

The Unthinkable ~ Luke 11:1-13 ~ October 7, 2007

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” So says Martin Luther. But if prayer is that vital, why do I at times feel so inadequate in it? Prayer *surely is* the breathing of life with God, but it *surely does not* seem to come as naturally as breathing. It seems to me that there are a thousand obstacles to prayer that threaten to strangle our prayer life with Christ. There is our tendency to distraction, our lack of discipline, our laziness. And these are not royal “ours”, this is my laziness, my capacity for distraction, my want of discipline. But even more dangerous than these obstacles, are our misconstrued ideas about God which lead to less than adequate manners of praying. Ideas about God which are either too-hard, leaving us feeling like He is disinterested so we only talk to Him when things are really bad, treating prayer kind of like those masks that drop down from the ceiling of an airplane in an emergency instead of our daily breathing. Or ideas that are too-soft which keep us from recognizing that He is Holy and need to confess our sin to Him if we are to have intimacy with Him. These misconceptions keep the heart from opening wide to the true God. You see, a healthy prayer life goes hand in hand with an intimate knowledge of who God is. We learn how to pray well only as we come to know the One to whom we pray, and we come to know the One *to whom* we pray only *as* we pray. So we need something to help us see God clearly so that we can pray rightly to Him. How about a story? That always seems to help.

But careful now. Stories can turn things upside down. Remember that quote that Ellis read last week from Roy Clements about the nature of these parables that Jesus tells, “charming little narratives [they are,] full of familiar images that easily capture your attention. But in reality they’re a kind of Stealth bomber, specially designed to evade our psychological defenses, insinuating themselves inside our mind in spite of every barricade we may seek to erect, and then dropping a highly explosive charge targeted at the most vulnerable level of our spiritual complacency.” I’m excited. The parable we are focusing on this morning is no different. It too seeks to swoop in, destroy false notions of God that we have that hinder us in prayer, and by doing so equip us to walk in greater intimacy with the Lord.

But before we hear the Lord teach us how to pray, we see Him in the act. Luke notes that “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Lk 5:16). But here in Luke 11 we actually see Him in the act and learn how He prayed when He went away. Luke 11:1:

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples to pray.”

The only instance that the Gospels record of the disciples specifically asking Jesus to teach them something is right here: Lord, teach us to pray. In a sermon by Darrell Johnston that has helped me a great deal in understanding this passage, he notes that the disciples ask not, “teach us how to heal people,” or “teach us how to cast out demons,” or “teach us how to preach.” But “teach us how to pray.” They must have sensed that all his healing, and all his casting out demons, and all his preaching came from right here, from prayer. So quite perceptively, they ask, “Lord teach us to pray.”

“He said to them,” verse 2, “when you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.”

Now you know we can probe the depths of that prayer for some time. Suffice it here just to note that it teaches us that we pray to a dear Father, a fact that will come out again at the end of our passage, and that our first request before Him, a request that puts all the others in their proper place is: “Father, hallowed be your name.” The first words in prayer that Jesus puts on our lips, the words that give the spirit that is to drive and fill all those words that are to follow are, “Father, make it so your name is revered here as it is in heaven. Make it so that every deception that keeps people from seeing and loving you is taken away. Let the earth and all that is in it rejoice and honor you for who you are! May your good reputation spread for your glory and our good. May you be recognized and prized for who you are. Lord, hallowed be your name.”

But How Will the Father Respond If We Pray Jesus’ Way?

But after teaching us this model prayer that is to shape how we pray, this, “Father, hallowed be your name,” prayer, a question naturally arises in the minds of his disciples and in our minds. **How will the Father respond to us if we pray Jesus’ way?** In response to that question, Jesus tells us the story we were all waiting for. I think I hear planes.

Verse 5: Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.” Then the one inside answers, “Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed, I can’t get up and give you anything.” I tell you, though

he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness [literally: *anaideia*, which means shamelessness. “because of his shamelessness”], he will get up and give him as much as he needs.” End of story. Now do not worry if the bombs are not going off yet.

