



---

## ASKING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

---

Part 48 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 11:5-13 | October 03, 2010

*Luke 11:5-13*

<sup>5</sup> 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,' <sup>6</sup> for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup> 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.'? <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup> What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; <sup>12</sup> or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

### INTRODUCTION

So I'm going to go ahead and pray and then we'll get right to work in Luke.

Father God, I thank you first of all that we get to call you Father, just like Jesus said we should and we could. And so God, we thank you for being a loving dad who hears and answers our prayers. Any time, we can bring anything to you and you're happy to hear from your children. Father, we thank you for that. Jesus, we thank you for being the perfect big brother, who has taken away sin. And Father, we thank you as well for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, we invite you to illuminate the Scriptures you have inspired to be written and to conform us to the image of Jesus and to teach us to pray as he did. And we ask for this grace in his good name. Amen.

And as we get into it today, here is Luke 11. It starts with Jesus praying and the disciples coming to him, observing him praying, and asking Jesus this very curious question in Luke 11:1. They ask, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus then gives them a model of prayer called the Lord's Prayer, something that we investigated last week, and then this week we will look at some additional parables and principles for prayer. He will give us a parable and a principle and a parable and a principle. And a parable is a story, an illustration, an analogy, a big idea through a word picture to communicate something about a theological concept.

### THE SHAMELESS NEIGHBOR

And the first parable that we see in is Luke 11:5-8, wherein teaching about prayer, we read this, "And he said to them," Jesus does, "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—" or his shamelessness. That's probably the best rendering of the Greek term— "He will rise and give him whatever he needs."

Here's the story. In that day, people would travel, oftentimes on foot, sometimes on the back of an animal, and it would be a long, arduous journey and they would pull into what was often a small town. Usually, the small town didn't have a Motel 6 where somebody left the light on for you, so when you rolled in at night, you needed to find a place to stay. Maybe there would be a small inn, but oftentimes those places were—quite frankly, they were seedy and they were dangerous.

So the best-case scenario was to find a residence of someone you knew, a friend, or a friend of a friend, or a friend of a friend's friend. And you would go up and you would knock on the door, and as it is in many eastern cultures in this day, there was this obligation of cultural hospitality that someone would let you in to stay at their house and to eat their food and to care for you. And, as it is in eastern culture, you wouldn't want to reject them because then you would lose face. You would be ashamed and it's all about keeping up appearances as a good citizen and friend.

And the story here is that someone has been travelling, we can infer, a very long distance and they arrive at what time? Midnight, which for many of us is not late because we have electricity, all right? For the college kids, you're like, "Midnight's awesome. It's the best time for breakfast, because I'm up at the crack of dinner," right? Midnight in that culture, though, was very, very late, because when the sun went down, no electricity, you go home. You have dinner, you go to bed. And when the sun comes up in the morning, you get up and you go to work, because you're usually working in an agrarian society, hunting, fishing, farming, those kinds of things. So midnight is very late.

And someone comes to your home at midnight and they're banging on the door. You open the door, you say, "What can I do for you? Oh, you're a friend or a friend of a friend's friend, and you need a place to stay and you need food to eat." The problem is, in the parable, you don't have any food. You didn't know they were coming. They didn't text message you in advance two thousand years ago on, you know, the iPhone 1.0. It—somehow the message didn't get there in time. So next thing you know, you're in a shameful position. You don't have any food to eat. You think, "Oh, I can't go to 7-Eleven, we haven't invented 7-Eleven yet. I can't go to Jack in the Box and get a taquito, we don't have taquitos, we're Hebrew. How will I feed these people? What shall I do? I cannot call Domino's. A kid in a car cannot drive here. He will come on a camel and he doesn't make pizza and it's gonna take too long. Woe is me. What shall I do? How shall I feed my friend? I know what I'll do! I'll go to my neighbor's house and I'll bang on his door and I'll make my problems his problems."

Do you have a friend like this? You do. You brought them to Mars Hill, trying to fix them. Welcome, friend! Welcome. *[Congregation laughing]* So, your neighbor makes their problem your problem. They come knock on your door. "Hey, somebody just showed up at my house. They need something to eat. I need some bread." Because you don't have much food, you're a poor family, and the guy who is your neighbor says, "Hey, we sleep in a small one-room home. We're flat broke. And we don't even each have our own bedroom. We take a mat and we roll it out on the floor, and me and the kids and the wife, we're all sleeping together, which, quite frankly is miserable."

Can you imagine that? Sleeping with all your kids? I have five kids. Every time one kid gets sick, this is how it always works. They climb into bed, I lie like this, Grace lies like this, and the kids always lie sideways. They don't get it. They don't understand the geometry of sleeping in the bed. And they always wanna sleep in the middle, which separates me from my wife, and she always gets the head and I always get the feet and I hate that. Little toes in my nose. I hate that.

So this guy's sleeping in bed with his wife and his kids, they got the mat rolled out on the floor, you can see that the wife's probably got the head 'cause the kids love to snuggle with their mom, you know? And he's getting Brazilian jiu jitsu ground and pound on the other side of the mat by the kid heeling him in the nose. And the neighbor comes over and bangs on the door, says, "I need a loaf of bread or a couple loaves of bread." And the guy says, "Hey, it's midnight. You're gonna wake up my whole family. We're trying to sleep. Don't you know what time it is?"

And the rude, inconsiderate, shameless neighbor says, "I do know what time it is, but I'm going to stand here and beat on the door until I get myself a few loaves of bread 'cause that's the kind of neighbor I am." What do you do? Eventually, you open the door. Because you can't let—you can't let this guy wake your kids up. Kids have no idea what time it is. It's midnight, but if they wake up, they're like, "Awesome. Night's over. Time for Wiffle Ball," right? That's what's gonna happen. You're going to have a midnight Wiffle Ball game.

