

引言 INTRODUCTION

What will you ask God for if you can make any request? Wealth? Long life? World peace? A couple was celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary at a seaside resort. One evening, as they were walking on the beach, the husband stumbled on something. It was an antique oil-lamp. Out of curiosity, the man rubbed it a few times. Behold, a genie appeared! He thanked the couple for releasing him from the bondage in the lamp. In return, he offered them three wishes. The wife did not waste a second and burst out: “I want the biggest diamond in the world on my ring.” Boom! Her wish came true. The rock was as big as an egg! Seeing that it truly worked, she made another request: “I want to have a never-ending vacation.” The genie said: “Granted!” The couple rode on a magic carpet instantly and flew around various exotic places. The man was annoyed by his wife’s quick actions. He said: “Honey, you have used up two chances already. Let me have the last one. I wish my wife is 30 years younger.” Bam! The couple fell back to the beach. The man turned into ninety-year-old. Of course, that is only a joke. There is no genie in the world who gives us what we want. But there is one true God who hears and responds to our prayer. He is our Heavenly Father. The passage today is on prayer. The section from verses 1 to 13 is a complete unit. It begins by saying that Jesus Himself prayed. If even Jesus prayed, how much more should we pray? Then a disciple came to the Lord and asked Him to teach the group how to pray. At that time students followed their rabbis in some standard prayer. What comes after that conversation are three connected sections. Verses 2 to 4 tell us **what** to pray for. It is the Luke’s version of the Lord’s prayer. Next, Jesus illustrates **how** we should pray in verses 5 to 8 with a parable. Finally, Jesus explains in verses 9 to 13 **why** we can expect an answer from God. Our message today will focus on the second and third parts.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 我們放膽地懇求 Audacity in Our Request (v. 5-8)

First, the parable tells us how we should pray. We can present our request to God with audacity. The Webster dictionary defines audacity as “bold or arrogant disregard of normal restraints.” It is an accurate description of the character in the parable who asked for bread. There are three friends in the story. For simplicity, let us call the person who arrived at midnight “visitor,” the guy who wanted to borrow bread “neighbor” and the man who was asleep “friend.” Why did the visitor show up so late? It will catch you off-guard if a friend knocks on your door in the middle of the night. Your house is not in a guest-friendly shape, not to mention that you are in pajama and your hair is like a bird’s nest. Your friend drives all the way from the east coast non-stop. He also tells you that he has not had dinner yet. The only food in your pantry is ramen noodle and Campbell soup. Fortunately, there are restaurants that open 24 hours. But there was no such convenience in the first century. In Jesus’ time, all the stores were close at night. It was common for people to travel after sunset to avoid the daytime heat. Therefore, it was not unusual for people to arrive at night. Without a cellphone, visitors could not inform their friends ahead of time that they were coming. But no matter how bothersome it could be, hospitality was the norm at that time. The host had the obligation to entertain a guest by providing food and lodging. In