Put Yourself In Their Sandals

We actually need to put ourselves in the skin of the first hearers of this parable if it is to land on us with full force. As you listen to Jesus in the sandals of one of his first disciples, you can easily picture yourself as member of a small village in Palestine, sleeping quietly in your bed on the floor with your family in your one room home when there is a quiet knock at the door. You rise easily, trying not to disturb your family and unlatch the door to recognize in the moonlight that a friend of yours has arrived from a journey. You invite him in. The family is now up. Though it is not an everyday occurrence to have a friend arrive late at night like this, it is not unheard of. And though it may be a bit inconvenient, you know that you now have the obligation to welcome your friend warmly and provide a meal for him to rejuvenate him after his journey. **Such was the custom and such were the bonds of friendship.**

One problem, the main utensils for the meal have run out until the bread is baked again tomorrow. You have none of the flat round loaves from which you tear a chunk to dip into a common bowl of food in the center of the table from which all would eat, you have no forks or spoons so to speak. And you know that you need more than one loaf because, though one loaf is enough for one man, it is custom to give more than what one could be expected to eat, as is still the case in many parts of the East still today. The custom is to provide amply. Hence the need for three loaves. But you have none. Big problem. As you exchange pleasantries with your friend, you realize that you are in a bit of a tough spot. **The custom of hospitality is so part and parcel of the culture that your honor is at stake in your ability to welcome your friend adequately. But not just your honor.**

As Kenneth Bailey points out, know your guest is not just yours, but the guest of the whole village, on behalf of whom you are now responsible to act. Not only is *your* honor at stake in the way you respond to your guest, but the honor of your whole village is involved. A guest to the town is a guest of all. But **you** are now representing the village to your surprise friend. You sense the weight of your honor and that of your village.

But even more so, as you listen to the story, you know what friendship means. Jesus uses the word “friend” four times in this short story, and for a reason.

“Suppose one of you has a **friend**, and he goes to him at midnight and says **friend**, lend to me because a **friend** of mine has come”
Then later: “though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his **friend**”

As you sit there in those sandals, you know the emphasis on friendship is no mistake. This is no stranger that comes to visit you, but your friend. And the bonds of friendship in your culture are significant. You are not friends with just anybody. And an ideal equal friendship entails an open sharing spirit with regards to possessions. As Jesus implied in another place, John 15:15, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for *everything* that I learned from my Father *I have made known to you.*” Friendship means sharing with your friend what you have as the other needs it. And it means almost taking the other’s honor as if it were your own. **Not only is the honor of the village at play here, but this is also a friend. This only intensifies the need.** You want to provide for him. But you have run out of the basic staple of the meal. What do you do? Though the whole village wants to make a good impression and anyone could be called upon to help, it is late. **So you go to one of your *sleeping* friends in the village to feed your *surprise* friend, who is now a guest of the village.**

Your sense of shame compels you. And though later in Western history the word “shame” will develop negative connotations meaning something to the effect of “I’m a rotten person because of such and such”, now, as you sit in those sandals, it is a positive trait. As one scholar, commenting on the way the idea is used in your time, says:

“Shame is a person’s concern for reputation. It is a positive value by which one seeks to maintain or protect his or her honor. If one is unable to maintain his honor, or if his peers do not acknowledge his claim to self-worth, then the person is shamed, i.e. dishonored and disgraced. **A person with no concern for his honor or reputation is shameless.**”¹

And another,

“As the basis of repute, honor and shame are synonymous, since shamelessness is dishonorable; a person of good repute is taken to have both [honor and shame], one of evil repute is credited with neither . . . As such, they are the constituents of virtue.”²

¹ Ronald A. Simkins, “Honor-Shame,” in Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, 603-604.

² Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status” in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, edited by J.G. Peristiany, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 44.

So *shamelessness* in this situation would take the form of you not acting as if your honor or the honor of your village were at stake. It would mean throwing off custom and social restraint and doing what was easiest. You tell your friend, “I’m glad you are here but from your journey and look forward to seeing you in the morning.” But your sense of shame compels you. So as you step out into the midnight air, you are acting honorably. **You by no means are acting shamelessly**, which would be to disregard the bond of friendship with your surprise guest and thus bring dishonor upon yourself and your village. Instead you are acting quite honorably and right. **Hopefully your *sleeping* friend will act with the same sense of honor when you go to wake him to fetch bread for your *surprise* friend.**

So, now we see three important things that are crucial for understanding the parable: One, the culture of communal hospitality and honor which required everyone in the village to be hospitable if they were to maintain honor. Two, the reciprocal bonds of give-and-take friendship, which disposed people to looking out for the interests of their friend. And three, we understand that the ideas of shame and honor are nearly synonymous, and to act shamelessly is to act dishonorably, without regard for shame. So that you, as you strike out into the night, are by no means acting shamelessly, but just the opposite. Now we are in a better position to hear the parables. Listen to the story again with our ears now set in their proper setting.

Now Hear This “Harmless” Little Story Again . . .

