

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Luke 11

The Lord's Prayer

Of Prayers, Signs and Spiritual Integrity:

Luke 11 illuminates the essence of spiritual life - from the intimate act of prayer to the audacious conflict with spiritual forces. It cautions against hypocrisy and champions spiritual integrity and discernment. Ultimately, it calls us to a life marked by authentic faith, relentless prayer, spiritual discernment, and genuine devotion to God's Word.

Verses 1-4: Jesus Teaches about Prayer

Responding to His disciples' request, Jesus teaches them how to pray, offering what is now known as the Lord's Prayer, a template for approaching God in worship, supplication, and repentance.



Verses 5-13: Persistence in Prayer

Jesus illustrates the importance of persistent prayer through a parable and assures His disciples of the Father's willingness to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Verses 14-23: Jesus and Beelzebul

Accused of driving out demons by Beelzebul's power, Jesus refutes the claim, explaining that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand, and emphasizing His authority over demonic powers.

Verses 24-26: The Return of the Unclean Spirit

Jesus warns about the dangers of spiritual vacancy, illustrating the state of a person who, after being delivered from an evil spirit, does not fill the void with good.

Verses 27-28: True Blessedness

In response to a woman's blessing on His mother, Jesus redefines blessedness as hearing the Word of God and obeying it.

Verses 29-32: The Sign of Jonah

With the crowds seeking a sign, Jesus points to the sign of Jonah, alluding to His impending death and resurrection as the ultimate sign for His generation.

Verses 33-36: The Lamp of the Body

Jesus teaches about spiritual perception, comparing the eye to a lamp that lights up the body, highlighting the importance of clear spiritual vision.

Verses 37-54: Woes on the Pharisees and Experts in the Law

Jesus pronounces woes on the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy and legalistic tendencies, exposing their neglect of justice and love of God.

Luke 11 provides a profound exploration of spiritual life and practices, offering insights on prayer, conflict with spiritual forces, signs of the times, and the perils of religious hypocrisy. Throughout this chapter, Jesus teaches His followers about authentic spiritual devotion and the need for discernment and integrity.

Themes

Prayer and Faith

Spiritual Conflict and Authority

Hypocrisy and True Righteousness

Light and Spiritual Perception

Topics

Jesus Teaches about Prayer

Jesus and Beelzebul

The Sign of Jonah

The Lamp of the Body

Woes on the Pharisees and Experts in the Law

People

Jesus

The Disciples

The Crowd

Beelzebul

Pharisees

Lawyers (Experts in the Law)

Locations

The place where Jesus was praying

The location where Jesus was speaking to the crowds

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1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”

2 He said to them,

“When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

3 Give us each day our daily bread

4 and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test.”

Further Teachings on Prayer.

5 And he said to them,

“Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,

6 for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,’

7 and he says in reply from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed.

I cannot get up to give you anything.’

8 I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

The Answer to Prayer.

[11:1–13] Luke presents three episodes concerned with prayer. The first (Lk 11:1–4) recounts Jesus teaching his disciples the Christian communal prayer, the “Our Father”; the second (Lk 11:5–8), the importance of persistence in prayer; the third (Lk 11:9–13), the effectiveness of prayer.

[11:2] **Your kingdom come:** in place of this petition, some early church Fathers record: “May your holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us,” a petition that may reflect the use of the “Our Father” in a baptismal liturgy

[11:1–4] The Matthean form of the “Our Father” occurs in the “Sermon on the Mount” (Mt 6:9–15); the shorter Lucan version is presented while Jesus is at prayer, and his disciples ask him to teach them to pray just as John taught his disciples to pray. In answer to their question, **Jesus presents them with an example of a Christian communal prayer that stresses the fatherhood of God and acknowledges him as the one to whom the Christian disciple owes daily sustenance (Lk 11:3), forgiveness (Lk 11:4), and deliverance from the final trial (Lk 11:4).**

9 **“And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.**

10 **For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.**

11 **What fathers among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish?**

12 **Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?**

13 **If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the **holy Spirit** to those who ask him?”**

Jesus and Beelzebul.

14 He was driving out a demon [that was] mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute person spoke and the crowds were amazed.

15 Some of them said, **“By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons.”**

16 Others, to test him, asked him **for a sign from heaven.**

17 But he knew their thoughts and said to them,

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house.

18 **And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons.**

19 **If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out?**

Therefore, they will be your judges.

20 **But if it is by the **finger of God** that drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

21 **When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe.**

22 **But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils.**

23 **Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**

The Return of the Unclean Spirit.

24 **“When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says,**

‘I shall return to my home from which I came.’

25 **But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order.**

[11:13] **The holy Spirit:** this is a Lucan editorial alteration of a traditional saying of Jesus (see Mt 7:11). **Luke presents the gift of the holy Spirit as the response of the Father to the prayer of the Christian disciple.**

[11:19] Your own people: the Greek reads “your sons.” Other Jewish exorcists (see Acts 19:13–20), who recognize that the power of God is active in the exorcism, would themselves convict the accusers of Jesus. See Mt 12:27.

[11:22] One stronger: i.e., Jesus. Cf. Lk 3:16 where **John the Baptist identifies Jesus as “mightier than I.”**

26 **Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that person is worse than the first.”**

True Blessedness

27 While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed.”

28 He replied,

“Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

The Demand for a Sign.

