

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #007
A chronological Study

"The Friend At Midnight"
Luke 11:5-13, Matthew 7:7-12



"The Friend At Midnight"

*"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and
uttered things hidden since the creations of the world."*
Psalm 78:2

THE INTRODUCTION

The parables are the direct words of Jesus! Now, open your ears, sharpen your understanding, and hear what He has to say!

COMMENTARY on the setting and The Cast of Characters Involved

Starting in **[Luke Chapter 10:1]** Jesus had appointed 72 disciples and followers to go "into every city and place where He was going to come." They were looking for homes where those "coming in the name of the Lord" would be welcomed. Most of the communities were welcoming and, of course, some communities were totally against this. When they return and report this to Him He says, "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; BUT the one who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

[Comment] This last statement is a very important one. The one who doesn't listen to the words of Jesus - rejects Him... and the one who rejects Jesus rejects The Lord God Almighty. In every way you can interpret these words you cannot escape just who Jesus is. Jesus also shows us how to plan an evangelistic ministry. Send some out, find out where your audience is by asking the tough and important questions right from the start. Jesus also required of His messengers that they not carry or wear anything of great value, and be like "lambs in the midst of wolves." He wanted to make sure that those who "said" they were interested would welcome them, and they would not be robbed and their possessions taken... instead act like someone from The Lord looking for "laborers" for His harvest. Also, His closing comment to these disciples concerned the people of the places who rejected them - they were actually rejecting The Lord God Almighty Himself. We need to know that when we reach out to our lost world representing Jesus. First, you should make sure that you are really telling them about Jesus from pure and unadulterated Biblical truth - for you are His representatives. You will be responsible for what you say while representing Him. And then secondly, they will be responsible for how they listen, and how they respond to the message that the Holy Spirit of God has spoken through you to them. After all, it is not you who leads someone to faith in Jesus, it is purely the work of the Holy Spirit

of God. It is you who are being obedient to the call of the Gospel, to minister and witness to God's Son, His substitutionary sacrifice, and His resurrection from the dead using the Word of God, through the Spirit of God. We are the vehicle that brings the Word of God to their ears along with the testimony of what God has done, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

Jesus introduces us to the Jewish confession of faith (**The Shema**) found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41. **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."** If you want to know what the Kingdom of God is like... there it is in one sentence.

Jesus then tells the story of "The Good Samaritan, which we will cover in greater detail in another lesson, but for now... He was asking His disciples the question, "Who is your neighbor?" When they listened to Jesus' story and the great lengths this un-respected Samaritan went to, to help an unknown stranger, they were then ready to hear Him say, "Go and do the same." That would include both the actions and the ministry of the Samaritan and to believe the Shema.

Two more incidents follow before we get to the event from this lesson. **[Chapter 10:38]** begins by introducing us to a woman named Martha and her sister, identified as Mary Magdalene in the gospel of John. These two sisters have a brother named Lazarus - and yes, indeed he is the Lazarus that Jesus raises from the dead in the last chapters of both Luke and John. Checkout our study on "For the Love of the Savior" #006 for more information on these three.

Now it is important to remember that the chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were put there in order to divide up the chapters and verses for easier understanding. They are artificial

divisions. So when studying, or even just reading, it is advisable to make sure you read across these divisions in order to understand the bigger picture of what is being written about.

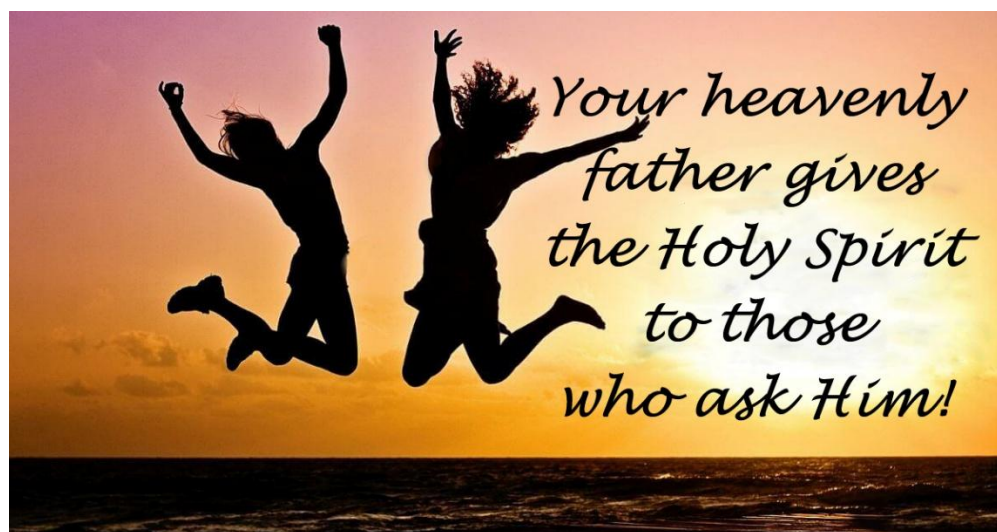
In the last element before our lesson, we enter **Luke, [chapter 11:1-4]**, and we find Jesus just finishing a time of prayer. One of His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, "just as John also taught his disciples," and we are introduced to "The Lord's Prayer."