We have just heard Jesus teach us the prayer beginning, “Father hallowed by your name.” And the question arises, “How will the Father respond when we pray Jesus’ way?” And he continues:

LK 11:5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

“Good man, good man” we hear murmured quietly in the crowd. Jesus continues:

LK 11:7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'

We hear mutters again, not so quiet now: “What?!” “Absurd”, “Shame” “Shame” “Unthinkable.” Jesus closes with his point:

⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of his anaideia, his shamelessness, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

Why “Boldness” or “Persistence” in Our Translations? And Where Is the Focus?

Now traditional western interpretations of this text tend to do two things wrong with this passage: One, they give an incorrect meaning of the word anaideia, and two they apply the word to the wrong person in the story. We will take each of these quickly in turn.

First, you will notice that in your English translation that the word is commonly translated either persistence or boldness. The word actually means, “shamelessness” as a thoroughly negative quality. Persistence is simply not an available meaning of this word. We do not see the Host persisting in his request at all in the parable, and that meaning of the word did not even come into existence into the 3rd Century AD. This is written before the end of the 1st century. If you were to find a 1st Century Greek dictionary the meaning of the word would be “shamelessness” without a hint of the idea of persistence. Shamelessness in the sense of acting in a way that flouts honorable behavior and social guidelines. And most every scholar recognizes that this is the original meaning of the word.

The problem comes when some try to reconcile that meaning with the parable without the understanding of a shame based Eastern culture. And they say then that well it must mean persistence because the following verses speak of how we must ask, seek, and knock, or it must mean boldness because the man is striking out at night. But, his striking out is because a friend came to him and he needs to act honorably toward him. And if the idea of boldness is the focus, he is surely bold right from the start and we do not see him getting any bolder as the parable progresses, so why is he initially rejected? If the idea is boldness, he’s been bold, he’s ventured out, he’s made the request, why is he denied? And the detriment to both these translations is that they turn a negative quality, shamelessness, into a positive one, either boldness or persistence. **And though in the end, as we will see, the meaning of the parable is positive, the positive meaning behind the sleepy friend’s good actions only comes about by means of his negative experience of shamelessness first.**

Secondly, the word is commonly attributed to the wrong person, as if the focus of the parable were the asker and not the giver. The shamelessness is then attributed to the caller outside, but he is clearly acting in honor. Yet the sleepy friend

is clearly acting dishonorably. He turns his friend down when he comes on behalf of the honor of the whole village! Shamelessness indeed! This parable is not about how we pray with the focus on us. It is about why we can pray with confidence that God will answer with the focus on Him, the one to whom we are praying. The focus as the parable comes to a close is not the Host of the surprise friend asking outside, it is the actions of the sleepy friend inside. The key question is, What makes him move?

Putting It Together: How Will God Respond? He Won't Shame the Name!

Though the bonds of friendship are not enough to rouse the sleepy man so that he gives what his friend needs, the weight of his "shamelessness" is. Though the would be Host outside is acting honorably this man inside is acting shamelessly in denying his friend's request. No sooner are the words out of his mouth, "Don't bother me. The door is already locked, the kids are in bed. I can't give you anything" when he realizes that his behavior is shameless, it is dishonorable, and if he persists in it he will bring dishonor on himself and his village. So he changes his answer and gives his friend what he needs. Because he feels the sting of his shameless behavior and realizes that if he doesn't change his tune dishonor will be brought upon him and his village, he responds to his friend. **He does in the end act honorably, but not before feeling the sting of his shamelessness even if only for a moment.**

What gets him out of bed is his refusal to bring shame on his name. Hence the TNIV footnote translation that Ellis read:

"though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, **yet to preserve his good name** he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Will the sleeper not act to preserve his good name? **Unthinkable.** No, he will preserve the honor of his name and give his friend as much as he needs. He will not persist in shamelessness but will uphold his honor.

So the reasoning of the parable is much like that in the parable of the Unjust Judge. There too a shady character initially acts wrongly, but in the end does the right thing and so the argument goes, well if this is the case with this poor fellow, **how much more will the heavenly Father respond? The Father who doesn't need to do things wrong before He gets it right?** The message of this parable is this:

Jesus teaches how to pray saying, Father, hallowed by your name and we ask Jesus, how will the Father respond if we pray your way? He answers, if a failing friend will give what is needed to uphold the honor of his name, how much more will your Father in heaven give you what is needed to uphold His

honor in your life? Him bring shame upon the name? Unthinkable! He will not shame the name!