Genesis, both Lot and his uncle Abraham invited a few angels who appeared in human form to their homes. If people were expected to receive strangers, then how much more should they welcome friends? Moreover, not only was one household supposed to show hospitality, the whole village was required to do the same. All things considered, it was unthinkable for the friend not to lend some bread to his neighbor. That is why Jesus begins the parable by asking a rhetorical question: “Which of you will deny a friend’s request when he asks for help?” The unspoken answer is: “Nobody!” The friend refused to offer help because his family was in bed already. In those days, most people had a small house. We call it an efficiency home in today’s term. There is no bedroom. An open space serves as a living room during the day. People roll out a straw mat and sleep on the floor at night. That would be the bedroom for the whole family and even animals like sheep and goats. The friend seemed to have legitimate reasons denying the request. Notice his reply in verse 7: ...‘**I cannot get up and give you anything.**’ He did not say: “Sorry pal, I don’t have any extra bread.” He was able to help, but he was not willing to do so. He would rather bear the shame of not fulfilling his social responsibility. But Jesus’ comment in the next verse gives the man no excuse not to help: “**I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.**” The word translated as “impudence” in the ESV version is a key word in the passage. Some of your Bibles may render the word “persistence.” That translation may not fully capture the idea. The neighbor in the story did not only keep asking. He was also bold because he did not care about waking up the whole family and even other people living nearby. He would not give up until he got the bread. The NIV 2011 version gives the best description by translating the word as “shameless audacity.” The man was not only blunt, he was shameless too. Jesus is saying that we should pray with that same attitude. Surely, we should come to God in a respectful manner. He is the Heavenly Father. However, we should not be too shy to express our needs. God is always available. Unlike humans, God never needs to sleep. Psalm 121:3 says: **He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.** We do not need to shout at the top of our lungs to wake Him up. Are you grateful that God does not have office hours and He never takes a vacation? Even McDonald’s closes during Thanksgiving and Christmas. But God’s throne of grace is always open for His children. Because of that, we can come to God with audacity for our request. He is not the reluctant friend who needs repeated begging before He finally answers us. Our nagging will not make our prayer more effective anyway. How should we pray, knowing that God is always available and He is eager to listen? Let me suggest a few things. First, we must be **determined**. We should be bold as we bring our requests to Him. God welcomes us any time for any reason. We do not need to make an appointment or fill out an application form. Second, we need to show our **desperation**. Our demands may come at midnight, on a weekend or while we are traveling. Those urgent needs can be a surprising bill in the mail, an unexpected doctor’s report or a sudden phone call from your child. Third, we have to show our **dependence** on God. There should be no plans B and C in our mind in case God does not reply us. He can meet our needs in a miraculous way. But in most cases, He ministers His grace through a human agent. God may point us to certain people as we commit our needs to Him. Perhaps a friend of a friend knows an expert who can solve the problem. Fourth, we can be **detailed** in our requests. To say that “Lord, Your will be done on me” may sound spiritual. But perhaps you can be more concrete. Supposed you are looking for a job, and you hope to stay in this city or you prefer to relocate to a certain region. Tell God your preference. Perhaps you want to share the gospel with your aging parents overseas. You hope that your manager will allow you

to take a two-week vacation despite a busy work schedule. Regardless of what it is, you can make your needs specific to God.

2. 天父肯定的回應 Certainty of God's Response (v. 9-13)

Jesus tells us that we should pray with audacity. God promises us certainty in His response. He is far better than the friend in the parable. Jesus says in verses 9-10: **9 “And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”** Jesus is arguing from the lesser to the greater. If even a person should lend bread to his neighbor reluctantly out of social norm, how much more eager will God answer us? Those who ask Him will receive, those who seek Him will find Him and those who knock on His heavenly door will enter. Those are some general promises. We need to have a more complete view on prayer to understand why God does not answer us the way we hope for. For example, James 4:3 tells us: **You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.** God will not fulfill your greed. Therefore, do not pray that you will win a lottery. Even if you hit a jackpot, it is not from God! Self-gratification aside, there are many occasions where God does not seem to answer our legitimate requests. For instance, I prayed for the salvation of my father. But I did not have a chance to travel back home due to the pandemic and shared the gospel with him. He later passed away. How do we explain such an unanswered prayer? It takes faith to commit our requests to God. But it takes a bigger faith to trust that He has a perfect will for us. That is why Jesus asks us to bear a child-like faith. Little children cannot fully understand the mind of their parents. But they trust that dad and mom have the best plans for them. That is the proper mindset toward God. Jesus uses that parent and children relationship in verses 11-12: **11 “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”** This is a second rhetorical question in the passage. The expected answer is another no. Every father will love his child. It is unthinkable for a dad to give something useless and even harmful to his son who asks for food. He will provide the best based on his capability. He willingly wears socks full of holes, uses a ten-year-old phone or drives a rusty car. But he may save up money and buy everything brand-new for his children. Our Heavenly Father tops the most pampering fathers. Continue to read verse 13: **“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”** Here we find a second argument from the lesser to the greater. Even the meanest person loves his son. How much more will our merciful Father love us? In our limited mind, we evaluate greatness in terms of quantity. For example, we want a larger paycheck, a bigger house or a longer vacation. However, God's abundance can often be measured only in terms of quality. A blessed marriage, a fulfilling career or a satisfying retirement life cannot be expressed in numbers. The Biblical standard we should pursue is contentment. We enjoy life with peace and joy, knowing that everything we have is from God. But why does Jesus say that the best gift from God is the Holy Spirit? Let us do a quick review first. The Holy Spirit is part of the trinity God. The Father is God, Jesus Christ is God and the Holy Spirit is also God. But the Bible clearly tells us that there is only one God. In our human logic, three is not one, and one is not three. It is okay if you get confused, since the doctrine of the trinity God defies our limited knowledge. The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts the moment we receive Jesus Christ. Once He enters, He will stay forever. Among other works, the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer. He guides us in God's will. Prayer is not presenting a shopping list

