

READING

Luke 11: 1- 13

SERMON:

Going Right To The Top! (Luke 11:1-13)

In what do you trust? When things go wrong, what is the first thing you do? Be honest here with yourself. For some it is to contact another person, for some it is to rant and rave, for another it may be to go inside of oneself. For some it is to take control – they must be in control. For another it is to give over control to another, to become more and more laid back. For another it may be the rabbit in the headlights – just to sit or stand there looking lost, waiting to be hit by the ‘car’.

However there is another way, which we should use, but maybe it is something that we have to build up over time, so it becomes an instinctive response. It can be hard to do this – it can be a difficult thing to do. However it may not be as hard as we think, but to quote A W Tozer

**Real Christians are an odd number, anyway.
 Christians feels supreme love for One whom they have never seen;
 talk familiarly every day to Someone they cannot see;
 expect to go to heaven on the virtue of Another;
 empty themselves in order to be full;
 admit they are wrong so they can be declared right;
 go down in order to get up;
 are strongest when they are weakest. . . .
 They die so they can live;
 forsake in order to have;
 give away so they can keep;
 sees the invisible;
 hears the inaudible;
 and know that which passes knowledge.
 Sometimes it seems that God enjoys turning things upside down. But one direction
 is very clear: he invites us to talk to him directly. Through prayer, we can go right
 to the top.**

That is us and through prayer we can go right to the top. But that also means certain things we can do and certain things we cannot do, or at least should do and should not do.

To fill in the background here in Luke 11. Jesus has been with people and so he withdraws as was his common practice to talk to his father. To reunite the Trinity in prayer. Then, at the end of his prayer time the disciples ask to be taught how to pray. Seems a little strange, the request, as Jews were into prayer and they would see their pious people praying on the street corners. But maybe they recognised that Jesus had something special.

So Jesus begins, verse 2

“...”“Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.” (Luke 11:2 NIV)

When we pray, we do not go through any intermediaries, but we go straight to the top – to God himself. But it implies more than that. We are saying that God is sovereign, that he is in control. But this can be hard for some folks to let God be in control, to let go and let God.

When someone is sovereign it means that they have complete control, or at least it did. When Jesus was alive they had a king, King Herod. And you were under the whim of the king, even if he was under the Roman Emperor because Israel had been overrun by the Romans. Remember that John the Baptist lost his head because of the whim of the king when he had promised to his step-daughter who had danced for him so well and he said

"Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."
(Mark 6:22-23 NIV)

And after consulting her mother she relied

"The head of John the Baptist," (Mark 6:22-24 NIV)

Sovereigns had that absolute power. Can we hand over that amount of sovereignty to God? For some it is easy, for others it is hard. For some the words, "God has it all in hand" come so easily, for others it is not so easy. But what does it really mean?

Let us move on through the prayer, verse 3

"Give us each day our daily bread." (Luke 11:3 NIV)

What does this mean? Of course it is larger than just daily bread – it is all of our needs that are to be catered for. God is great at that. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV)

How many times have you sung?

**SEEK YE FIRST the kingdom of God
And His righteousness,
And all these things shall be added unto you,
Hallelu, hallelujah!**

*Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelu, hallelujah!*

What does this mean? That we sit back and do nothing except pray.

George Muller of Bristol who was the Bristolian counterpart of Barnado in London? George began an orphanage and the orphanage was always poverty stricken and had no money, but George had great faith that God would always provide. One day when the coffers *were* empty, they were showing round some local dignitaries and one of them on the way out gave George a five pound note – a large sum of money at the beginning of the 20th Century. Another time when they had no food on the table, George gathered the children as normal around the table at meal time, said grace and a knock came at the door – a pastry van had broken down outside the orphanage and rather than let the food go off, the driver, who was the owner of the business, gave it to the orphanage.

However, Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 NIV)

Or as one translation says

Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? "If you don't work, you don't eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10 MSG)

If you don't work, you don't eat. Does this mean we do away with Jobseekers' Allowance? Let me tell you about Philip. Philip was well into his fifties. He was very overweight, but could still was quite mobile. He was a diabetic and had virtually lost most of his sight. He also had some learning difficulties and so had ended up in his late fifties not very literate, not enough to work in an office, but not able to work in manual labour – he had been classed as unemployable.

So what did Philip do all day? He lived in a 15 storey block of flats, one of five blocks that were close together. One was turned into a Residential Home of the elderly and they added on a dayroom and had a person on the door. But back to Philip. Philip use to be out most of the day doing shopping for those who were shut in and couldn't get out to the shops. They would give him a list and go through it with him – he had enough literacy skills for that, and then in his time, because he did have some breathing difficulties as well, he would do the shopping.

Philip was unemployed, but he was far from being idle. There are those who are unemployed and idle, who volunteer for nothing and who spend all day doing nothing. They do no work, so should they eat? Should it be, “God will provide”, but this usually means through other people who may feel guilty because they appear to have so much more than the one who is relying on the Lord for help.

There are those who say that ‘God helps those who help themselves’ but this does not appear in the Bible. However we are to let God be sovereign, to be available to not be idle.

If Jesus had said in the Garden of Gethsemane, “My Father will work it all out,” and walked away, then salvation would not have happened. God uses you and me, God gives us a brain and a mind to be able to work things out. God gives us a voice to ask questions and then two ears to listen to the answers.

Going to the top is to be ready to take the answer God gives. Of being willing to hand over control to him, but that may also mean that God directs you to work – even for the daily essentials.

But remember where we began

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PRAYER