

Prayer to the Triune God

by John Murray

Jesus teaches us to pray to the Heavenly Father, who gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask, for the purpose of glorifying Christ and being the earnest of our inheritance.

Duration: 32:00

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Luke 11:13, John 14:16-17, Acts 2:38, Ephesians 4:4-6, Titus 3:4-6

Topics: "Trinity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the analogy Jesus used in the human sphere to teach about approaching God the Father. Jesus appeals to the fact that even earthly parents, who are flawed, know how to give good gifts to their children. This analogy is meant to strengthen the confidence of believers in approaching the transcendent and holy God. The speaker also highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promises that the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The sermon references various passages from the Bible, including Luke 11:13 and the commission Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:19.

Transcript

The Gospel according to Luke, the eleventh chapter, at verse thirteen. Gospel according to Luke, chapter eleven, verse thirteen. If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? It is well for us to observe how the three persons of the Godhead are frequently brought together in the teaching of our Lord and of his apostles.

As recorded in the preceding chapter of this Gospel, you read that in that hour Jesus rejoiced, as it should be, in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Jesus is the speaker, he is rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, and he is giving thanks to God the Father. You remember again that in another Gospel he said to his disciples, I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot perceive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but he knoweth, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Again, Jesus is the speaker, he is referring to the gift of the Father, and that of the Holy Spirit. And we find that same, perhaps most conspicuously of all, in the commission that Jesus gave to his disciples just on the eve of his ascension, when he said to them, go and disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We find the very same intermingling of reference to the three persons of the Godhead in the witness of the apostles.

You remember what Paul says, there is one body and one spirit, referring to the Holy Spirit, there is one body and one spirit, even as he were called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, that is Jesus Christ, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all. The three persons of the Godhead are brought into the closest relationship, the one to the other.

And it isn't because the apostle Paul was, as it were, going out of his way to the three persons of the Godhead. It was the spontaneous expression of his devotion. We enter again in what we overlooked in verses 3, 4 through 6, but on the kindness and love of God our Savior.

Love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done. He saved us by the washing of regeneration. And through Jesus Christ our Savior is to come.

Regeneration is the particular work of the... Now, it is all important as great doctrine to be of God, and great doctrine to be of being. But, nevertheless, there is no living except as we come into... in the persons that belong to each. And when we think of these texts and many others which might be quoted, it is always with reference to the salvation that Jesus is speaking, or that the apostles are writing.

And it is just witness to this great truth that the economy of salvation is the economy of the three persons of the Godhead in the particularity, in the distinctiveness, of that prerogative and function and relationship that belong to each. Now it is in our text that we have this very same intermingling, which you might call even the interpermeation, of reference to the three persons of the Godhead. For Jesus is speaking, and he says, If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father, in this text, shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

And we may focus attention upon three considerations. Prayer is to be directed in this particular... And then second, for whom prayer is requested. And then third, by whom the approach to God the Father for this request is authorized.

Now first of all, we have to whom Jesus joins His disciples to direct their prayer or petition in this particular instance. He speaks of the Heavenly Father, the Heavenly Father. You notice that your is in italics in your version, and there's no reason for it being there at all, because the accurate translation is simply the Heavenly Father.

Now when you have that designation, the allusion is first of all to the primary reason for that title. He is called Father, He is called the Father, He is called the Heavenly Father, He is called the Righteous Father, the Holy Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when He is called such, there is always allusion to that unique relationship which He sustains too.

It is because He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that primarily why He... Now that is a unique relationship. It is a relationship that is not shared by any other.

And that is why Jesus is called the only begotten Son, the only Son. And He is sometimes called the Father's own Son. Because there is a uniqueness to that Sonship, and it is not shared by anybody else.

He is the Son of God the Father because of a very unique relationship that exists from eternity between the Father and the Son. And we must never confuse the Fatherhood that belongs particularly to God the

Father because of His relation to the Son with the Fatherhood which He comes to sustain to man. Jesus was very jealous for that distinction.

You remember as we read earlier in this chapter when the disciples asked Jesus, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven. And Jesus did not join with them in that prayer. You very soon discover why He could not.