And so the guy gets up and he opens the door, "What? What do you want?" Just, "I want bread. Give it to me or I'm gonna keep banging on the door." "Great, have your bread. Leave me alone." And Jesus' point is not, "Hey, when you pray, pray like that. Pray like a rude neighbor." That's not the big idea. But the big idea is, even if someone is being rude and inconsiderate and shameless and really bossy and pushy—and some of us are like that. Some of us are professionally like that, hypothetically. That's what I do for a living.

Even if this person is kind of rude and kind of bossy, kind of pushy, eventually we still meet their request. Why? Because ultimately we do care and even though they're frustrating us we're going to meet their need. And so in comparison to prayer, here's what he's saying. He's saying that even if we're not the greatest children of God, even if we're not having the best intentions or motives, our God is loving, gracious, and kind. And we don't need to make him be good, he just is. And so we should just come to him, day or night, 24/7, because God is a Father who loves us and he's never asleep and he's never tired and he's never weary. He's not unable or incapable or inconvenienced as a neighbor would be. So if we're going to go bug our neighbor for something, we should just go talk to God as well, anytime about anything and God hears and answers all prayer.

## **ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK**

And so then he gives us this parable and then he follows it up with a principle regarding prayer. Luke 11:9–10, "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."

He says that prayer is about three things: asking, seeking, knocking. That's prayer. So we do community groups all over the region. If you're not in one, get in one. And you'll learn how to pray, pray with, and for others. And one thing I want to set the community groups up to do this week is a lot of praying for one another, asking, seeking, knocking.

So asking is going to God, as Father who loves us, and saying, "Dad, here's what I want. Dad, here's what I need. Dad, here's where I'm at. Dad, I really need you to show up." It's asking. And I would ask you, what have you not asked him? What have you not talked to God about? What have you not brought to God? Because some of you are planners. A bad thing happens or a need comes, you're like, "I don't need God. I need a plan." You need to talk to the Father before you make your plan. Some of you just freak out. You don't make a plan or talk to the Father, you just freak out. How's that going? All right? Freaking out never helped anything. Some of you are freaking out that I just told you that freaking out doesn't help. All right? It doesn't help. Don't just make a plan, don't just freak out. First things first, go to talk to the Father and ask. You go ask the Father, "Here's where I'm at, here's what I need."

And then seek. You can't just say, "Well, I prayed about it, and now I'm going to sit here and do nothing." You got to get up and go do something. You got to seek, you got to work, you got to pursue answers to your request. And if that doesn't work and it still hasn't been answered, you just keep banging on the door. You keep knocking.

I'll give you a few examples. You need a job. First thing you do? You go to God the Father. "Dad, I need a job. I need this kind of job, be nice if I had benefits, here's what I'm looking for. Father, I need a job." You can't just say, "Well, I did it. That's it, I'm sitting at home and as soon as someone comes and knocks on the door at my house and says, 'Well, hey, we heard you were looking for a job and we're willing to give you one,' then God will provide." No, what do you do? You get up. You go out. You fill out applications. You go to job interviews. You go out and seek a job. And you literally go out knocking on doors. "Hey, are you hiring? Are you hiring? Are you hiring? I need a job." You pursue it actively, vigorously, passionately. All right?

Same with a wife. Some of you guys here are single. You say—first thing you do, talk to the Father, "Father God, I would like a wife, someone who loves you and finds me interesting. I know it's a miracle, but you walked on water. You can do this." [*Congregation laughing*] "It just takes one girl. That's all I need. So Father, give me a girl." But you can't—you can't just sit at home, you know, playing World of Warcraft, expecting her to come knock on your door. Any girl that does come and knock on your door, that's the wrong girl, right? So you got to go seek, you got to go look for her. You got to go to Mars Hill, where your odds are better. You got to go look for a girl. And then you got to knock, you got to, "Hey, how you doing? My name's so-and-so. Look, my shirt has buttons." Back to my previous point, "I have a job." You got to knock. You got to seek. You got to ask, right? You just do. You just do.

So prayer is about asking, seeking, knocking. And what happens if your prayer isn't answered? Keep praying. Keep seeking. Keep asking. Keep knocking. That's the big idea. And God's a Dad who loves you. So keep bringing your requests to him. And God always answers prayer, sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes later, but like every loving parent, he, in fact, does hear and answer all prayer.

Now let me say this as well. The reason we can ask, seek, and knock God is because through Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, our faith in him, our sins are forgiven, his grace is given, and we are adopted into the family of God and God is our Father, so we can approach him like kids approach a loving dad. So if you want to know prayer, don't look at religious people. Look at children who love and are loved by their father.

I'll give you an example of what this looks like. It happened to me yesterday, all right? I woke up, I'm not feeling very well. I was home and it was my day off. I had to go preach to—it was awesome, like a couple thousand high school kids, and hundreds received Christ, but I was going to have the morning and early afternoon off, at home with my family on college football game day, praise the Lord. And so I was like, "That's it. I am going to sit down and I am going to watch college football. That's what I'm going to do."