29 While still more people gathered in the crowd, he said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah.

30 Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

31 At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here.

32 At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.

The Simile of Light.

33 “No one who lights a lamp hides it away or places it [under a bushel basket], but on a lampstand so that those who enter might see the light.

34 The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is sound, then your whole body is filled with light, but when it is bad, then your body is in darkness.

35 Take care, then, that the light in you not become darkness.

36 If your whole body is full of light, and no part of it is in darkness, then it will be as full of light as a lamp illuminating you with its brightness.”

Denunciation of the Pharisees and Scholars of the Law.

37 After he had spoken, a Pharisee invited him to dine at his home. He entered and reclined at table to eat.

38 The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not observe the prescribed washing before the meal.

[11:27–28] The beatitude in Lk 11:28 should not be interpreted as a rebuke of the mother of Jesus; see note on Lk 8:21. **Rather, it emphasizes (like Lk 2:35) that attentiveness to God’s word is more important than biological relationship to Jesus.**

[11:29–32] The “sign of Jonah” in Luke is the preaching of the need for repentance by a prophet who comes from afar. Cf. Mt 12:38–42 (and see notes there) where the “sign of Jonah” is interpreted by Jesus as his death and resurrection.

[11:37–54] This denunciation of the Pharisees (Lk 11:39–44) and the scholars of the law (Lk 11:45–52) is set by Luke in the context of Jesus’ dining at the home of a Pharisee. Controversies with or reprimands of Pharisees are regularly set by Luke within

39 The Lord said to him, “Oh you Pharisees! Although you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, inside you are filled with plunder and evil.
 40 You fools! Did not the maker of the outside also make the inside?
 41 But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you.
 42 Woe to you Pharisees! You pay tithes of mint and of rue and of every garden herb, but you pay no attention to judgment and to love for God. These you should have done, without overlooking the others.
 43 Woe to you Pharisees! You love the seat of honor in synagogues and greetings in marketplaces.
 44 Woe to you! You are like unseen graves over which people unknowingly walk.”
 45 Then one of the scholars of the law said to him in reply, “Teacher, by saying this you are insulting us too.”
 46 And he said, “Woe also to you scholars of the law! You impose on people burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not lift one finger to touch them.
 47 a Woe to you! You build the memorials of the prophets whom your ancestors killed.
 48 Consequently, you bear witness and give consent to the deeds of your ancestors, for they killed them and you do the building.
 49 Therefore, the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute’
 50 in order that this generation might be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world,
 51 from the blood of **Abel** to the blood of **Zechariah** who died between the altar and the temple building. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be charged with their blood!
 52 Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter.”
 53 When he left, the scribes and Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him and to interrogate him about many things, 54 for they were plotting to catch him at something he might say.

the context of Jesus’ eating with Pharisees (see Lk 5:29–39; 7:36–50; 14:1–24). A different compilation of similar sayings is found in Mt 23 (see also notes there).

[11:44] Unseen graves: contact with the dead or with human bones or graves (see Nm 19:16) brought ritual impurity. Jesus presents the Pharisees as those who insidiously lead others astray through their seeming attention to the law.

[11:45] Scholars of the law: see Lk 10:25.

[11:49] I will send to them prophets and apostles: Jesus connects the mission of the church (apostles) with the mission of the Old Testament prophets who often suffered the rebuke of their contemporaries.

[11:51] From the **blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah**: the murder of Abel is the first murder recounted in the Old Testament (Gn 4:8). **The Zechariah mentioned here may be the Zechariah whose murder is recounted in 2 Chr 24:20–22, the last murder presented in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament.**

Bible Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' instruction on prayer teach us about our relationship with God?
2. How can the parable about persistent prayer encourage us in times when answers seem delayed?
3. How does Jesus' response to the accusation of collusion with Beelzebul strengthen our understanding of His divine authority?
4. What does the parable of the return of the unclean spirit teach about the importance of spiritual growth and renewal?
5. How does Jesus' response about true blessedness challenge common perceptions of happiness and success?
6. How does the sign of Jonah provide a prefiguration of Jesus' death and resurrection?
7. How can the metaphor of the eye as the lamp of the body shape our understanding of spiritual perception?
8. How do Jesus' woes against the Pharisees and experts in the law prompt self-examination of our own religious practices?
9. How can we apply Jesus' teaching on prayer to our personal prayer lives?
10. What steps can we take to avoid spiritual vacancy as described in verses 24-26?
11. How does the concept of "true blessedness" challenge societal values and priorities?
12. How can the sign of Jonah serve as a reminder of God's salvation plan for humanity?
13. What does the "lamp of the body" metaphor teach us about maintaining spiritual clarity in a confusing world?
14. How do Jesus' warnings to the Pharisees and lawyers resonate with contemporary religious institutions and practices?
15. How does the Lord's Prayer guide us in balancing adoration, petition, and confession in our prayers?
16. How can Jesus' teachings about Beelzebul equip us for spiritual warfare in our lives?
17. How can the teachings on true blessedness inspire us to seek fulfillment in God's word and obedience?
18. In what ways can the woes against the Pharisees and experts in the law help us discern religious hypocrisy?
19. How does the sign of Jonah provide a model for understanding divine signs in our lives?
20. How can the teachings on the lamp of the body guide us in nurturing our spiritual vision?