

## Pursuing After God

A question as we begin today . . . Are you completely satisfied with the relationship that you have with the Lord? Or, do you sometimes wonder if there should be more?

We know from these scriptures that King David had a very special relationship with God. And though at times David faltered, and sometimes very badly, he still remained a "man after God's own heart".

And David truly loved the Lord. And because of his great love for him, David pursued after God with unyielding fervor. He said in Psalm 42,

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So my soul pants for You, O God.  
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
(Psalm 42:1-2)

As I've read and studied through the words of this passage that we've been considering here in Luke chapter 11, I get the same sense of the pursuit of God that King David enjoyed. And that the Lord Jesus would desire for you and me to have this same kind of pursuit as we ourselves pursue after God.

Listen again to the words of this passage, here beginning in verse 9 of Luke chapter 11.

<sup>9</sup>"So 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. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>11</sup>If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>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!" (Luke 11:9-13)

As we said in an earlier message, when God takes the opportunity to repeat a matter over and over again, then we should know that it's very important to Him. And that is what He has done in this passage that we'll study again today.

Here, He tells us over and over again that we are to come to Him, that we are to ask and we are to seek and we are to knock, and we are to keep asking and

seeking and knocking until His Will is accomplished in a matter that we are praying about.

And folks, may I reiterate very strongly that these efforts are only possible with those of us who have given our hearts to the Lord Jesus to be our Savior and Lord. This is what family members of Christ do. In our Salvation, we became "sons of God", joint heirs with Christ. And these efforts of asking and seeking and knocking are part of the family life that takes place in our relationship with God our Father.

Why do I say that this is only for those of us who have Christ as our Savior? It's because until we do surrender our lives to Christ, neither we nor anyone else will seek after Him. We are told clearly in Romans chapter 3 that,

10 . . . "There is none righteous, no, not one.  
11 There is none who understands.  
There is none who seeks after God.  
12 They have all turned aside,  
They have together become unprofitable.  
There is none who does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:10-12)

Unfortunately, these words are an absolute truth for all of us, for all of mankind. We were all born into this world with a sin-filled nature, a nature that is totally corrupt, and on its own, has no ability and no desire to turn and to seek after God and after His ways.

And because of that, these words that the Lord Jesus gave to us here in this scripture passage that we're studying today are only possible for a person who has first surrendered their heart to Christ in salvation.

And then also, and very importantly, in these words of the Lord Jesus, He's conveying another truth about the relationship that He desires to have with those of us who have Him as our Savior. These words give us a special insight into how He not only wants to be our Savior, but also how He wants to be our "Lord", the "Lord of our life".

The Lord Jesus wants to be the One that we turn to for every need and for every purpose. And these words give us a plain understanding that we are not only to have Him as our God, but we are to have a daily, moment by moment pursuit of Him and His purposes, ever and always pursuing after Him, persistently asking

and seeking and knocking at the doorway of His Kingdom for every purpose in life. And we are to persevere, with great patience as we watch for Him, our Lord, to bring each matter and each purpose into fulfillment.

And while yes, these words of Jesus are being given about praying and pursuing answers to our daily prayers, God is so very wise and purposeful. He's able to also use these same circumstances of daily prayer for even greater purposes, to then propel us onto a next level of relationship with Him. And He is doing that here in these words. Here, Jesus is elevating our focus on past the level of ordinary prayer on into a fervent pursuit of the Person of God Himself.

And such a transition does not take place easily or quickly. Our personal affinities and our sympathies for the ones we are praying for are strong, keeping our attention on some particular need at hand.

But then, in the mysterious timing of God, He will call for us to move on up to another level of faith and desire. He will call us into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Himself, into a fullness of His Holy Spirit. And that is when we begin to cry out to Him with different words than we have ever used before.

Without even knowing why we would say the words, we find ourselves crying out, "Father, give me your Spirit". And that's when these words here in verse 13 begin to take place.

Yes, we've had His Holy Spirit abiding within us since we were first saved, but then, as we begin to cry out to Him, that's when God begins to give us His Holy Spirit in a fullness that we have never known before. Verse 13 again,

<sup>13</sup>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!"(Luke 11:9-13)

And what a precious gift this is, the gift of God's Holy Spirit! It is the sweetest, most extraordinary gift we could ever imagine.

Yes, we do need bread to sustain our bodies. And yes, we need all sorts of other physical and temporal provisions. But as demanding as those needs can become to us at times, they are relatively minor considerations to God.

And He does know well that you and I have need of all those temporal things. He tells us so in Matthew chapter 6, where He says to us,

<sup>31</sup>“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.(Matthew 6:31-32)

Unfortunately for you and me, these kinds of temporal needs do dominate most of the moments in our daily prayer efforts, especially in the earliest years of our Christian experience. The ever-present needs of our bodies and also the many emotional demands involving our friends and families keep our prayers focused on temporal matters.

But here again is that mystical interaction of God's sovereign providence and of our own “free will” taking place. And in particular, it is God's desire that our “free will” be guarded very carefully, and that in all the matters of life, our “free will” be brought into line with His Holy Will. And because of that, He wants you and me to reach to His Holy Spirit, not just to find a quick remedy or relief, but to also find all the many other special provisions that abide within Him, especially some of His special fruits that we will need to have as we work our way through some of those difficulties, fruits like peace, patience and self-control.

May I say this again . . . It is God's ultimate desire for you and me, that we would have His Spirit abiding fully within us. It is then and only then that we will be able to hold fast to His promises and to not allow the pressing problems and needs of the day to take control over our thoughts and cares.