Can you imagine a friend, and a poor one at that, who will not in the end get up and give you what you need to uphold honor? No, you can't imagine that. Well then, can you imagine calling on your Father in the dark of night and being turned away? No, you can't imagine that. Neither can He! Have you considered that the measure of God's commitment to answering you when you pray Jesus' way is the measure of His commitment to the honor of His own name?

Do you see the precious truth that God has so bound Himself up in His covenant to do us good that He has actually connected the future of the honor of His name with our lives? God's commitment to His name translates into God's commitment to His people. 1 Samuel 12:22. The people of Israel don't want God as their King anymore, they want a human king. And Samuel is lamenting over the fact that they are rejecting God as their King and choosing a human king who will place burdens on them. And then he laments saying,

1 Sa 12:22 For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.

Though the Israelites reject God as their King, he remains committed to them, because He has set His love on them and bound them up with the honor of His own name. **And He won't shame the name!** The commitment to His name results in a deep commitment to His people.

How Then Shall We Pray?

As we see, the saints of Old knew this. The happiest saints take no issue with the fact that this is the Father's world, and it is for His honor. Instead, they see that the Father's commitment to His honor is the measure of His commitment to them and the foundation of their joy. They bank their lives on His commitment to hallow His name in their lives. Listen to how they pray:

Remember Moses,

EX 32:9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

EX 32:11 But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?' Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' " ¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Remember David in Psalm 23:2-3:

PS 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
PS 23:3 he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Remember Psalm 25:

PS 25:11 For the sake of your name, O LORD,
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

Remember Jesus teaching us to pray, "Abba Father, hallowed be your name!", and promising, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"? (John 14:13-14). So when we pray, all of it is gathered up and placed under the goal of the glory of the Father's name. How will the Father respond when we pray Jesus way? He will not shame the name!

This is encouraging indeed! The Father invites us to come to Him through Jesus and lay our requests before Him, and as we do that, all with a mind to God's name being hallowed, He says, "Oh I'm eager to hear. And be sure, I won't shame the name."

Our Response to the Promise of God's Response

But another question arises when we hear that God will not shame the name. How then should we respond to the Father's promise to uphold the honor of His name? The answer to that question comes in the verses that follow the parable. I won't shame my name . . .

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him that knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9-10)

The verbs here are in the present tense carrying the sense of “keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.” But that doesn't mean that these words are telling us to just keep on keeping on in prayer when we don't get an answer. The truth of the need for persistence in prayer is taken up in Scripture, but this is not the passage to go to find it. Why? Because the emphasis of these words is not “keep on asking even if you don't immediately receive” (though it is true that we are to do that), the emphasis of the passage is that we will receive! This isn't “Ask, seek, knock and keep at it even if you do not get an answer. This is, “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking because you will then keep on receiving, keep on finding, and keep on seeing the door opened before you! Again:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him that knocks, the door will be opened.”

This is an exuberant invitation on the basis of the parable's promise that the Lord will not shame His name. The Father is saying, “So come! Come and pray to me my children, and I will answer you to uphold the honor of my name in your life to my glory and your joy! Why do you wait? Come!” He invites us to try Him out on this one. Venture out in prayer on this basis that the Father will not shame His name. If a failing friend will uphold the honor of his name by giving what is needed, how much more will the Father in heaven not shame the name when we bring our needs to Him?

He's eager to respond. So often we do not receive because we do not ask (Ja 4:2). We don't ask for righteousness, or the strength to obey, or insight into God's word, or to experience a deeper obedience and consecration to God by means of a fuller work of the Spirit in our lives. What's keeping us from seeking God for more of His work in our lives and in our church? Would we not be a happier people if we sensed God working more and more in our lives to bring His name honor? Would that not only bring Him glory but also bring our hearts greater joy? We desire for Him

to be honored in us and among us. What is keeping us from asking Him to do whatever is needed so that His name is glorified in our lives *to the max*? It is certainly not because God is unwilling to answer when we pray, “Lord, hallowed be your name.” No, he is willing, but will we ask?

How should we respond to the Father’s promise to not shame the name? We should keep on asking, seeking, knocking, and keep on receiving what He has to give us.

The Greatest Gift of All

One last question. As we consider that Lord’s invitation to keep on asking so we keep on receiving, it makes us wonder, what will the Lord give us? If we say to the Lord, “Ok Father, I see you are committed to honoring your name through my prayer as I bring my needs before you, and I’m going to keep on asking so I keep on receiving.” What will He then give us? He promises only good gifts, indeed, the Greatest Gift of all. The passage concludes:

“Which of you father’s, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13).