Because He asked them to pray, Forgive us our debts or forgive us our sins. And Jesus could never pray that prayer. He asked His disciples to say, Our Father which art in heaven.

But He never joins with His disciples in common approach to the Father with them by the title Our Father. And you remember how eloquently He drew that to the attention of Mary Magdalene. Or at least how careful He was in speaking to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection when He said, Go tell my brother that I went to Galilee and there shall I see them.

I ascend unto My Father and My God and your God. He didn't ask her to go and tell them that He was ascending to our common Father. But I ascend unto My Father and your Father.

To My God and your God. But although there is this unique sonship that belongs to Christ and this unique fatherhood that belongs to the relationship to the Son, nevertheless it is the marvel of grace that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ comes to sustain this fatherly relationship to man. I say He comes to sustain this fatherly relationship.

It is not a universal relationship. It was to the disciples that He was, it was to the disciples that He said to Mary Magdalene, I ascend. And He is never represented in this particular way as the Father of all men.

He is the Father of His disciples. But it is a marvel of grace that the very same person, in the uniqueness of his fatherhood, as it applies to God, is the Father of all men in Jesus' name. And it is for that reason that brethren of the Savior, it is marvelous because those who are being sanctified and are all of one, that Jesus is not a... O God, the Father is then by way of eminence, and by way of eminence, according to the pattern of Scripture, God the Father is the person to whom prayer is to be addressed, and that is His... He then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heaven, shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

It is very striking indeed that in this particular instance, Jesus appeals to the analogy in the human sphere, if He then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children. He pleads that analogy in order to enforce and in order to strengthen their confidence in their approach to God the Father. So transcendent in being, so transcendent in relationship, and so transcendent in holiness is God the Father, that if He being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

And as it is in the parallel passage in the Gospel, this is very clearly brought out by a change of form, if He then being evil, know how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good gifts. Now it might be said, and I think it is frequently said, that the fatherly relationship is simply patterned after the fatherly relationship, that it is, as it were, simply a symbol of the human fatherhood is the pattern or the type according to which we are to interpret the Heavenly Fatherhood. I don't believe that is the direction of... I think it is rather the other way around, that it is just because there is this fatherhood in the realm of Deity, that there is such a thing as fatherhood, that since mankind is made after the image of God, that is one of

the features that bring to expression the fact that man is made in the image of God, and it is the Heavenly Fatherhood, after all, that is the pattern in accordance with which there is in the human realm that relationship of father and son.

And that is what Jesus is here appealing to, that if in the human sphere, if in that which is just but a dim analogy, a dim pattern of what there is in the heavenly realm, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Now, second, there is the question for whom are the disciples to make requests, and that is in this instance the Holy Spirit. There are a few things to be noted that are particularly pertinent in this connection, and the first is that it is the Father who gives the Holy Spirit.

It is through a first that Jesus Himself, when He was to ascend to Heaven, promised unto His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit. But again, by way of eminence, the Holy Spirit is the gift of God the Father. He is given in accordance with the promise of God the Father.

Now, it was God the Father who gave, it was He who sent His only begotten Son into the world. And that, of course, is that which we usually associate with the giving of God the Father, and quite properly so. There is nothing that excels the gift of the only begotten Son whom God the Father sent into the world, and whom He sent into the world to accomplish redemption.

But, nevertheless, it is the Father also who sends another person of the Holy Spirit, and we must never underestimate the significance of that twofold gift, and what you might call the necessary complementation of that twofold. He gives the Holy Spirit. And let us ever remember this, that the greatest gifts, the greatest gifts of God the Father are not things that as it were are bestowed.

Oh, these are inestimable gifts indeed, that God the Father effectually calls men into the fellowship. It is marvelous that He adopts them into His family. It is marvelous that He justifies them, and that He sanctifies them by His truth.

But the greatest gifts of God the Father are not these things, however precious they are. The greatest gifts of God the Father are the other passions of the Godhead. Think of it.

You are getting into the mystery of the economy of salvation. You are getting into the very heart of God the Father's design, of God the Father's love, of God the Father. And the greatest gifts are His own Son.

Out of what ends does He give the Holy Spirit? These are indeed endless. I shall only mention just a few. To what end does God the Father give the Holy Spirit? Well, here is one that I think must always be uppermost in the interest and in the desire and in the passion of the people of God.