to God. We should not say: “God, I want A, B, C, D and E. Luxury brands and next-day delivery, please. Amen!” Prayer should be an interaction with God, much like talking to your friends or your parents. Instead of keep talking, we must pause and listen. More than likely, God will not speak in audible voice. He may remind us some Bible verses we read before, or He may nudge our hearts and change the direction of our prayer. God reveals His will as we wait on Him. How does that close relationship affect our prayer? Let me give you some implications. First, we must trust God’s **provision**. He knows our needs more than we do. He promises to give us the best in His mind. Therefore, we need faith to believe especially when His answer may not be the best choice in our mind. Second, we must trust God’s **process**. He will supply our needs in His ways. I was looking for a used car for my older son last December. I found a reliable car that fitted my budget. The dealer reduced the price a few times because it could not sell it. I did not understand why such a good car remained in the market for so long. It was as if God reserved the car for me. Praise God! Third, something closely related to God’s process is His **plan**. God may not grant our wishes. I mentioned earlier a prayer for my father’s salvation. We may never know why He denies a legitimate request like that. Eventually, we must submit to God’s sovereignty. His plans are bigger and higher than our personal needs. That connects us to the fourth lesson. We must trust God’s **purpose**. Why does God fulfill our requests? Why does He give you a job or a spouse, heal your sickness or solve your financial problem? He blesses you first because He wants to bless others through you. Also, He wants to prove to you and the people around you that He is the source of all blessings. His ultimate purpose is to display His glory. God is pleased when we pray: “Lord, show others that You are real and that You live in me.” When God answers our prayer we give credit to people who offer help, but we give all the glory to God alone.

結論 CONCLUSION

God hears and responds to our prayer because He is our Heavenly Father. Here is an important question for you: is God your Father? If He is not your Father, then why should He answer your prayer? You may give money or food to a beggar out of compassion. But no one can rebuke you if you do not help the person. However, parents have no excuse not to provide for their children. You see, prayer is powerful not because our words can do magic. It is because the mighty God chooses to act in our favor. Moreover, prayer works only when we have an eternal relationship with the Father. A cell phone without a service plan is but a seven-ounce (about 200 grams) paper weight. You cannot call or text anyone if there is no signal. By the same token, God has no obligation to listen to you if you have no connection with Him. Prayer is effective only when we have the middle-person who directs us to God. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator. His death on the cross opens the door for us to come to the Father. Jesus is willing to give you salvation grace if He is not your Lord. Confess your sins to Him today, receive Him into your heart by faith and determine to follow Him the rest of your life.