So instead, I'm upstairs and I hear my daughter's asking for me. "Hey, Dad? Dad? Dad? Hey, where's dad? Where's dad? What's dad doing?" She's asking for me. She can't find me. So she starts seeking me. And I hear her voice get more distant, she's in the playroom. I hear her voice get louder, louder, she comes upstairs. She's looking in every room. She's very consistent, very committed to finding me. "Hey, dad? Where are you at?" She's seeking me. She comes to the very last room in the house that she has not checked, my bathroom. [*Congregation laughing*]

And she comes, asking, seeking, knocking. "Dad, are you in there? Dad, I know you're in there. Dad, you have to be in there. I've looked in all the other rooms." "Yes, I am in here." "What are you doing?" "I'm doing what you would guess I would be doing. This is not a place to do a lot of other things. This is sort of a one-purpose room that I find myself in. Why are you asking for me, seeking me, and knocking after me?" "Dad, I want to watch Tinkerbell." "Hmm, well then feel free to do that." "No, I want to watch Tinkerbell with you." "Great, someday we will watch Tinkerbell." [*Congregation laughing*] "Hypothetically." "No, dad, I want to watch Tinkerbell right now. Right now. I have to watch Tinkerbell. So let's watch Tinkerbell."

"I don't want to watch Tinkerbell. I don't like Tinkerbell. I like football, college football, to the glory of God and the joy of all people." [*Congregation laughing*] That was the plan. That was the sovereign plan of the God of the universe that I would sit in my pajamas and drink coffee and watch young men hurt each other. That was my plan. So she keeps knocking, "No, dad, let's watch Tinkerbell right now." "Honey, I'll tell you what. I'll think about it." Which is a way of saying no, but I said no and it didn't work. So I said, "Well let me think about it, and I'll talk to you a little later." "Okay, Dad, how long is a little later?" "Well, it'll be a while." "Okay, dad." Literally ten seconds later, "Have you thought about it?" "Thought about what?" "Thought about watching Tinkerbell, Dad?"

"Well, honey, why don't you watch football with me?" "I don't like football." Well, I don't like Tinkerbell. We have a terrible impasse here at the Driscoll home. And my daughter used my theology against me. She said, "Well, you are a loving father and I know that you will watch Tinkerbell because daddies are supposed to love their children." [*Congregation laughing*] Stinky Pete, I just got assassinated with my own theological convictions. "Yes, I will watch Tinkerbell," to the glory of God and the joy of my daughter.

So I come out of the bathroom, she's laughing, smiling, "Hey, Dad, let's go watch Tinkerbell!" So I sat down and watched Tinkerbell. And it wasn't that awesome, just so you know. [*Congregation laughing*] The story line was predictable. But you know what? Here's my daughter, asking for me, seeking me, and you know what? Banging on the door. Knock, knock, knock. Now, let's just put this in a different context. And I was glad to meet her request 'cause I adore her and I don't like Tinkerbell, but I like her, so I'll snuggle with her while she's watching Tinkerbell.

But let's say, for example, I was not at home, but instead I was at the Wing Dome. And I was eating chicken wings because I'm filled with the Holy Spirit and I love chicken wings. See, you can tell you're filled with the Holy Spirit not just because you speak in tongues, but because you love chicken wings. It's another evidence of God's grace in your life. So let me just retell the story.

Hypothetically I'm not at home. I'm at the Wing Dome eating chicken wings to the glory of God, okay? And I decide to go use the restroom and I'm in the restroom and someone is asking for me and seeking me and a grown man, large man, college football fan, because we're all there to eat chicken

wings to the glory of God and to watch college football, comes into the bathroom and is knocking on the door. “Pastor Mark, are you in there? “Pastor Mark, can we watch Tinkerbell? Pastor Mark, can we watch Tinkerbell instead of college football right now?” The answer would have been considerably different than the one that Alexie received. It wouldn’t have been, “Yes, I will snuggle with you and watch Tinkerbell.” [*Congregation laughing*] It would be, “Give me one minute. Almost all the chambers are loaded. I’ll be right out.” Right?

And the difference between that kind of request and the request of Alexie and how it is answered is this, she’s my daughter, I love her. And so I have a relationship with her where she can ask for me and seek me and keep banging on the proverbial door, and because I love her, I’m going to ask for God to give me the grace to meet her needs and to serve her well in a way that I wouldn’t for a total stranger at the Wing Dome.

Now, this is the big idea of what Jesus is saying. God’s your dad! Ask for him. Seek him. Knock on the door. Keep knocking on the door. Tell him what it is that you want or need. We’re talking about here bringing to Dad your needs, not your greeds. God’s a Dad who does love and adore you and he’s not gonna treat you like a stranger. So if you want to understand prayer, look at dads and kids. Don’t look at religious people and their followers.

## A FISH AND AN EGG

He then moves to another interesting parable. Luke 11:11–12, “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” This is a weird Tim Burton parable, right? That guy’s got something wrong with him, man. “I made a kids’ movie where they’ll have a heart attack!” I mean, you just—he scares kids for a living, right? And this is that kind of thing. This is like—this is Jesus asking these rhetorical questions.

A son comes up to his dad, “Hey, Dad, can we have fish for dinner?” “No, but I will put scorpions all over you.” Whoa! Wait a minute! That’s different. “Okay, well how about eggs?” “No, how about this? Serpents.” What? “Dad, no, you’re freaking me out. You off your meds? Dad, we’re not a Tim Burton film, we’re a family.”

And the big idea here is that if you go to your dad, even if he’s not a great dad, and you give a simple request, like, “I want a fish,” he’s not going to give you a serpent. You ask for an egg and he’s not going to give you a scorpion, that a decent dad, even a not-so-great-dad knows if your kid asks for a good thing, you don’t give them a bad thing. But here’s the big idea in prayer. God’s a Father.

Some of you are not 100 percent convinced he’s good, and so you go to ask him for something but you’ll be fearful of what he gives. Some of you will go to God and you’ll say, “God, I want this.” And you’ll be, “What if I want to be with this person, but he says no?” Or, “What if I want this job, but he wants me to have another job?” And your conflict is, “You know, it sounds to me like I’m asking for fish and eggs, good things, but he’s giving me scorpions and serpents, bad things.” And so you don’t bring anything to God.