Preeminent among the prerogatives of the Holy Spirit as given is that He will glorify Christ. Glorify Christ. For He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto me.

And is there anything that is closer to the interest, to the desire, to the passion of the people of God than that the Holy Spirit should disclose to them more and more of the inestimable glory of the Redeemer, the inestimable glory of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the fresh image of His feet, who is the image of the invisible God? And is there anything that to be tokens you'll decide as a believer more than that to which the Apostle Paul gave expression when he says that I may know Him, that is, Jesus Christ, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings? I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dross that I may win Christ. And my friends, when your soul is, as it were, thirsting

for visions of the inestimable glory of the Redeemer, and you don't seem to be getting anywhere, the Word of God may seem to you to be pretty well closed, and you cannot, as it were, get any of these insights or any of these visions into the inestimable glory of the Son. Well, why is it? It is just, my friends, because we do not honor the Holy Spirit as the person who glorifies Christ and who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us.

That is the Spirit's prerogative. Well, there is just one other thing that I want to mention in connection with this gift of the Holy Spirit that is particularly precious and particularly near to the interest of the people of God, and it is this, that the Holy Spirit is the firstfruits, and He is the earnest of the inheritance of the people of God. You remember what Paul said? Not only so, but we ourselves also, who are the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves grow within ourselves waiting for the adoption of our body.

Or again, when he says, in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance and from the redemption of the person. What does Paul mean when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits or as the earnest? It is just this, that the Holy Spirit Himself is, as it were, the down payment, the first installment of that glory that remains for the people of God. He is the firstfruits, He is the earnest, He is the first installment, and that is an index to the place that the Holy Spirit participates in the age to come, in the glory of the children of God.

It is just because the Holy Spirit will be all-predominant and all-prevalent in the people of God, glorifying Christ unto their glorification and unto their eternal blessedness, that glory will be what it will be. And surely, it is all-precious that God the Father gives the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits, as the earnest, and not only as the firstfruits and earnest, but as the seal, as the confirmatory seal unto the people of God, that they are heirs, upright heirs, that they have an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that faith is not unserved in Heaven for them. Now, thirdly, by whose authority may we approach God the Father with this particular supplication? By whose authority? I think you have already sensed something of the grandeur, something of the unspeakable greatness of that at which Jesus is here speaking, that God the Father should give the Holy Spirit.

When you think of your own utter vileness, when you think of your own infirmity, when you think of your own utter incompetence with reference to all that devolves upon you by way of responsibility and privilege, surely you sense that there seems to be something by way of discrepancy between what you are and the great gift of which Jesus is here speaking. And of course there is. There is a total discrepancy between what you are in all your vileness, in all your insufficiency, in all your weakness.

I say a total discrepancy between what you are and the inestimable gift of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. And would you dare to come into the presence of God the Father, the Holy Father, the Righteous Father, lest you have the authority of Deity? Here is something very precious, that it is by the authority, with the authentication and the certification of Jesus Christ Himself as the great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, as the Son of God at the right hand of God the Father, that you come into the Father's presence with the supplication that He would grant you the Holy Spirit. That is the grandeur of Jesus' whole statement.

It is the grandeur of His certification, of His authentication. Therefore we can come with confidence to the throne of grace, to the throne of the Father's grace. We may ask Him, notwithstanding all our insufficiency, our fileness, our weakness, to grant unto us the Holy Spirit that He might glorify Christ and that He might be to us the earnest of an inheritance that is incorruptible, of undefiled, and that paid us not away.

This is the age of Pentecost. Jesus was speaking here in anticipation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would come in the fullness of His grace, in world-wide activity, in order to carry on that which He had once for all accomplished, and that Jesus Himself was effecting from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ's figure upon earth.

I will pray the Father and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive because it seeth Him not. Now I say this is the age of Pentecost because the Holy Spirit has come.

A great deal of our weakness, a great deal of our ineffectiveness, a great deal of our unfaithfulness in the Church of God arises from this fact that we have failed to do honor to the Holy Spirit. We have failed to take hold of the promise that Christ Himself has given us in all its simplicity, yet in all its faithfulness. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask.

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