

Title: BIG  
Text: Luke 11.5-13  
Theme: God loves to give the best  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: God loves to give the best to his children

My family has a NCAA basketball tournament bracket competition every year. The grandkids tend to pick teams based on mascots and colors, and the adults try for the crown. We are a rather competitive bunch. The least competitive and least interested in the whole bunch is Cathi. So, imagine our consternation when after the first two rounds, her bracket was not only in first place in our little league by a fairly wide margin, but she was in the top 1% of over 25,000,000 brackets filled out on the ESPN app. To add insult to injury, ESPN sent her a notification informing her of how well she is doing. (PIC) All week long I've been living with miss snarky asking me on a regular basis if I happened to check her bracket lately and how far ahead is she and what is my score? If you are trying to predict a winner, you try to be informed. You want to know how did this team stack up against others? If team A beat team B by 15 points and team B beat team C by 15 points, you are fairly confident that if A plays C that **How Much More** will team A win that game. That is logical and reasonable.

This is called "a fortiori" argument. A fortiori means "from the stronger." If a weaker point is true then a stronger point is even more likely to be true. Jesus concludes his teaching on prayer with a story that includes this argument. It is easy to see his point.

Read Text:

Jesus taught his disciples what to pray about. Now he tells them this story in order to motivate them to pray. If you don't pray, it is either because you don't believe in God, or you don't believe that you need God or that God is good or great. This story addresses the issue of God's goodness.

There is a lot of attention given to food in the gospels. I mentioned a few months ago, that one person noted that Jesus basically ate his way through the gospel accounts and there is much truth to that. Here is another story about food but I suspect that some of us may not appreciate the full weight of it, simply because we live in a different culture. But those listening to Jesus tell this story would feel their hearts racing, and panic setting in. This man had a big problem.

### 1. **A Big Problem** (5-6)

Some of you have friends and even family at times who visit from out of the area, but they do not want to inconvenience you, so they stay at a hotel and then you guys meet up for dinner or some other event. In the days of the NT and the OT as well, the average person had no category for that at all. Hospitality was hugely important. If you google Arabian hospitality, then you will get a sense of it. It is legendary. The guest is treated as if he is the master of the house for the length of his stay and the host will assume the position of a servant to wait on him and provide

for the guest any and everything. If we are the guest, we feel like we are imposing and we don't want to be a bother and don't want people to go out their way, but that is not the world of the Bible. Hospitality was so ingrained that (I know this sounds intense) it was viewed as the right of the traveler. One source I read said that it would not necessarily occur to the traveler to thank the host as if the host was doing the traveler a favor. That is not the case now, but it was a bit more then. It was the duty and honor of the host to do this. Being prepared to welcome a guest by providing lodging, refreshment, food, protection, even gifts was hugely important. There were clearly understood rules of etiquette. Therefore, this man has a big problem. He not only has a traveler who has arrived on a journey, but the traveler is a friend and the host is duty bound to provide some food for his friend. It is also possible that the host had been a guest in his friend's home. Either way it is inconceivable that a host would not have bread for his friend. We get a sense of how big a problem this is, because the big problem motivates a big ask.

## 2. A Big Ask (5-6)

It's midnight and the host is panicking. He has no bread and there is no 7-11 or 24-hr grocery store. You made bread daily for what you needed. This guy has no bread and I'm guessing that his guest does not know it. He sneaks out of the house and goes to a neighbor he thinks may have bread. A typical home was a one-room deal. The cooking and eating were often done outside, so the family is bedded down and asleep. In this case the neighbor had children, and again, I am guessing little children because they are all in the same bed (likely on a mat on the floor) as the neighbor and probably his wife. Because he is calling to his neighbor, I picture the panicked host as standing outside his neighbor's window and calling him in hushed tones in order to wake him up, but not the entire neighborhood.

"Joseph, Joseph, you awake? Hey, Joseph, friend, buddy-ol-pal, it's me, Barnabas. I got a problem, man. A friend of mine just showed up to stay with me and I've got no food for him and I have nowhere else to go. Friend, lend me three loaves." He is playing some relational cards. **"Friend, lend me three loaves."**

"Barnabas, what are you doing asking me at this time of the night? We are done for the day. I finally got everybody down, the kids are sleeping, and I'm sorry, but no, I can't get up and give you anything."