But trust that God is a good Father and whatever he gives you is a good thing and you’re not going to come to a good Father and ask for a good thing and get a bad thing. And some of you would even be reticent to bring your requests to God because you’re not sure he’s going to give a good thing. Maybe you have sin in your life and you’re ashamed of some of what you’ve said and done or failed to say and do and you’re even afraid to go to God the Father and pray and say, “Help me, forgive me, serve me, bless me, correct me, change me, grow me,” because you’re fearful that though you’re asking for a good thing, he’s just going to punish you and be mad at you and get violent with you and he’s going to do a bad thing even though you’re asking for a good thing. And the truth is, God’s a good Dad. If you ask for a good thing, he’s going to give a good thing. You don’t ask for a good thing from God and get a bad thing. He’s a good God!

## EVEN EVIL FATHERS KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS

And he’s trying to give us very simple principles regarding prayer. And so it all culminates in his final statement, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Chapter 11 verse 1 started with the disciples asking Jesus, “Teach us to pray. Teach us to pray.” And it culminates here in verse 13 that prayer is made possible by the Holy Spirit. So the answer to the request in chapter 11 verse 1 is the giving of the Holy Spirit in chapter 11 verse 13.

So let me unpack this for you. And here he is talking about that a good Father gives good gifts and the greatest gift is the gift of the Holy Spirit. So I’ve got a lot to unpack and to explain here. The first thing he says is that even parents who are evil know how to give good gifts. So let’s unpack this.

I’ll talk about fathers in general. This seems like a big word, does it not? Evil? That’s a big word. But see, fathers, we earthly fathers, unlike the perfect heavenly Father, we are evil, meaning we’re sinful. There are times that we are selfish, that we are angry, that we are impetuous, that we are inconsiderate, that we are lazy toward our children. We are.

Gentlemen, one of the most powerful things you can do is acknowledge your own evil to your wife and children. This is telling your wife and your children when you’ve sinned and it’s owning it and naming it. All right, Jesus says that earthly fathers are evil. So when we do or say or fail to do good and we act in a way that is evil, it is very helpful for our families to see us repent of sin. Some of you have never heard your dad say things like, “It’s my fault. I’m sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me.” You’ve never heard that. Because even when your dad was wrong, he didn’t acknowledge it. He didn’t confess it. He didn’t agree with Jesus, “Yeah, that was evil.”

And so fathers, if you want to create a loving, nurturing, godly home, you model repentance by acknowledging your own evil. If you want to raise really stubborn, obstinate, rebellious, religious kids, tell them to repent of their sin but never repent of your sin. Tell them when they say or do evil, but do not acknowledge your own. You will then create a very religious culture with very discouraged children who will realize that they live under a father

who is aware of their sin but ignorant of his own and that he is a cruel taskmaster and overbearing hypocrite.

So it's important for us fathers to tell our children, "I want to be the best father I can be. God the Father is the perfect Father. You need him. I need him, too, because we're both sinners that he's working on and he's dealing with our evil." But he says even those fathers who are evil can and say, do evil things. They also can and do say some quote unquote good things. So how does this work? You ever met somebody who's perhaps not even a Christian, but they do some quote unquote good things? They're generous, they help the poor, they serve those in need, they're kind, compassionate. If they move next door to you, you'd be glad to have them. You'd say, "They're not a Christian, but they're nicer than some Christians I know." They're "good, decent, moral" people. Well, this doesn't mean that they're going to heaven, it doesn't mean that their sins are forgiven, it doesn't mean that they belong to Jesus, it doesn't mean that they're righteous in the sight of God. What it does mean is because they're made in the image and likeness of God, occasionally they do some good things. They do some good things.

So you can be evil and still do some good things. And he talks about here that even an evil father knows how to give good gifts to his kids, all right? For those of you who are parents, you know. You know that the heart of a parent, even one who is evil, is to save up and be generous and to take care of the children. Or at least that should be the heart of even an evil father. And he's showing here that if an evil father can do good things, imagine what a perfect, heavenly, loving, altogether good Father does for his children, especially those who come to him in prayer, asking, seeking, and knocking for his provision, protection, and presence in their life.

## FATHERS, GIVE GOOD GIFTS

So let me say this as well, dads. Acknowledge your evil and give good gifts. One of the great delights of a father is to give good gifts. And this is true of parents in general, but I want to hone this in, contextually, for fathers in particular. And what sometimes happens is parents will say, "Well, I don't want to spoil the children." Here's my—here's my corrective of that. I tell this to Gracie often. I don't mind spoiling the children, but I don't want them to act spoiled. I don't mind spoiling the children, I just don't want them to act spoiled. You see the difference? See, sometimes people say, "Well, I don't want to give good gifts to the children or to the child because then they'll be spoiled." And my point is Jesus here commends the giving of good gifts from a parent to a child, but we just want to make sure that the children don't act like spoiled, ungrateful, unthankful brats. So I tell the Driscoll kids all the time, "Your daddy's going to spoil you, but if you act spoiled, there's going to be correction, there's going to be consequence." All right?