引言 INTRODUCTION

如果你可以向神提出任何要求，你會向神祈求什麼呢？財富？長壽？世界和平？一對夫婦在海濱度假區慶祝結婚 40 週年。一天傍晚，他們在海灘上散步時，那位丈夫踢到一件東西。那是一盞古老油燈。出於好奇，他在上面擦了幾下。忽然一個精靈冒出來了！他感謝這對夫婦把他從燈裡釋放出來。作為回報，他給他們三個願望。那位太太連想都不用想便衝口而出：「我要一顆全世界最大的鑽石在我的戒指上。」她的願望馬上實現了。那顆石頭有雞蛋那麼大！看到真的有效，她又提出另一個要求：「我想要一個永無止境的假期。」精靈說：「沒問題！」夫妻倆瞬間乘坐在魔毯上，飛到不同的景點。那位男士有點不高興。他說：「親愛的，你已經用了兩個願望了。該輪到我吧！我希望我的老婆年輕 30 歲。」嘖！夫妻倆回到海灘。那位先生變成九十歲的老人。當然，這只是個笑話。世界上沒有任何精靈可以滿足我們的慾望。但有一位真神會聆聽並回應我們的禱告。祂是我們的天父。今天的經文是關於禱告的。第 1 節到第 13 節是一個完整的單元。一開始說到耶穌獨自禱告。如果連耶穌都禱告，我們豈不是更應該禱告嗎？然後有一個門徒來找耶穌，求主教導他們禱告。當時，學生們會學習他們拉比的禱告。這段談話之後是三個相互關聯的部分。第 2 至 4 節告訴我們要祈求什麼。這是路加福音中的主禱文。接下來，耶穌在第 5 至 8 節中用一個比喻說明我們應該如何祈禱。最後，耶穌在第 9 至 13 節中解釋了為什麼我們可以期望神的回應。我們今天的信息將集中看第二和第三部分。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 我們放膽地懇求 Audacity in Our Request (v. 5-8)

首先，這個比喻告訴我們應該如何禱告。我們可以放膽地向神懇求。韋氏字典將放膽定義為「大膽或傲慢地忽視正常的規矩」。這是對比喻中要借餅的人貼切的形容。故事中有三個朋友。為了簡單起見，我們將半夜來訪的人稱為「旅客」，將想要借餅的人稱為「鄰居」，將正在睡覺的人稱為「朋友」。為什麼那個旅客來得這麼晚？如果朋友半夜敲你的門，你會措手不及。你的房子有一點凌亂，而且你穿著睡衣，頭髮像個鳥窩。你的朋友從東岸一路開車過來，他告訴你他還沒有吃晚餐。你的儲藏室裡只有方便麵和罐頭湯。還好有 24 小時營業的餐廳。但在第一世紀卻沒有這樣的方便。在耶穌的時代，所有的商店晚上都關門。人們為了避免白天的炎熱會在日落之後才長途旅行。因此，晚上來的訪客

並不稀奇。當時沒有手機，旅客無法事先通知朋友他們在路上。但無論有多麼麻煩，款待客人是當時的風俗。主人有義務招待客人，提供食物和住宿。在創世記中，羅得和他的叔叔亞伯拉罕都邀請了幾位以人形出現的天使到他們的家。如果人們樂意接待陌生人，他們豈不是更應該歡迎朋友嗎？而且，接待客人不只是一戶人家的事，而是整條村子的義務。總而言之，那位朋友不借餅給鄰居是說不過去的。耶穌在這個比喻開始時提出了一個問題：「當朋友尋求幫助時，你們中間誰會拒絕他的請求？」不言而喻的答案是：「沒有人！」這位朋友拒絕提供幫助，因為他的家人已經上床睡覺了。那個時候，大多數人都擁有一間小房子。那種屋子沒有房間。白天，整個空間用作客廳。晚上人們鋪上草蓆，睡在地板上。那將是全家人的臥室，甚至他們的綿羊和山羊都會睡在一起。那位朋友似乎有正當理由拒絕對方的要求。請注意他在第 7 節中的回答：『...我不能起來給你。』他不是說：「對不起，我沒有多餘的餅。」他有能力幫忙，但是他不願意這麼做。他寧願被別人取笑他沒有盡自己的本份。但耶穌在下一節指出那個人沒有理由不幫忙：「我告訴你們，雖不因他是朋友起來給他，但因他情詞迫切的直求，就必起來照他所需用的給他。」這裡「情詞迫切的直求」這個形容是這一段落中的關鍵詞。故事中的鄰居不只不停地懇求，他也很大膽。他不在乎吵醒全家人，甚至打擾到住在附近的人。他拿不到餅絕對不會罷休。一個更貼切的翻譯是「無恥的大膽」。他不只堅持他的需要，他甚至不要臉地懇求。耶穌說我們應該以同樣的方式來禱告。當然，我們要以恭敬的態度來到神面前。祂是我們的天父。然而，我們不應該不好意思表達我們的需求。神是隨時隨在的。和人不一樣，神從來不需要睡覺。詩篇 121:3 說：他必不叫你的腳搖動；保護你的必不打盹！我們不需要大聲呼喊把祂吵醒。感謝神！祂沒有辦公時間，也從不休假。就連麥當勞在感恩節和聖誕節期間也會關門。但神的施恩寶座永遠向祂的兒女敞開。正因如此，我們可以放膽地來到神面前懇求。祂不是一個勉為其難的朋友，需要反覆要求才願意回應。我們的嘮叨也不會讓禱告更有效。正因為神樂意並隨時準備好聆聽，我們該如何禱告？讓我提出一些建議。首先，我們必須下定決心。我們要勇敢地向神求。祂隨時歡迎我們提出任何要求。我們不需要預約或填寫申請表。其次，我們需要表現出我們的**緊迫**。我們的需求可能會在午夜、週末或旅行時出現。那些需要可能是收到的帳單、醫生的報告或兒女突然打來的電話。第三，我們必須表現出我們對神的**倚靠**。我們腦子裡不應該有後備計劃，萬一神沒有回應我們，還有其他方案。祂可以透過神蹟幫助我們。但在大多數情況下，祂透過人來施予恩典。當我們將自己的問題交託給神時，祂可能會把我們指向某些人。也許一個朋友的朋友認識一位專家。第四，我們可以**具體**地提出我們的要求。說「主啊，願祢的旨意成就在我身上」聽起來可能很屬靈。但也許你可以更詳細一點。假設你正在找工作，並且希望留在這個城市或是搬到某個地區。你可以把自己的心願