The Father promises to give only what is good! If we “evil” human fathers know how to give good gifts to our kids, the heavenly Father will do no less. And we fathers do know how to give good gifts to our kids. It comes almost naturally.

Illustration of Judah and me.

If I, a sinful man, know how to treat my son with love and give him only what is best for him, will our heavenly Father give us gifts that will harm us? No! He will do no less that I do for Judah, indeed He will do far more. He is able to give gifts that far surpass what an earthly Father could ever give. He promises the greatest gift of all to those who bank on the Father’s promise not to shame the name by continuing to ask and receive. What they receive in greater measure is the Holy Spirit.

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven *give the Holy Spirit* to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

There is an intimate connection between the greater work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and prayer in the Gospel of Luke. Each of the synoptic gospels includes a full account of Jesus baptism and the Spirit descending upon Him visibly after coming out of the water. But only Luke notes that the Spirit came down *as Jesus prayed*. Luke chapter 3:21:

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And *as he was praying*, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21-22).

And throughout the gospel, more than in any other of the gospels, we notice Jesus often going away to pray. And throughout the gospel, more than any other of the gospels, we notice Luke pointing out that the Spirit was with Jesus leading Him, directing Him, being with Him in power to heal. Is this connection a coincidence? By no means. As we keep on praying “Lord, hallowed be your name” He says, “I won’t shame the name! Here, receive more of the work of my Holy Spirit in your life, your fellowship, and my name will be honored among you!” Tell me, can you imagine a greater gift? Keep on seeking the honor of the Lord’s name in prayer, and keep on receiving the sweet gift of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Go on, just try Him out on this one. See if He is not willing, more than willing, to answer you.

Will He Not Get Up In The Night And Give Us What We Need?

In conclusion, as we pray Jesus’ way saying . . .

“Father, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation?

. . . how will the Father respond?

Will He turn you away when you pray, “Lord, lead me not into temptation”?
Unthinkable!

Will He turn you away when you pray, “Lord, forgive me my sins as I forgive others”?
He will not turn you away!

Will He turn you away when you pray, “Give me each day my daily bread”? No! Unthinkable! He will give you what you need so that whether you eat or drink or whatever you do you may do it to the glory of God.

Will He turn you away when you pray, “Your kingdom come”? Never!

Will He turn you away when you pray, “Father, hallowed be your name!” No! Unthinkable! He will not turn you away. He will not shame the name! He will *never* shame the name! Go ahead, test Him on this one, and know a greater work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Indeed, let’s test Him on it now, and pray together as the worship team comes up.

Prayer

Hear Our Praises

May our homes be filled with dancing

May our streets be filled with joy

May injustice bow to Jesus

As the people turn to pray

Chorus:

From the mountain to the valley

Hear our praises rise to You

From the heavens to the nations

Hear our singing fill the air

May our light shine in the darkness

As we walk before the cross

May Your glory fill the whole earth

As the water o'er the seas

Bridge

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

(repeat)

Benediction

JN 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing . . . ⁷ If you remain in me

and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Go in peace.

Other Helpful Quotes:

Joel Green on the focus of the parable:

“Luke . . . is not so much concerned with the technology of prayer as he is with the shaping of prayer in relation to an accurate recognition of the one to whom prayer is offered. That is, Luke shaped this narrative unit not with an eye to the “how-to” of prayer but with a central emphasis on the worldview leading to and informing prayer.”

Gary Inrig on interpreting verse 13 as a believer (i.e. one who already has the Spirit):

“What are we to make of this statement? We know that the Holy Spirit does not come by invitation but by salvation. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he means the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (John 7:37-39). Since the day of Pentecost this promise has instantaneously been fulfilled in the life of everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. As God’s children, we do not ask to receive the Spirit, as if we do not possess Him in our lives. He is God’s good gift to every believer.

“It is tempting then to dismiss the promise in verse 13 as referring to another time and place. After all, the Lord was speaking prior to Pentecost. His words must apply to that era. But in no period of God’s program was the Holy Spirit received by asking for Him. What can He mean? Two passages in Ephesians give us a clue. Paul prays that the glorious Father “may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better” (Eph. 1:17). He has already made it clear that believers are sealed and indwelt by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), but this prayer is for a specific ministry of God’s Spirit to us, beyond His indwelling. Paul prays, as well, in Ephesians 3:16, that “He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” HE is asking that the indwelling Spirit minister in a particular way in the lives of God’s children.”

A good one by Henri Nouwen:

"The question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much are you going to accomplish? Can you show some results? But: Are you in love with Jesus?... Do you know the incarnate God?"

– Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*.