Sermon: **Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say this”** (Luke 11.2)

 **How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.** (Luke 11.13)

When it comes to prayer (& other religious practices like Bible study, fasting, communion) most people have questions: How often, where, when? What do I say? Does it work? Let’s look at these in turn.

[1] How often, where, when?

Little boy at bedtime prays loudly for a new bike for his birthday. His mother says, “God’s not deaf” and he replies, “No, but grandma is!”

Perhaps you were brought up to pray by bedside before going to sleep; some still do.

Others choose a different frequency, place and/or time. Is there one right answer?

1st TEXT – Jesus gives no answer to these questions – it is up to us. **The act of praying is enough.**

[2] What do I say?

At a bomb shelter, bombs are raining down. There is a call to prayer. Someone says, “I don’t know any”. “You must do!”, comes the reply. So… “For what we are about to receive…”

1st TEXT seems to answer the question, but as in the story it might not always be the right prayer.

2nd TEXT hints at one answer – Holy Spirit. What does this mean?
In Acts (written also by Luke) receiving Spirit is what marks someone to be Christian (see 2.4, 11.15, 19.1-6)

Receiving and thus praying for Holy Spirit makes possible the rest of prayer. **So begin there!**

[3] Does it work?

A boat is sinking. “Does anyone know how to pray?” “I do” “Good, we’re a life-jacket short, so you are the one who does not get one!”

Does prayer work? It all depends upon what you mean by ‘work’.

If you mean does God wave a celestial magic wand, then probably not.
If you mean always getting what you ask for, then probably not. 2nd TEXT again.

Imagine limiting our conversations with friends/family to set times or places! Imagine a set formula for what to say to them! Imagine judging these conversations in terms of ‘do they work’? Prayer = relationship.

Prayer is ‘working’ if we increasingly turn to God in praise, thanks and in our needs and the needs of others.

Prayer is not so much asking God to do stuff, but seeking to see God at work and joining in.

Trouble praying? **Treat God as you do your best friend**, and in time God will become that best friend.