"The Friend at Midnight" The Prelude to the story

Now it's time to really pay attention! So, here's a quick summary of what has gone before, and we must remember that what is written here was originally written to the Jewish community. Jesus sends out His disciples to find places where the Word of God will be accepted. Those who reject what they hear about Jesus, and who He is, are, in fact, rejecting The Heavenly Father - God Almighty. Those who believe must come with a heart like the "Good Samaritan," and the teaching of the "Shema." Our parable is speaking about the route to becoming a true believer. Jesus is the very Son of God, the Almighty God of the Scriptures. He is attempting to teach them of the route to belief and the requirements of belief. At this time in the scriptures, John the Baptist had come in order to "prepare the way" for the Messiah. Jesus, the Messiah has come and "His kingdom is at hand." He will attempt to gather those whom the Holy Spirit has prepared to join with Him in faith. Over the remainder of the Gospels, we will see the evidence of this effort. We will also see the rejection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in so many lives and in so many situations - as they reject their Anointed One, the Messiah, the mediator between man and God, God and man, the very Son of God, Jesus.

The whole previous chapter has been aimed at getting the gospel readers to see the route to true faith. The route He tried to teach during His earthly ministry, and the route we all must follow in finding Him to be our Savior. Jesus is not just a man to believe in! He is, in fact, God and... **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."**

Then we leave the Lord's prayer and Jesus says...



The Study:

[Luke 11:5-6] "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine has come to me from a journey and I have nothing to serve him';

[Comment] This is a pretty common experience. Of course, in our time we're probably neighbors in a condo or apartment complex, or live just across the street. In this case let's make it YOU who comes at midnight. And you're not just an unknown, but a friend. For most of us midnight is somewhat of an inconvenient time to be knocking on someone's door or for them to be answering the door - for a friend or for anyone else. You have a need that you didn't have back at a convenient time, and now you have a late arrival, and it's another friend of yours. So, what would probably be your friend's first response? I don't know about him or her... but my first response, after getting a robe on, would be something like, "Are you alright? What's the matter," as I open the door not properly hearing their predicament. But the way Jesus sets up this parable for His disciples takes a different turn.

[Luke 11:7] and from inside he [the home owner], answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot, will not, get up and give you anything.'

[Comment] So, I take it that part of the object of the parable is to present a difficult moment - putting us off guard. Is this what you would say to a friend? I've lived in my neighborhood for a number of years. I've met many of my neighbors but only a few would I put into the kind of friend relationship that Jesus is speaking to here. But even at that, I would be courteous to any of my neighbors who came to my door in need - even for some bread, a cup of sugar, a drink of water. We should also not miss the home owner's mention of his protection of his children. They are there at his side, under his care... and obviously important to him and the story. So why has Jesus created this situation. You, the one who is supposed to be the one knocking on the door... Jesus has made your friend [the one answering the door] out as, at least, grouchy. The question we should ask is, "Jesus, why have you made my friend out to be such a selfish grouch?"

We'll have to look at the original text to see the problem here. The original tells us that the approach **you** have taken to knocking on your friend's door is to KEEP ON KNOCKING, AND KNOCKING, AND KNOCKING."

[Luke 11:8] I tell you, even if he (your friend the home owner) will not get up and give him (you) anything just because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

[Comment] So let us make it clear about the situation so far. You have a friend, who for our purposes we have made it YOU. Someone has come to visit you from a long journey and you haven't got any food to offer him. You have gone next door and continued pounding on their door until they have come to answer it. Let's take verse 8 apart and understand more. Jesus says to you, his disciple, that the one you went to for bread wouldn't give you anything even though you are his friend - he just won't, he's just not going to - not now, not ever! But, because you are shameless in your approach to knocking continually, on and on, on, and on... he will get up and give you as much as you need. Now, before you get the wrong idea... Jesus is not telling you how to go next door and get bread at midnight! The next verse will tell all.

