I pray around the clock. It means I don't give up on praying for you. I don't pray for you once and then drop you from my prayer list or my prayer concerns.

I'm praying regularly without stopping doing so. Of course, I don't pray for you while I'm asleep. You've got to stop praying at some point.

My prayer life isn't just what I'm doing each hour. It's what I'm doing over a lifetime. And I don't cease to pray for you just because maybe I've been praying for a while and haven't seen results.

I don't drop you off my list of concerns I pray for. I keep praying for you. But when it comes to seasons of actual time spent in prayer, you do cease from those of course, temporarily.

And Jesus ceased from his prayers on this occasion. And no doubt it was his praying that inspired the question, hey, we want to learn how to pray like you pray. There must have been some difference between the way John prayed and Jesus prayed, and reasonably enough, Jesus was the son of the Father and had a communion with him, such as John and other prophets before him never specifically enjoyed.

Jesus, for example, always called God Abba, or Father. Most Jews did not. In all likelihood, John the Baptist did not.

In fact, it may have been this very feature that Jesus spoke to God like a son speaks to a father. That made his prayers distinctive, even different from John the Baptist's prayers. And we know that some of these disciples had been John the Baptist's disciples before they followed Jesus.

We know that from John chapter 1. So it's possible that even whatever disciple this was that asked the question had learned to pray from John the Baptist, but now when he heard Jesus pray, he said, I'd like to be able to pray like him. Would you teach us how to pray like you pray? Just like John the Baptist's disciples taught his disciples to pray? And sure enough, the first thing Jesus said is when you pray, say Abba. Say our Father.

In other words, the first thing is you've got to talk to God like he's your father, not like

he's some aloof monarch and you're some serf who's not very close to his concerns but you might have to twist his arm or beg him and give excellent reasons why he should be concerned about your needs. A father is naturally concerned about his children's needs and you should come to God with that assumption. You're coming to a father.

You're not coming to Zeus on Mount Olympus somehow where he lives in a different realm, he's of a different species, he doesn't care about you. God is your father and that's something that was unique to Jesus' teaching. The rabbis didn't teach that.

And it's of course has special ramifications with reference to prayer because in another place Jesus said, which of you fathers if his son asks him for bread is going to give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he's going to give him a serpent. He said, if you fathers even though you are evil give good gifts to your children when they ask you. How much more will your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him? In fact, Jesus is going to make the same point just almost immediately after that here in verse 13.

But here Jesus teaches them to pray and this prayer that he teaches them to pray is of course the same prayer that we read of in Matthew chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount. It's possible that Matthew collecting things taught that we took this prayer taught on this occasion and inserted it into his expanded Sermon on the Mount. Or it's also possible that Jesus had taught this on another occasion and it never hurts to say it more than once.

I mean, how many times have you heard sermons on the same subject and realized, yeah, I forgot about that. It's a good thing I heard that sermon today. I knew that.

I'd heard that but I forgot. And so Jesus might be teaching them again. Our father in heaven, start that way.

Hallowed be your name. In other words, you come with reverence. You don't come in a chummy way like to your pal Jesus.

You come to you come with reverence. Hallowed be your name. Sacred.

You're lofty. You are, after all, our father but you're also in heaven. And heaven is above us.

And your name is to be exalted and hallowed. And to come with that kind of reverence and yet that kind of familiarity is the balance that Jesus teaches in approaching God. First things first.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. First priority in prayer is the kingdom of God and God's will.

We're much more inclined to pray at times when we're feeling a particular need

ourselves. In fact, it's very common to neglect prayer until such a time and then we feel I need something so the first thing I blurt out when I pray is, help me provide for this need, you know, heal this sickness or whatever it is. Whatever the crisis is is what I'm likely to pray for first.

It's just because it's on my mind. But prayer has got a different priority. First comes begging God to promote the interest of his kingdom in the world and to do his will so that more his will be done on earth as it is in heaven as a result of each prayer we pray.

This suggests very strongly that God's will isn't automatically done or else why are we supposed to pray for it? God's will isn't always done. But apparently Jesus is teaching us that his will will be done more if we pray than if we don't and we're supposed to pray for it. Our prayers are part of the process of conquering the world.

Part of the process, maybe the main process, main part of it. Bringing about an end to the devil's reign and displacing it with the reign of God. With his will being done.

That's what prayer is primarily to accomplish. Now there's subordinate concerns like verse 3, give us this day our daily bread. That's very mundane and it makes it very clear that while we're concerned primarily with the grand scheme of God's plan on the earth and his will being done and the conquest of all opposition to his kingdom and so forth also down to me eating bread this morning.

