

## *Luke's Gospel: Chapter 11*

# *Jesus' Teachings and Warnings...*

### *The Lord's prayer (Luke 11 v 1 to 13)*

"Lord, teach us to pray" (v 1) – like the disciples, we need Jesus to teach us to pray. Prayer is so simple that the smallest child can pray, but it is so great that the mightiest man or woman of God cannot be said to have truly mastered prayer...

- This abbreviated version of 'the Lord's prayer' sets out the 'essentials' of prayer. What aspects and themes of prayer does Jesus select? How do our prayers measure up to this pattern?
- What attitude in prayer is commended in these verses? What results can we expect from this kind of prayer? What reasons does Jesus give us for confidence in prayer?

"Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight" (v 5) – in those days a family lived together in a one-room house. On one side was a raised platform where they all slept; on the ground were the cows, sheep and goats. There was no way a man could come to the door without disturbing the whole household!

"Impudence" (v 8) – this describes a persistence in prayer that is literally 'shameless' (see Hebrews 4 v 16).

- Why does Jesus urge us to "ask... seek... knock..." (v 9, 10)? Why do you think God values persistence, passion, boldness and 'shamelessness' in our praying?

### *Jesus and Beelzebul (Luke 11 v 14 to 26)*

Jesus displays his authority over the 'mute' demon (v 14). The crowds react to this miracle with Messianic expectation, but the religious leaders respond by attributing Jesus' power to the prince of demons. The word 'Beelzebul' may come from a similar sounding word meaning 'Lord of the flies'.

- How does Jesus answer the accusation that he is operating by Satan's power (v 14 to 23)? Who is the "strong man" (v 21) and what is the "palace"? Hint: who is the 'ruler of this world' in John 14 v 30? Who is the "stronger" man (v 22)? What are the dire consequences of rejecting Jesus (v 24 to 26)?

"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste" (v 17) – Jesus shows that if he is an agent of Satan, and is working against Satan, then surely civil war has come Satan's kingdom, and it will not stand. The point is that Satan will never work *against* himself. "Your sons" (v 19) – Jewish exorcists: verses 20 to 22 show Jesus' complete mastery over Satan, in comparison with the imperfect cures of the Jewish exorcists.

"He takes away his armour in which he trusted" (v 22) – Jesus not only defeats Satan on our behalf, he also disarms him (Colossians 2 v 15). "And divides his spoil" – Satan will never get to keep or enjoy the 'fruit' of his temporary victory. Jesus' victory over the strong man is complete. If Jesus is stronger than Satan, then we are faced with a decision: whose side will we be on? Will we be for Jesus or against him? Will we work for Jesus, or will we work against him?

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person" (v 24) – the picture of a person delivered from a demon, but not yet filled with Jesus, is a picture of someone who tries to be neutral: Jesus shows us that this is impossible. "The last state of that person is worse than the first" (v 26) – Jesus points out the danger of delivering a person from demonic possession without filling their life with Jesus: they end up worse than before. The heart of person has a vacuum-like nature: it needs to be filled. If you 'empty' your heart of evil, without filling it with Jesus and his goodness, evil will rush in again to fill it. Therefore, in answering those who accused him of working by the power of Satan, Jesus tells them that he hasn't merely come to fight against evil: he has come to bring God's goodness into their hearts...

**[MORE OVER...]**

### ***The sign of Jonah (Luke 11 v 27 to 32)***

“Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (v 28) – hearts set on signs need to know the greatness of God’s word. But what makes a person blessed is hearing the word of the God and keeping it.

- Jesus condemned the Pharisees’ seeking after a sign, especially when so many signs had already been given. What is the “sign of Jonah” (see Matthew 12 v 40)? What is the significance of the behaviour of the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba? Why should the generation to whom Jesus preached stand condemned at the ‘judgment’? What was their sin?

How did Jesus become a sign like Jonah was a sign? Jonah gave his life to appease the wrath of God coming upon others. But death did not hold him; after three days and nights of imprisonment, he was alive and free (see Jonah 1 v 2). And Jesus is that sign, both to his present generation and to ours. Jesus *himself* is the sign; we are to believe in *him*, not in a sign.

The “queen of the South” (the Queen of Sheba) came to Solomon (1 Kings 10 v 1 to 13). When she saw the great works that God did for and through Solomon, she praised the God of Israel. She did not say, ‘show me more and maybe I’ll believe.’ The queen of the South “came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (v 31). She sought after God’s word with a tenacity that should shame us. The people who asked Jesus for a sign saw his work right in front of their eyes, yet they did not believe. The point is clear: the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh were Gentiles, yet they had a more open heart to the things of God than the religious people of Jesus’ day...

### ***The light in you (Luke 11 v 33 to 36)***

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand” (v 33) – just as a lamp should be displayed out in the open, so that all can benefit from its light, so the word and work of God should be displayed. But when Jesus displayed his word and works, the religious people of his day would not accept them! “Your eye is the lamp of your body” (v 34) – the eye, as the organ of the body which processes the light that shines on it, is a picture of spiritual perception – which must be in good order to receive the light of revelation. The allusion is to the spiritual blindness of “this generation” (v 29).

When you are in darkness, there are two possible reasons why: there may be no light source, or the darkness may be within yourself (v 34). But when we have the light of God’s word shining in us, when we see and understand the work of Jesus around us, we will not walk in the darkness of spiritual blindness – “your whole body... will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light” (v 36).

### ***Woes to the Pharisees and lawyers (Luke 11 v 37 to 54)***

“Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness” (v 39) – these Pharisees were careful to maintain the *appearance* of righteousness, but not the *inner reality* of it. They are “fools” (v 40) because they could be outwardly clean, but inwardly dirty.

- Jesus accuses the Pharisees of a lack of proportion in their religious practices (v 42 to 44), and of hatred and persecution (v 45 to 52). What are some modern examples of these dangerous tendencies?

“For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it” (v 44) – these religious leaders loved giving the impression that they were so spiritual, but they actually were defiling everyone they came in contact with. According to Numbers 19 v 16, everyone who touched a grave was ceremonially unclean for seven days. For this reason, the Jews sought to mark graves clearly, usually using whitewash, so everyone would know where they were and would avoid them.

“You build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed” (v 47) – Jesus observed that the leaders of his day would honour dead prophets, while persecuting living ones like himself. “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge” (v 52) – their legalistic approach has taken away understanding and knowledge. Those who lead God’s people in a legalistic way are guilty of a crime before God – they keep others out of the kingdom.

“The scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him” (v 53) – they would not receive Jesus’ correction: they preferred instead to stay in their own sinful thinking and habits, rather than repent and learn from Jesus’ rebuke. “Lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say” (v 54) – this is a common reaction when someone corrects us: instead of receiving the correction, we *counter-attack*...