Some of you are blessed with young kids who are good sleepers. They will fall asleep at the table, you can pick them up, lay them in bed and they won't move for 10 hours. Many of you can only dream of that. Of course, if the kid isn't sleeping, you ain't sleeping either. And there are times in the middle of the night when you are so desperate for your kid to sleep, that if Baal promised to get your kid to sleep, you'd probably erect a statue and bow down to it, just to get some relief. We don't know all the particulars here, but this dad is not interested in helping. This is a big ask on the part of his neighbor and even though he is being a little out of order in terms of social etiquette, this big ask is too big. No. I won't help you.

## 3. A Big No (7)

It is worth noting that “friend” appears 3x in the first two verses, all from the perspective of the host. The host views his neighbor as his friend. He has a friend who shows up and he calls his neighbor, “friend.” However, his neighbor does not call him “friend” in return, because in this moment, the neighbor is not feeling the friend thing. “Look, if I get up and get you some food, I’m going to wake up the whole family. No, I can’t do it.”

Now what? Going back home and informing his guest that he will run out first thing in the morning as soon as the vendors show up in the marketplace is not an option. He simply cannot be without food for his guest. The shame of begging from his neighbor is not nearly as great as the shame of not having food. So, the big ask turns into a big pain.

#### 4. **A Big Pain** (8)

Jesus describes the neighbor who is asking as being impudent. This is the only place in the entire NT where this word is used. It is a word that means the opposite of modesty, respect, decorum or what is proper. It is not proper to pester and irritate your neighbor when he has asked you to stop and go away. But the guy is impudent. He won’t go away and won’t stop asking. Notice what Jesus says in v.8. The man in bed (probably on a mat on the floor) is not willing to get up and give his neighbor bread based on friendship. He weighs it out. Getting up, finding the bread, opening the door, likely moving a wooden or iron bar that functioned as a lock, would all contribute to waking up everyone. So, in friendship (or neighbor) vs. family, family wins. But because the guy won’t go away and is a big pain and won’t stop asking, this means that all the kids are going to wake up anyway. So, the man is willing to get up and give him bread because impudence vs. family means impudence wins.

This scenario is a bit humorous. And I don’t think that Jesus is saying that every host would do this. After all the host is either going to look bad to his guest or look bad to his neighbor. Because the host is so determined to get some bread, he is willing to exasperate his neighbor in order to get what he wants. Now, go back to verse 5. This helps us understand the question that Jesus is putting forward to his disciples. Which of you has the nerve to do this to your neighbor? Which of you are so bold that you will wake up your neighbor and his family so you can get some bread? This is the tension that Jesus wants us to feel so that we are ready to hear what he says next. Do you really want to make your neighbor that upset? Is it really worth it? But that question is so we will understand a Big Truth, which Jesus explains in verses 9-10.

#### 5. **A Big Truth** (9-10)

Your heavenly Father is not an inconvenienced neighbor. Even the inconvenienced neighbor gave up and gave in, but God is not like that. So, when you pray; ask and keep asking and it will be given to you. Seek and keep seeking and you will find. Knock and keep knocking and it will be opened to you. Jesus uses three words as three commands to emphasize how necessary it is for us to pray and keep praying. Asking, underscores the very act of praying and talking with God. Seeking underscores our need to pursue the kingdom of God and knocking emphasizes the idea

that we are coming into the very room (presence of God) when we pray. Again, Jesus, the Son of God is telling us that this is a great thing to do. The point is obvious. You would be hesitant to bother your neighbor because while you are desperate, your request is a major inconvenience to him and you know it. In fact, he tells you so. That is not the case with God! God is not bothered by your request. In fact, he delights so much in you coming to him and depending upon him for all of these things, that he commands you to do it.

Jesus then repeats these commands in v.10 so we are reassured of this. For everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds, and the one who knocks, it will be opened to you. What a reassurance! God loves to supply your needs. In fact, God is a big giver!