God's concerned about the small mundane personal needs as well. They take a back seat to the larger issues but they have their place. There's nothing wrong with praying for daily bread.

A slave expects his master to provide food for him on a daily basis and there's nothing wrong with asking it. But it's a modest request, notice. Our daily bread.

Each day give me enough bread for this day is really what it means. He doesn't say, you know, set me up for life or set me up for the next six months. It's not praying for a great deal of material comfort or security or prosperity.

It's asking for what is necessary. Asking for bread. It's necessary.

I need bread every day. And God knows it. He doesn't mind you asking for it.

There's nothing wrong with praying for stuff that you need. And forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

So in the end we're praying for our spiritual well-being, for our forgiveness which keeps our relation with God and no obstacles there. And then also for our relationship with the enemy that we not be brought to under his power. Do not lead us into temptation but

deliver us from evil.

I believe these two lines go together and the first one doesn't stand without the second one. If we just said do not lead us into temptation that raises interesting questions. Does God lead people into temptation? If so, does he have a good reason for it? And if he does, why would I ask that he don't do it? He led Jesus into temptation.

The Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And so why should I ask that he wouldn't do that to me? I believe that this request has two parts and it's not a complete one without both parts. Don't lead us into temptation but deliver us out of it successfully.

Meaning don't only lead me into temptation but also deliver me out of it. This is what I refer to as a limited negative. Don't do this but do that is a structural grammatical structure that we find in scripture a number of times.

In many cases what it really means is don't only do this but also do that. Don't just lead me into temptation. I count on that happening.

I will be tempted. I trust I won't be tempted except when you lead me into it because I don't want to do anything that you're not leading me into. But Jesus said in another place in Luke it's impossible that offenses or stumbling blocks would not come.

There are inevitable temptations and stumbling blocks but I don't have to stumble. When I face temptation I can conquer it if I'm praying about it. I can ask God that I don't simply end up in temptation and then abandoned there but that I am brought through temptation.

I'm brought into it and out of it successfully without having succumbed to the enemy's devices against me. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to the disciples watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation. He knew they were going to be tempted that night but he told them to pray and implied very strongly that in doing so they would secure their victory over that temptation and that situation.

So if a Christian is falling to sin on any kind of regular basis it's because they're succumbing to temptation obviously. And the first question I would ask someone who has such problems is are you praying about it? Jesus said watch and pray that you do not fall into temptation. You're supposed to be praying lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Now also he says before that forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. I actually think that that latter line for we also forgive those who are indebted to us is intended to be a declaration and a decision made at that very moment. As I'm praying for forgiveness right now I now am forgiving anyone.

You know if I haven't done it before I'm canceling the debts that anyone has to me. I'm asking you to do that for me and as I say this I'm verbally releasing anyone from anything they owe me. I'm forgiving them now and I expect to be forgiven only on that basis.

In Matthew after this prayer is told Matthew goes on to have Jesus saying for if you don't forgive others your father won't forgive you and if you do forgive others your father will forgive you. That amplification on the prayer is given in Matthew chapter 6. Verse 5 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 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.

And I'm going to read the next section to then I'll comment about this. And 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 for everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened if a son asks for bread from any father among you will he give him a stone if he asks for fish will he give him a serpent instead of a fish or if he asks for an egg will he give him a scorpion if you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Now verses 9 through 13 have essentially the equivalence of that teaching also duplicated in the 7th chapter of Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount with only a slight you know inconsequential differences except for one thing in Matthew's version it says if you earthly fathers being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him and here it's will he give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

When Jesus says everyone who asks receives and everyone who seeks finds you might think well I haven't received everything I've asked. I've prayed some prayers are denied me. In fact I think it's somewhat normal for some prayers to be denied because they're not well they're not well intentioned they're misguided prayers and it's a good thing that God doesn't give us everything we ask for.

Remember that psalm that says he gave them their request and with it leanness of soul. There's times you shouldn't request for things and God mercifully doesn't give them to you when you do. When he says everyone who asks receives, everyone who knocks has the door open.

He's obviously talking in the context of what he says here at verse 13. You ask for the Holy Spirit, your father will give it to you. He's talking about spiritual things.

If you pray for the Holy Spirit and perhaps by this also those things that pertain to the

Holy Spirit, the gifts, the fruit, the power, whatever he's promising a spiritual benefit which will not be denied to those who come to him on proper terms and ask. And apparently continue to ask because he says in the Greek it's knock and keep on knocking more or less keep knocking, keep asking keep seeking. So the suggestion is it may not be just you ask one time and then lo and behold you've got what you ask for.