And I'll give you an example and it filled my heart with joy and it's a simple illustration, but I've got Gideon and Alexie, my youngest two. Because they're the youngest two, they get all the hand-me-down bikes. How many of you were those kids? Like, "Yeah, I always got the hand-me-down bike. Never quite rode straight, the handlebars were crooked, and the pedal always fell off." All right? That's kind of the bike that Alexie and Gideon inherited. They inherited from the older siblings their bikes. And Alexie actually loves to skid. And she eventually just wore down the tire to where it wouldn't even hold air. And Gideon rode his bike so much the pedal kept coming off and we couldn't do anything to keep it on. It had actually stripped out the threads and the bike was falling apart. And similarly, he took all the tread off. And he actually, one day, got out a wrench and was trying to figure out how to get the training wheels off his bike, because quote, "I'm not a baby." So he's trying to get the training wheels off his bike and they're both—the bikes are too small, they're not working. So it's just time. They need bikes, okay?

And Gracie and I are talking, and Gracie's like, "Well, let's go to a second-hand store and let's find them bikes." And I said, "You know, that's not a bad idea." It's not a sin to buy kids a used bike. If you buy your kid a used bike, you know, you're not going to be up for church discipline. That's not the big idea. But I just said, "You know what? All they've ever had is used bikes. I want to go get them a new bike. I want them each to have a shiny, new, awesome-tastic bike. That's what I want for them. So I'm going to go find a bike for each of them."

And so we go looking for bikes and I found one for Alexie. It was pink, which that's all it needed to be. It didn't even need wheels. Just pink. *[Congregation laughing]* And it had purple and it had streamers and it had a basket to put snacks in and flowers in because she's an absolute girl. And then I found one for Gideon that was the right height and had black rims and it was black with red and it had this handle thing on it to where it would make a motorcycle noise. Vroom-vroom-vroom. And I thought, "Oh, he's rocking a big boy bike now." He just got—he's going to be able to ride this with no training wheels and make motorcycle noises to the glory of God and the joy of all people. And I thought, "This is fantastic."

So I bought these two bikes and I put them in the back of my truck and I drove them home and I set them up outside. And I went in the house and I said, "Alexie and Giddie, I need you. I need you guys to come with me. I need to show you something." Well—and they get all excited because they're little. "Okay Dad, what is it? What is it?" "Come on out, let me show you. Look at that. What do you guys see?" "Oh, those are brand-new bikes." "Yes, those are brand-new bikes." Alexie and Giddie, they look at me, and they look at each other, like, "Whose bikes are they?" *[Congregation laughing]* "Whose bikes are they?" I said, "Well, those are your bikes. Alexie, the pink one's yours. And Giddie, the red and black one's yours." "Whoo-hoo!" I mean, they're kicking, screaming, yelling, "Whoo-hoo!" "Okay, get your helmet on, kids, it's time to bike ride!" And they jump on their bikes and my kids are riding down the street, and they're laughing and giggling. "Thank you, Dad! You're awesome! We love you! This is a great bike! I love my bike!"

If you came up and said, "Oh, you spoiled your kids." As long as they don't act spoiled. If they looked at the bike and said, "Well, that's not exactly what I wanted. I was hoping for, you know, spinners on my bike and I didn't get spinners." You know? "Is there an iPod adapter on my bike? I didn't get all the accessories." I would say, "Not only is the father evil, so are the children! The children are evil too!" But if your children are grateful and thankful, yeah, then give them good gifts. And if your children like to give good gifts to others because they have the Father's heart, well, then give them good gifts. And when they see someone else get a good gift and they rejoice and celebrate, "Oh, that's awesome that God provided that for you! Praise God, and I'm so thankful and happy for you!" Then even when they are spoiled, they're not acting spoiled.

So fathers, we want to give good gifts to our kids. And I'm not talking that it's always even massive amounts of money, but if it's from the heart, it's considerate, the gift fits the kid. Same is true for the wife. My son Calvin, he's the letter writer. He's the card writer. He's the pastor in the family with the really affectionate heart. For Calvin, a good gift for him is actually a letter from me. Every time I write a letter for Calvin, he keeps it. He usually posts it right above his bed. Just my love for him and how I'm proud of him and encouraging him. Whatever the good gift looks like for your child, parents in general but daddies in particular, give good gifts. And I don't care if your kids are spoiled as long as they don't act spoiled, as long as they're the thankful, grateful kids who rejoice in the gifts they get and they rejoice in the gifts that others get and they rejoice in giving good gifts to others. Then praise be to God, that's the Father's heart.

And Jesus' parable here, his analogy, his illustration, is one where he's showing and here he is principally teaching that God's like a Father who loves to give good gifts to his kids even more than earthly fathers, who are evil, like to give good gifts to their kids. And he's saying, "Even if sinful dads can give good gifts, imagine your heavenly Father and the kind of gifts that he likes to give."

And I'm not here teaching what is called prosperity theology, where if you love God and you pray, prayer is a stick and God is a piñata and if you pray in faith Bentleys fall out of the sky and you get to drive the one of your favorite color. I don't believe that at all. We're learning this from a homeless guy named Jesus, who is exceedingly poor but also acknowledges that God the Father's heart is to be generous and to give good gifts.

And so we need to come to the Father, knowing that he can give good gifts, knowing that he loves to give good gifts, and just like a dad rejoices when he sees his kids being thankful and grateful, our God likes to hear and answer prayer and give us good gifts so that we can be thankful and joyful and grateful.

## **THE GREATEST GIFT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT**

And he says the greatest gift of all is the Holy Spirit. That's a big statement. "Lord, teach us to pray." "Okay, you'll need the gift of the Holy Spirit." That's the big idea in Luke 11:1-13. That's exactly what he says, right? "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" The Holy Spirit is the great gift. The greatest gift.

See, everything that Jesus has done for us, his sinless life, his righteousness, his substitutionary death as our God and savior, his payment of our penalty for sin, his resurrection to conquer enemies of Satan, sin, and death, all of that is given to us, brought to us, applied to us by whom? The Holy Spirit. So apart from the Holy Spirit, all the gifts that the Father has to give are not received apart from the Holy Spirit.