#### 6. **A Big Giver** (11-12)

Look back at v.5. Verses 5-7 are a question. Jesus loves to ask questions so we will be engaged with what he is saying and follow along. So, after getting us to feel the tension of the first question he raised, he answers it. The first question centered on the relationship of a neighbor to a neighbor. Now here in verse 11-12, he asks a second question. This is designed to do the same thing by engaging his audience, only now the example raises the intensity volume from a neighbor to a family, specifically to a father and a son. Of course, this is intentional since Jesus taught us to pray by saying "Father." Jesus is saying, think with me! Follow the logic! If your son asks you for a fish, will you give him a serpent? Do you know any dad that would do that? "What father among you..." there may be someone who would do that, but they would be deranged and twisted and horrendously abusive. No, if your son asks for a fish (something he needs to eat), you aren't going to give him a serpent that could bite him and cause him pain and death. If he asks for an egg (again to eat because he is hungry), you aren't going to give him a scorpion what would be deadly to him. Would you do that? NO!

#### 7. **A Big GIFT** (13)

Here is the BAM moment! If you then, who are evil.... Wait a second. Did Jesus just call his disciples evil? Yes. We are sinners and compared to God, we are not good. But even though we are sinners, we are certainly not as sinful as we could be. And even as fallen sinners, we retain enough of the image of God, even in our fallenness that if our sons asked us for something that was necessary, we would not give them something that would harm them. Even we know how to give good gifts to our children.

Where did dads learn to give? They learned to give from the ultimate dad – God! God is the ultimate Father who is the ultimate giver and He always gives what is good. So, what are we expecting Jesus to say here? If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their kids, how much more does the heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to his children. But he doesn't say exactly that, does he? He says, "**how much more** will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Jesus says that the Father will give the Spirit which is infinitely better than the things we usually ask for. So, what is the Big Gift? It is God.

There are two bedrock truths that Jesus is putting in place as the foundation for our prayers. But wait. Prayer is the breathing in and out of a genuine believer. Prayer is the natural act of walking with God. Therefore, these two bedrock truths are actually foundation to our entire lives of walking with and relating to God. 1) God is good and 2) will give you what is good. Now, let's tease this out. What is the ultimate good? God is. In fact, God is so good that he is the greatest gift. If God doesn't give you what you want, or even what you think you need, it is only because he is giving you something better. What is better than the gifts? God is! In view of this, let's go back through the story.

First of all, the host has a big problem. He has a need that he cannot meet and his only hope is a reluctant neighbor who doesn't want to help him. He has a big problem. So, while we face problems all the time, the one we turn to is not reluctant, but is our good Father. So that changes our problems from big problems to big opportunities.

Secondly, what appears to be a big ask is a small request. Paul built on this very point in Romans 8 when he said (v.32), "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him, graciously give us all things." God already gave us the greatest (again himself when he gave us Jesus who died for us). That was the hardest thing for God to do. Anything else is easy. What appears to us to be a big ask is an easy thing.

Thirdly, God is not a big NO! If God does not say "Yes" to your request it is because he is doing something better. Always. That is hard to remember, but necessary to never forget. God is our Father who always acts as the ultimate Father for the good of his children.

Fourthly, you are never a big pain in coming to God. Instead of being a bother, we are commanded to ask, seek and knock so that we can enjoy him.

When our kids were young, we had a neighbor across the street named Chuck. Chuck loved our kids and whenever they had to sell candy for a fundraiser, they made a beeline to Chuck's house. Chuck would go through this little game of pretending to figure out what candy he would buy and would finally ask them what their favorite was. They would tell him and then he would buy that and give it to them which ensured that they would always come over to his house to sell him candy. What did Chuck get out of the deal? Nothing, except the affection of three kids who thought he was an awesome neighbor. If Chuck could do that to kids who were not even his, HOW MUCH MORE does God do that for kids who are his.

I thought that was such a wonderful thing that I started doing that with the kids here who were selling candy bars for school stuff. One time after pretending that I was having a difficult time making up my mind and then asking the kid what his favorite one was, and buying it and then giving it to him, he grabbed it and said, "I knew you'd do that." And ran off. Beloved, that is the attitude we are to have when we pray. We know that God is good and gives the best gifts to his kids, even himself. And we know he will do it.