But rather if you're needing spiritual power, spiritual growth, spiritual fruit, whatever, the Holy Spirit and whatever his functions may be ask for it. Ask for those things and keep on asking. Don't give up because your father really wants you to have that and he'll certainly give it to you.

Now this story about the so-called persistent neighbor has sometimes been, well it's disputed exactly what the lesson is there. It's certainly a lesson about prayer. He's talking about asking and receiving.

And in the context of course of verses 9-13 it's clear that prayer is what he has in mind. Actually the context of the previous part too where he taught them how to pray. He is in this story giving them encouragement to expect an answer to their prayers just like a man who comes to his neighbor's house and knocks on the door and asks for something in the middle of the night.

Now obviously the scenario he presents is one where he's inconveniencing his neighbor at a bad time of the day. In the middle of the night he's got an unexpected visitor. In the Middle East you have to feed your visitors.

Hospitality is almost a moral obligation and therefore if the man didn't expect a visitor his cupboards were bare. He's going to have to go to some neighbors and get enough stuff to put a meal together for his unexpected guest. Sadly it's the middle of the night so his neighbors are going to be in bed.

But he's going to go anyway. The demands of hospitality in the Middle East make it unthinkable that he would say it's an inconvenient time to feed you. We'll do something about it in the morning.

No, when someone comes on a journey, they've been journeying they're hungry, you feed them. If you've got to go disturb your neighbors to do it, then that's what you've got to do. Hospitality in that society is absolutely non-negotiable.

So he goes to his neighbor and he knocks on the door. His neighbor says what Jesus says to his neighbor, we'll get up. Why does he get up? Sometimes it is suggested in teaching this that the neighbor is in fact reluctant to get up.

And we find the neighbor saying, do not trouble me. The door is now shut. My children are with me in bed.

I cannot rise to give to you. Jesus actually doesn't say he's not telling a story where a neighbor actually says this. He's saying which of you in these circumstances would expect your neighbor to say such a thing as this? And the answer is none.

No neighbor would say that. That's the idea. No neighbor would say that to a neighbor.

Not in the Middle East. He knows the bind you're in and if he doesn't rise to help you just because it's inconvenient just because he has to climb over the kids who are asleep he's not a neighbor. By morning he would be the talk of the town.

This guy is a pariah. He doesn't even help his neighbor when he needs bread in the middle of the night. Jesus doesn't tell a story about a sleeping neighbor who gives this response.

He's speaking rhetorically. Which of you in these circumstances would your neighbor say this to you? The idea is none. That would never happen.

Not in a Jewish town. Every neighbor would see that even if he doesn't want to do it, he has to do it. He has to get up.

His reputation, his neighborliness is all on the line here. No man would say no in a case like this. Especially to such a modest request.

I just need some bread. He might have to go to other neighbors to get meat and vegetables and things like that. This guy is just asking for a piece of bread.

Your neighbor is going to be so stingy and so selfish. He's going to say, I know you've got needs but who cares. I'm in bed.

Don't disturb me. Jesus is implying by this rhetorical question, no one would do that. Which of you would that happen to? It wouldn't happen.

Now, the next part is interesting. It says, I say to you though he will not rise and give it to him because he is a friend. Yet because of his persistence, he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

Now the word persistence here, this translation, has led to the impression that Jesus is talking about a selfish neighbor who doesn't really want to help and wouldn't. Except the guy keeps persistently knocking at the door and the neighbor finally says, Okay, I'll never get any rest until you stop knocking. I'll get you what you want.

He wouldn't do it out of friendship but just to get himself some sleep, he'll rise. And so, this word persistence, which gets the job done, is sometimes interpreted to mean the neighbor was reluctant and nothing but the persistence of the man asking dissuaded him from staying in bed. Nothing but the insistence that I'm not taking no for an answer made the guy actually get up.

Another way of understanding this is quite different. The word persistence here is not an exact translation of the Greek word. The Greek word here actually literally means shamelessness.

Now, we're talking about people living in a shame-based culture. I don't know if you've read much or heard much about shame-based cultures. We don't have it so much here.

In Asia and the Middle East, they are shame-based cultures. The Japanese in many cases would rather die than lose face to experience shame in the eyes of the community. Likewise, Middle Easterners.

They are motivated by shame. And that doesn't mean that it's all bad. It just means that they are almost slaves of public opinion about themselves.

And they would do anything inconvenient to themselves to avoid the shame and the opprobrium of the community thinking they're not a good person. And Jesus actually says, because of shamelessness, this man will rise. Now, it still sounds like it's time for the shameless persistence of the man knocking on the door.

So, it could still be the same thing. The shamelessness of this man knocking. How shameless it is for him to get up and disturb his neighbor and keep pounding on the door when the guy says, go away.