So I want to unpack for you, in my remaining time, who this Holy Spirit is and what he does. First of all, the Holy Spirit is God. He's God. Acts 5, Peter says to Ananias and Sapphira, who withheld tithes and offerings they'd promised to the church, "You have not just lied to men, you have lied to God the Holy Spirit." Number one, the Holy Spirit's God.

Number two, the Holy Spirit is a person. So the Holy Spirit is he, not it. When you read things like John 14, John 16, Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, it says, "He will lead you and guide you. He will convict you of sin." It's personal. So the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. The Holy Spirit is he, not it.

Number three, the Holy Spirit is present with us. He takes up residence in the child of God, that he indwells every Christian who belongs to Jesus.

And number four, he helps us. One of the titles that Jesus gives to the Holy Spirit is that he is our helper because we need help. And the Holy Spirit is our helper. And some of you have a view of God that he's very far away and he has a long list of demands and expectations and he doesn't ever help us but he judges us. That's not true. The same God who rules and reigns over all creation indwells the child of God to help us, becoming more like Jesus and living a life of obedience by the same power that he did, the power of the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. Let me unpack this for you. In context, who has been teaching us? In Luke 11:1-13, who's teaching? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. The Trinity is that there is one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. All Christians for all of church history have all agreed that there is one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. This distinguishes our understanding of God as taught in the Bible from every other religion in the world. This is one of our distinguishing convictions.

So Jesus here is talking and he's talking about whom? God the Father, the first member of the Trinity. And here he's teaching us as well about the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. So in context, this is all about the Trinity.

And prayer didn't start with us. Prayer started with God. God the Son, God the Spirit, God the Father in eternity past through the present to eternity future, they live in communion, union, communication, affection, adoration. They love, serve, glorify, talk to, which is ultimately prayer, one another. Some religions would say that God made us because he was lonely. God wasn't lonely. God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, they had perfect union and communion. They had no need of us. I've told you before, but I think it's important. God didn't make us because he needed us. God made us because he wanted us, which is better. That's the Father's heart. It's like a father doesn't need a child. A father wants a child. God didn't need us. God wanted us. But God had perfect union and communion within himself.

And prayer is where we enter into conversation with the living, loving, communicating Trinitarian God of the Bible. That's what prayer is. And so the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the Christian and Jesus dies for our sin to reconcile us back to the Father so we can pray by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. What that means is the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches us how to talk to God because he himself is God and he's been in communion and union with the other members of the Trinity forever. This is amazing. What a great gift.

And I'll say this. Mars Hill's journey has, in some ways, reflected my journey. When I first became a Christian at age nineteen, the first person I got to know in the Bible the best was Jesus. He's God, born of a woman, lived without sin, died on a cross in my place for my sins, rose conquering Satan, sin, and death. He's ascended into heaven. He's ruling and reigning from a mighty throne. He's coming again to judge the living and the dead. Jesus.

And then over time, I started to get to know more about God the Father. He predestines, he loves, he adopts us into his family. He hears and answers prayer. He devises the plan of salvation. He comes for us with great affection.

And the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, he was the one that I was a little slower to come to understand. Now, I always believed he was God and I believed he wrote the Bible and I believed that he was true, but I didn't know how to have a relationship with him. So I would have been more inclined to say I love Jesus, but I would have had a harder time saying I loved the Holy Spirit. I would have had an easier time saying I have a relationship with Jesus. It would have been harder for me to articulate a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Make sense?

Because when I became a Christian, most of the people who talked about the Holy Spirit, the Christians, they were just, quite frankly, pretty weird. They just were. They said and did some really weird things and they called it the Holy Spirit, and I thought, "Well, is he the drunk third member of the Trinity? Because every time they talk about him, it just sort of busts loose into like happy hour. It's crazy."

And I was given a book that I will not say the name of, but it actually made me more fearful and it was a bad book. It was supposed to be a Bible teacher, but it was a Bible teacher who is something called a cessationist, which is the Holy Spirit doesn't give certain gifts today. The Holy Spirit doesn't do certain things today. Even the Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but this says, "Oh, no he's not! He's essentially changed and he doesn't say and do what he used to." And it made me more fearful. "Okay, what's true?"

And in more recent years, God's been very gracious to me. He's introduced me to friends from around the world who love the Holy Spirit, who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who rejoice in the Holy Spirit, who have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. And it's really helped me to mature and grow and that's where good Christian friends can be a tremendous gift.

So Mars Hill, let me say this publicly. I want to publicly acknowledge that I have not led you as well as I could have and should have in an understanding of what it means to be Spirit filled and Spirit led and have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. This is something I'm maturing and growing in, but I want that for you and I want that for us. And so, in more recent years, this has been an area I've been growing and maturing, in part through my study of the Bible and in part in relationship with people who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

## FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

And it comes down, for me, I think Luke is so incredibly helpful because thus far we've seen that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism. It says that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. Here we see that Jesus prays through the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus' life, God becoming a man, was empowered, enabled by the presence of the Holy Spirit. So what it means to be Spirit filled, friends, is to be like Jesus by the same powerful Holy Spirit. That's what it means to be Spirit filled. To live a life that is yielded to, is led by, is guided by God the Holy Spirit. And when—even Ephesians uses that language of, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."

The word picture is that the Holy Spirit is—he's always at work, but sometimes our sail is not set. In John, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is like the wind. He's strong and powerful and he transitions our lives from one direction to another and he guides us and empowers us and leads us and sustains us. But we don't enjoy that unless our sail is set. So he says, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." And the language there is language of setting your sail, repenting of sin, trusting in God, saying, "Holy Spirit, I'll be who you want me to be. I'll go where you want me to go. I'll do what you want me to do. I yield to you. I submit to you. I trust you. I invite you. I welcome you."