告訴神。也許你想與海外年邁的父母傳福音。雖然公司的事務很繁忙，但是你希望經理允許你休兩週假。不管是什麼，你都可以將你的具體需要告訴神。

2. 天父肯定的回應 Certainty of God's Response (v. 9-13)

耶穌告訴我們應該放膽地懇求。同時天父向我們保證祂肯定的回應。祂比故事中的朋友好得多。耶穌在第 9-10 節中說：9「我又告訴你們，你們祈求，就給你們；尋找，就尋見；叩門，就給你們開門。10 因為，凡祈求的，就得著；尋找的，就尋見；叩門的，就給他開門。」耶穌說，如果一個人因為社會規範而勉強借餅給鄰居，神豈不是會更熱切地回應我們嗎？求祂的，必要得著；尋找祂的，必尋見祂；叩天堂大門的，必要進去。這都是一些普遍的應許。我們需要對禱告有更全面的認識，才能理解為什麼神有時候沒有按照我們的期望回應我們。例如，雅各書 4:3 告訴我們：你們求也得不著，是因為你們妄求，要浪費在你們的宴樂中。神不會滿足你的貪欲。因此，不要禱告中彩票。就算你中了頭獎，那也不是神所賜的！撇開個人慾望，在某些情況下，神並沒有回應我們合理的請求。例如，我為父親的得救禱告。但因為疫情，我沒有機會回家向他傳福音。後來他去世了。我們如何理解這種沒有被應允的禱告？把我們的需求仰望神需要信心，但明白神對我們有完美的旨意需要更大的信心。因此耶穌要求我們要有孩子般的信心。小孩子無法完全理解父母的想法，但他們相信爸爸和媽媽為他們安排的計畫是最周全的。這是看待神的正確心態。耶穌在 11-12 節中提到了父母與子女的關係：11「你們中間作父親的，誰有兒子求餅，反給他石頭呢？求魚，反拿蛇當魚給他呢？12 求雞蛋，反給他蠍子呢？」這是經文中的第二個反問句。預期的答案是否定的。每個父親都會愛他的孩子。兒子要求食物，父親給他一些無用甚至有害的東西是無法想像的。做爸爸的會根據自己的能力提供最好的。他情願穿著有破洞的襪子，使用十年前的手機或開一部生鏽的汽車。但他可能拼命存錢，為孩子們買全新的東西。我們的天父勝過世上最溺愛的父親。請繼續讀第 13 節：「你們雖然不好，尚且知道拿好東西給兒女；何況天父，豈不更將聖靈給求他的人嗎？」就算是罪犯也會愛自己的孩子。慈悲的天父豈不是更愛我們嗎？在我們有限的頭腦中，我們以數量來衡量價值。例如，我們想要更高的薪水、更大的房子或更長的假期。然而，神的豐盛常常只能用質量來評估。幸福的婚姻、令人滿足的事業、滿意的退休生活都無法用數字來表達。我們應該追求的聖經標準是知足。這樣我們便能平安喜樂地享受生活，知道我們所擁有的一切都來自神。但為什麼耶穌說神最好的賞賜是聖靈呢？讓我們先回顧一下基本的真理。聖靈是三位一體神的一部分。聖父是神，耶穌基督是神，聖靈也是神。但聖經清楚地告訴我們，只有一位神。在我們的邏輯思維中，三不是一，一也不是三。你感到困惑是正常的，因為三位一體神的教義違反我們有限的知識。當我們接受耶穌基督的那一刻，聖靈就進