[Luke 11:9-13] "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. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened. 11 Now which one of you fathers will his son ask for a fish, and instead of a fish, he will give him a snake? 12 Or he will even ask for an egg, and his father will give him a scorpion? 13 So if you, despite 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?"

[Comment] I trust you have just read those 5 verses. Verse 13, the last verse - "So, if you, despite being evil [represented by

your continuous obnoxious knocking], know how to give good gifts to your children [remember how the home owner protected his children], how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Ever feel like God just isn't listening? Ever feel alone, like perhaps, God doesn't really care? What Jesus has been telling you is... if you have to be, be shameless in your knocking on His door. For by knocking on His door... the way will be opened unto you! Be shameless in your asking Him. For by asking Him will the answers you seek be given to you! Be shameless in your seeking Him. For it is by seeking Him that you will be found!

The whole previous chapter has been aimed at getting the gospel readers to see the route to true faith. The route He tried to teach during His earthly ministry, and the route we all must follow in finding Him to be our Savior. Jesus is not just a man to believe in! He is, in fact, God.

In Matthew Chapter 7:7-12 we have some parallel verses.

[Matthew 7:7-12] 7 "Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself"

The Postlude to the Story

As we leave this story in Luke's gospel the next event begins a downward trend. Jesus had cast out a "mute demon," a demon causing lifelong muteness in this man, and many were amazed, **[Luke 11:15]** "But some of them said, "He casts out the demon by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." After some dialog Jesus tells them, "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

This is a clear message to those who read and have heard this gospel. Our lesson told us about the preparation of Jesus' disciples - the one who doesn't listen to the words of Jesus... rejects Him. Then He tells them to go into the countryside and find homes where the gospel will be accepted. Those who reject Jesus, will be rejected. Those who accept Jesus, will be accepted.

It is Luke that tells us about the "good father who gives good gifts to his children" and the friend who comes knocking at his door. "Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find, keep knocking, and it will be opened to you."
[Matthew 7:7]

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

1. Why is it important that Luke placed the story of the sending of the 72 disciples and the Good Samaritan, just before our "Friend at midnight" story?

2. What is the purpose of all the characters in our story to be "friends?"

3. What is the purpose of telling us about the man answering the door having children?

4. Why is our story immediately preceded by Jesus' teaching of "The Lord's Prayer?"

5. Why is it important that both Luke and Matthew remind us, "So, if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...?"

6. What is the gift that we should be telling about to those we witness to as a result of this teaching of Jesus?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Why is it important that Luke placed the story of the sending of the 72 disciples and the Good Samaritan, just before our "Friend at midnight" story?

Jesus is teaching His disciples the process of "soul winning." Find your audience, remind yourself of your position in Christ and the love you should have for your neighbor.

2. What is the purpose of all the characters in our story to be "friends?"

This is a story about how believers are to approach our God. When you have a request of God, you come as His friend.

3. What is the purpose of telling us about the man answering the door having children?

This is also a story about how believers are to approach our God as His children, how He only gives good gifts.

4. Why is our story immediately preceded by Jesus' teaching of "The Lord's Prayer?"

Our story, "The Friend at Midnight," is preceded by six chapters identifying Jesus, His miracles, His blessings, and the gathering of His disciples. This event is the last positive moment in these six chapters. The giving of this important prayer instructs His disciples the basic ingredients for communicating with their Heavenly Father. Identifying Him as your heavenly Father. Giving worship to Him before you bring your needs before Him. Remembering that here on earth we await His coming Kingdom. Acknowledging that it is He who supplies our daily needs. Repentance and forgiveness go hand and hand in maintaining our holy relationship with Him. Always asking Him to intercede for us and lead us into holiness as a way of life.

5. Why is it important that both Luke and Matthew remind us, "So, if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children..."?"

Both writers wish to tell us that Jesus is making a very clear statement... about the goodness of the gifts our heavenly Father gives us. For if evil fathers give good gifts... how much better will be the gifts of a Holy, forgiving, merciful, graceful, heavenly Father!

6. What is the gift that we should be telling about to those we witness to as a result of this teaching of Jesus?

For those whom we find willing to allow us to talk about Jesus, for those whom we now consider to be our neighbors, for, those who are willing to listen and understand, "So, if you, despite 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?"

References

* Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation of the Scriptures*, Edinburgh, 1898

** *The New American Standard Bible*, Zondervan, 1995

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Jeremiah 18:15
"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2025-04-26 updated