And that's exactly what Jesus here is teaching. "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Some people think there is voodoo in getting the Holy Spirit. You need the holy anointed man of God to whack you on the head while wearing a white suit so you can fall down and flop around like a perch on a dock. That's not it. That's not it. It's just going to the Father and the Son and asking, "Could you please give me the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Can you please allow me to enjoy the presence and power of the Holy Spirit?"

## ASKING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

So, in closing, let me go to the Scriptures. Let me take this all to the Bible. Let me tell you what the Holy Spirit does. And I can't tell you everything the Holy Spirit does. That would be a forty-two-hour sermon, which would be awesome. But you probably didn't prepare for that. So I'll give you a short summary of some of the things the Holy Spirit does and how then we can pray to him, asking him to help us because, quite frankly, we need his help. Here's asking for the Holy Spirit. I'll give you a few examples.

John 16:13, Jesus says, "The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into the truth." How many of you want to know the truth? The Holy Spirit's the one that will lead and guide you in the truth. That's what Jesus says. So the first thing you learn is—well, actually, in the next chapter, John 17, Jesus says, "Father, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is the truth." So the Bible is the truth. Who wrote the Bible? God the Holy Spirit. "All scripture is God-breathed." That's the Holy Spirit. It's what it says in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed." Peter says people didn't just make up the Bible. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They were Spirit filled, Spirit led, those who authored the pages of Scripture.

So if you want to know the truth, it starts in prayer. "Holy Spirit, thank you for being the Spirit of truth. Holy Spirit, thank you for writing the Scriptures through human authors. Thank you that they're true. Holy Spirit, I want to know the truth, so please come and teach me the truth through the Scriptures, which are true." You think the Holy Spirit's going to answer that prayer, yes or no? Every time. Jesus says, "All you got to do is ask. Just

ask.” But see, asking is an act of faith. Asking is an act of faith and it shows that your heart and mind are open.

How many of you are in various situations where maybe you’re mediating a conflict or you’re in the middle of a conflicted situation and there’s different opinions and perspectives and you go, “I don’t know what the truth is here.” You know what you do? Pray. “Holy Spirit, Jesus said to ask for you. I’m asking for you. Tell me what the truth is. I hear one side, I hear the other, I get totally conflicted, confused. I don’t know what the truth is. I just want to know the truth. Holy Spirit, you know the truth. Please reveal to me the truth.” Do you think he’ll answer that prayer? Of course he will. Again, you don’t ask for a good thing and get a bad thing from a good God.

How about this one? John 16:8, “He will convict the world concerning sin.” You ever have those days? You’re just not feeling it. You say, “I know the Bible says not to do this, but that’s what I’m going to do, twice.” Right? “Because I’m just feeling rebellious and stubborn and foolish and hardhearted and stiff-necked and indifferent. “I should care, but I don’t. And it’s not that I don’t know the truth, it’s that I don’t like it.” You say, “What do you do?” Go to the Holy Spirit. Say, “Holy Spirit, Jesus said you’d convict me. I’m not feeling it, but I’m inviting you to convict me. Let me feel what you feel, see what you see, think what you think about my sin.” Do you think he’ll answer that prayer? He will.

You can even do this with your children. I’ll give you one—this happened many times with my kids over the years, where—I’ll give you one example with one of my sons that comes to mind. When he was little, my wife was correcting him and the more she corrected him, the worse it got. You got a kid like that? Were you a kid like that? Right? And she finally came to me, she’s like, “I don’t know what to do with him. I tell him, ‘No,’ and he does it twice. And I come to him and ask him if it bothers him, he says, ‘No.’ He gets a really scary-looking face and he just keeps escalating. It gets worse. He’s stubborn. He is really stubborn.” That’s my boy. Yep. That’s how we roll. So, okay, well, she’s, “Well, what do we do with him?” I’m, “Well, here’s what we can do. We need to pray for him. Because we can’t guilt religion him, we can’t threaten him, we can’t negotiate with him. ‘Hey, if you obey you get a sucker.’” Because all that is is a hostage negotiation. All we’re raising there is an eventual bank robber, right?

So I held him, kiss him on the head, “I’m your daddy, I love you, I care about you.” Draw him near, let him know there’s lots of affection, put my hand on his head, “Holy Spirit, Jesus says that you can convict of sin. Mama and I, we’re not making any progress here. His heart’s getting hard, his neck’s getting stiff. Holy Spirit, we invite you to reveal to our little boy his sin, convict him of it, break his heart over it, bring him to repentance. Help him to learn to be an obedient boy, not just to be a good boy, but to be a holy boy. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” Kiss him, hug him, love him.

I can still remember, he gave me the look, I thought, “Yeah, that didn’t work at all.” He gave me the look like—he gave me the stink eye. *[Congregation laughing]* I’m like, “Oh, boy.” And he goes away and he comes back a little later. Transformed child. Just looks in the eye, says, “Mom, Dad, I’m sorry. I was thinking about it, and you know, I’ve just been a real brat today. I’ve been very selfish. I’ve not thought of the other kids and I made Mom cry and I made the day hard.” And he’s crying and he’s weeping and broken. You know what? The Holy Spirit answered that prayer.