入我們的心裡。一旦祂進來，祂就會永遠住在我們裡面。聖靈的工作之一，是幫助我們禱告。祂按照神的旨意引導我們。禱告不是向神提交一份購物清單。我們的禱告不應該是：「神啊，我想要 1、2、3、4 和 5。我只要名牌而且明天送貨。阿門！」禱告應該是與神的互動，就像與你的朋友或父母談話一樣。我們不能只說個不停，而必須停下來聆聽。神很可能不會用聽得見的聲音說話。祂可能會提醒我們以前讀過的一些經文，祂或者會感動我們並調整我們禱告的方向。當我們等候神之時，祂就會顯明祂的旨意。這份親近的關係如何影響我們的禱告？讓我給你一些建議。首先，我們必須相信**神的供應**。祂比我們更了解我們的需要。祂答應會給我們祂認為是最好的安排。因此，我們需要以信心去接受，尤其是當神的答案並不是我們心中最好的選擇時。其次，我們必須相信**神的過程**。祂會以祂的方式來滿足我們的需要。去年十二月，我為大兒子找一輛二手車。我找到了一輛符合我預算又可靠的車。由於車子賣不出去，車行降了幾次價。我不明白為什麼那麼好的車沒有人買。在我看來，就好像神為我保留了那輛車一樣。感謝神！第三，與神的過程息息相關的是**神的計劃**。神不一定達成我們的願望。我之前提到為我父親的得救禱告的例子。我們可能永遠不知道神為何拒絕這樣的合理要求。最終，我們必須順服神的主權。祂的計劃比我們個人的需要更大、更高。這就與第四個功課連結起來。我們必須相信**神的目的**。神為何滿足我們的要求？為什麼祂給你一份工作或賜給你一位配偶，治癒你的疾病或解決你的經濟問題？祂先祝福你，因為祂想透過你祝福別人。此外，祂希望你和你周圍的人證明祂是一切祝福的源頭。祂的最終目的是要彰顯祂的榮耀。神會很喜悅聽到以下的禱告：「主啊，讓人們知道祢是真實的，並且祢住在我裡面。」當神回應我們的禱告時，我們把功勞歸給那些提供幫助的人，但我們要將所有的榮耀歸給神。

結論 CONCLUSION

神聆聽並回應我們的禱告，因為祂是我們的天父。這裡有一個關鍵的問題：神是你的天父嗎？如果祂不是你的天父，那麼祂為什麼要回應你的禱告？你可能出於同情心給乞丐錢或食物。但如果你不幫助那個人，沒有人可以責備你。然而，父母沒有理由不養育自己的孩子。禱告之所以有果效，並不是因為我們的言語有什麼魔力，乃是因為全能的神選擇向我們伸出援手。此外，只有當我們與天父有永恆的關係時，禱告才會發揮作用。一部沒有訊號的手機就像是七盎司（約 200 克）重的石頭。你無法用它打電話或發送短訊。同樣，如果你與神沒有聯繫，神也沒有義務聽你的禱告。唯有當我們透過中間人與神連接時，禱告才會有效。耶穌基督是唯一的中間人。祂在十字架上的死為我們打開了來到天父面前的大門。耶穌願意給你救贖的恩典。如果耶穌不是你的主，你今天就向祂承認你的罪，憑信心接受耶穌進入你的心裡，並決定一生跟隨祂。