God's desire for you and me is that we would raise the focus of our eyes, up from all the demanding temporal needs, up from our lusts for the things of this world, up from our constant need for approval from others, up to a consecration of our soul where we might never have been before, expressed here, in Matthew 6:33 with the words,

<sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

And no, these words don't imply that we hold back from coming to God for the many temporal needs of daily life, and for the answers to our many questions and concerns. The words of the “Lord's Prayer” given just a few verses earlier clearly tell us to do that. But rather, these words of Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you,” are intended to remind you and me that there are far more important

concerns that we should be tending to in our relationship with God . . . matters of the soul.

So then, as we do bring the concerns of our day to God, we must be willing to move on quickly, on to the deeper, more important matters of our relationship with Him, and to do exactly as the words of Matthew 6:33 instruct us, to “. . . seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

As I ponder these words, and as I look back on the usual pattern of my own daily prayers, I confess to you that I have not often done this. More often, my daily prayer efforts seem to end abruptly, immediately after I have prayed for temporal needs.

And I recognize that I need to not do that. I need instead to move on ahead in my pursuit of a relationship with God, on to another depth of intimacy with Him. Note within those words, “. . . seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” that there is no “self-centered” concern or need being sought after in them, only relationship.

And that is where God wants you and me to fix the focus of our hearts and our desires, upon Him and Him only.

But how do we do that? How do we fix the focus of our hearts and our desires, upon God and God alone? How do we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? How do we even know how to begin such a search?

Again, our answer is given to us clearly and plainly here in verse 13 of today's scripture passage,

<sup>13</sup>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!"(Luke 11:13)

This is the answer to most all of our questions. And this is where we must begin. We must go to the One who knows God best. We must go to God's Holy Spirit. He alone can give me the answers I need. We're told that plainly in the words of 1 Corinthians chapter 2. There in verse 10 we are told . . .

<sup>10</sup>. . .the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup>For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of

God. <sup>12</sup>Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Corinthians 2:10-12)

This is what Jesus was speaking about as He was instructing His disciples to be aggressively persistent and patient as they ask, and seek, and knock. Here we see God's ultimate answer to all of our questions and needs, God's Holy Spirit abiding fully and freely within us, making Him and His desires known to us.

Again, verse 13,

<sup>13</sup>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!" (Luke 11:13)

This is the greatest gift that you and I could ever want to receive, the gift of God's Holy Spirit, in fullness and without measure.

Nothing else compares, nothing else should really matter. Our career choices, our health condition, the political struggles taking place in our country, the culture wars that swirl all around us filling our news media each day, and all the many other concerns of the day that clutter and corrupt our lives.

All of those things are of this earthly realm. And God does not want you and me to be so consumed with our anxieties and concerns about them. He instead wants you and me to rise above all those concerns, and to set our minds on Him.

In Colossians 3, God tells us,

<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-2)

In Christ, you and I have truly been changed. We are new creatures. The many concerns of our old life died with our old self and we have been raised to a new life, one that must not busy itself with the many matters of this culture and lifestyle.

God tells us that clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

<sup>17</sup>Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In our surrender to Christ, our old self really did die, as dead as dead can be. And now, in Him, we have been born again, resurrected with Christ into a new life, a life that is fixed upon a much higher goal, that of the righteousness of Christ.

Again, those words given in Colossians 3,

<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-2)

In our new life in Christ, God wants you and me to set our minds on one thing and one thing alone, one pursuit, our pursuit of Him.

In one of my favorite books, A. W. Tozer's, "The Pursuit of God", Tozer expounds, over and over again on that very special pursuit. And he encourages us over and over again to live a lifestyle taken up first, ever and always with only one pursuit, the pursuit of God.

Are these words intended only for the clergy or for other people who are in full time ministry! Not at all! This instruction is for ordinary people like you and me.

Our pursuit of God is to simply but fervently be a deeply indwelling and elemental part of all the many other matters of our daily life, asking and seeking and knocking.

As the world and its ways take place all around us, we are to have our desires set first upon knowing and loving God and upon His plans and His purposes, and to do that with great passion, with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

That is the first and greatest command of God. And He intends for it to be our first and greatest desire of life, that we would hunger and thirst after Him, not merely believing in Him, and not just being faithful church goers, and not just seeking after the blessings that He brings to us. But rather that we would ask, and seek, and knock, and hunger and thirst after the very person of the Lord Jesus.

Before we close out our time for today, as your Pastor, I am compelled to ask you the very direct question. "Is this kind of pursuit of God at all where your soul is at this moment? Or are you perhaps instead still just hanging around at the doorway of salvation, glad to be inside, but hesitant about moving on forward? Are perhaps the many matters of daily life still consuming most all of your time and affections as you live, and especially as you pray?"

Let me say clearly and plainly to you and to me, that this "pursuit of God" is God's ultimate desire for you and for me. As I have said to you on so many occasions, salvation is only the beginning, a first step through the doorway of God's kingdom.

There are many, many more steps to take, and God wants, and fully expects you and me to take those steps. That is what the word "pursuit" implies, a fervent and unrelenting seeking after the very person of God, asking, seeking and knocking and never resting even for a moment.

And the only way that we can join in that special pursuit of God is by having His Holy Spirit fully abiding within us. And so these special words of Jesus, Verse 13,  
<sup>13</sup>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!" (Luke 11:13)

May I ask each of us to begin, this day, and every other day, by asking God to give us His Holy Spirit, in full and without measure.

Let's pray.