So sometimes in our own life, we can pray for conviction. In the lives of others, we can pray for conviction. This can even be part of our parenting with our children. We pray for the Holy Spirit to work on their heart. And ladies, let me tell you this, this is better than nagging, okay? Some of you ladies like—you say, “I don’t need the Holy Spirit. I got this covered. I will nag him until he changes.” Just so you know, nagging never works. Men don’t like nagging. Men don’t respond well to nagging. It has never worked and it will never work. And men never get together and are like, “How does your wife nag?” “Oh, she’s such a good nagger. I’m so proud to be with her. Every time she nags, just something flutters in my heart, like, ‘Thank you, Lord, for this woman you gave with her spiritual gift of nagging.’” *[Congregation laughing]* Nagging never works.

But you know what does work? Siccing the Holy Spirit on him. That works every time. Right? Like a pit bull after a mailman. You just say, “Holy Spirit, I talked to my husband, and he’s not listening. Get him.” Just pray like that. Grace prays these sic-the-Holy-Spirit-on-me prayers. Every once in a while, she’ll talk to me about something and I love her and I tend to listen to her, but sometimes I don’t because I’m a man. And so she’ll talk to God. She’ll be like, “Holy Spirit, please convict my husband.” And then I feel it. Like, “Aw, she did it again.” *[Congregation laughing]* “She did it again.” And I’ll walk up to her. “Honey, I’m sorry. You were right. I was wrong. Did you pray?” *[Congregation laughing]* “You did. You need to tell me when you do that so I can get my cup on.” *[Congregation laughing]*

Galatians 5:22–23, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Do you ever wake up and say, “That’s not happening today. Love? Nope. Joy? Mm-mmm. Peace? Nah, somebody’s going to get hurt. That’s the way it’s going to go. Patience? Nah, they’re dumb. I’m going to shove them. Kindness? Nah. Goodness? Later. Faithfulness? Perhaps. Gentleness? Nope. Self-control? Nah. The wick is short. It’s going to be bad for everybody.” You ever have that day? You just wake up, you’re like, “Yep, it’s going to be a good day for me and a bad day for everyone else on the earth.”

Okay, what you don’t need to do in those moments is get all legalistic and religious, say, “Okay, I need to work on love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and self-control.” You need to go to the Holy Spirit and say, “Holy Spirit, save me from myself. I need you to give me the character of Jesus. I don’t have it, especially today. I’m not starting with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control. Even in hearing the list, I kind of am frustrated and annoyed by it because it sounds like a greeting card and I’m not in the mood.” All right? Some of you have had that day? I call it Monday. *[Congregation laughing]*

You got to go to the Holy Spirit, say, “Holy Spirit, I don’t have it. Holy Spirit, that’s you. You’re love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. I need you to show up in me, through me, in spite of me. Holy Spirit, please, please make me into someone that, apart from you, I’m just not.” You think he’ll answer that prayer? Yeah. Jesus says to just ask. Just ask.

Here’s the big idea I’m trying to communicate. You don’t just ask for the Holy Spirit once. There’s this ongoing relationship as you understand who the

Holy Spirit is and what he does. You just keep making requests of him to help you because you need his help.

I'll give you a few more. Luke 12:12, "The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you are to say." You ever not know what to say? You're in a meeting, you're counseling, you're working, "I don't know what to say." You know what you do? Pray. You can pray silently. Unlike Satan, God knows your thoughts. You could verbally, vocally. God hears your prayers. "God, tell me what to say. I don't know what to say. I don't want to say the wrong thing." And then you open your mouth and you say whatever the Holy Spirit has given you.

And for me, quite frankly, I know not everything I say is from the Holy Spirit. But for me, when I preach I'm more concerned that I've repented of sin, I've spent time with the Lord, and I've listened to the Holy Spirit and I get up not with everything memorized and rote, but just wanting to be led by the Spirit and to do my best to serve you. I apologize for the times that I haven't, but I want to speak by the power of the Holy Spirit and I want him to tell me what it is that you need to hear. And so, sometimes some of you are really stressed over what you're going to say. Be more concerned about your connection to the Holy Spirit. He'll tell you exactly what to say. Now, if you come to the Holy Spirit, say, "Holy Spirit, please tell me what to say," do you think he'll answer that prayer? Yeah, he will. Jesus says just ask.

Romans 8:26, "We do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us." Do you ever not even know what to pray for? You ever had this prayer, you're just standing there, you're like, "Okay, heavenly Father. Argh! [*raspberry*] Amen." [*Congregation laughing*] You ever had that prayer? And the Holy Spirit's like, "I know what that means. I'll interpret that. I'll take that to the Father." "Thank you. Thank you for delivering that mail." See, you don't even need to pray this rock star, world-class prayer. You need the Holy Spirit to interpret the prayer and to take your frustration and your groanings and your confusion to the Father through the Son on your behalf. Isn't that great?

And lastly, I'll give you one more. He says in Philippians 3:3 that we, "Worship by the Spirit of God." You ever show up to—well, worship is a lifestyle, but when we get together corporately, do you ever say, "You know, I don't feel like going to church. I don't feel like listening to Mark for an hour. I don't feel like singing the songs. I don't feel like raising my hands. I don't feel like praying the prayers. I'm not feeling it"? What you don't do then is try and religiously guilt yourself into it. You ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, you never get tired of adoring Jesus. You never get tired of glorifying the Father. You never get tired of being a worshiper. Please indwell me. Please fill me. Please empower me. Please enable me to worship. To worship. Because I don't have it. But you, Holy Spirit, are the perfect, unceasing worshiper." Do you think the Holy Spirit will answer that prayer? Do you think the Holy Spirit will answer that prayer? Well, let's see. All right, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. Raise your hands. Repeat after me.

Father God, you are a good Father. Lord Jesus, you're a good savior. Holy Spirit, you're the greatest gift. Please come to me. Please fill me. Please teach me to worship forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*[End of Audio]*

*Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.*