It's like shameless persistence. And some people understand it that way, and that's why the English translation translates it, persistence. It literally says, because of shamelessness, he will rise.

But there is another way of seeing it, and that is the shamelessness of the man who rises. Now, shamelessness wouldn't be a good word, but the Greek word has an Aramaic equivalent, which means the avoidance of shame. Now, this is a little technical, but it does throw a different light on the meaning of the story.

There's an Aramaic word, and that's the language Jesus spoke, that means avoidance of shame. But translated into Greek, it would generally be translated by this word, shamelessness. But obviously, avoidance of shame is a different concept than shamelessness.

Shamelessness is almost like you've got no conscience. Avoidance of shame is more like a motivation. You'll do such a thing to avoid shame, to avoid the disapproval of the community.

And so this other alternative is saying, essentially, it's the man who is in bed, who would much rather stay in bed than help his neighbor, and if it was only a matter of friendship, that wouldn't be enough. This man's not his friend, so there's no friendship element there that would make it good, but he'll do it anyway to avoid shame. That is to avoid

the disapproval of the community.

The shame motivation in the culture would prevent any man from saying, go away, I'm in bed, my kids are in bed, this is inconvenient for me. That would bring shame on any man in a Middle Eastern community, that he is so callous to the needs of hospitality. You know that if you go to places in Asia, people are very, very friendly and very polite and very hospitable, and they may be that, whether they like you or not.

You get the impression everybody likes you. Well, they might or might not like you, but whether they would or not, they are expected to do that. In a shame-based culture, anyone would be ashamed not to show that kind of hospitality.

It's different than here in the West. Likewise in the Middle East. So what Jesus may be saying is this.

He's not saying necessarily that there was a man who had a guest come on a journey to his house. He went to his neighbor. His neighbor was reluctant to give up.

The neighbor gave this excuse for not getting up. But the man persistently knocked on the door and more or less forced the guy out of bed and made him do it because he wouldn't do it out of friendship, but he wanted to get some sleep and because of the persistence or shamelessness of the petitioner, the man in bed actually got up to get himself some relief. Now that would be one way to understand it, of course, if the shamelessness is on the part of the knocker.

And that would be basically arguing for persistence in prayer, getting things from God that he might otherwise not give immediately. But on the other hand, this story could be understood to be this. It's not really a story at all.

It's a question. Which of you, if a guest came to your house and you went to your neighbor, would get this kind of an answer from your neighbor? It's rhetorical. No neighbor would give an answer like this because he'd be ashamed to.

He might not help you because he likes you. He might not even be a close friend of yours. The bond of friendship might not be enough to motivate him, but the bond of avoiding, the motivation of avoiding shame in the community would be sufficient to get him to get up and give you everything you want and more.

Because the community would certainly find out what kind of a neighbor he is. These are small towns here and everybody needs to know that they can go to their neighbor in a pinch and get the help they need to show hospitality. And anyone who ever wouldn't get up to give you some bread in a situation like that, well, he's endangering, he's going to become sort of a reject of society and no one's going to want to help him.

He's not a neighbor. So the point here is Jesus is describing something that they were

familiar with in terms of the shame-based motivation of doing things and saying certainly no man would turn down his neighbor on this if only to avoid the shame of turning such a person down in those cases. Now if he's a friend, he might do it for friendship, but even if friendship's not a factor, a man who wouldn't do it for friendship would do it to avoid shame.

And some feel that that's what's being said here. If so, then the lesson about prayer is this. God's reputation is on the line.

When you pray if he doesn't give you what you need, it makes him look bad. And he's concerned about his reputation. He's concerned about his glory.

If his honor is at stake, you can count on it. He's going to defend his honor. It's a matter of his dignity.

It's a matter of his glory that he takes care of the needs of his children. And if you ask him, you can count on it. Even if he wasn't your friend, his reputation alone and it being placed at risk would be enough to make him answer your prayers.

Of course, the idea is he is a friend. It's sort of like the story in some ways of the widow who came to the judge who didn't care about anybody, but because she persistently bugged him, he gave her. Now, this is often thought of as a parable of persistence, but as I said, it may not be even talked about persistence at all.

It may just be saying anyone you ask is going to give you what you need in the middle of the night because that's just their reputation is there on the line. But the point here is, though, that God is not like somebody who isn't a friend. He will do out of friendship, but he'll also do it, or you can count on it, even if he wasn't your friend, he'd do it just to vindicate his own honor and to avoid the shame of being a stingy benefactor.

Anyway, these teachings on prayer are, they go up through verse 13 and then the subject changes and we'll take that next time. Thank you.