

- More Holy Spirit
- Luke 11:1-11: Nervous about this message – starts well but a controversial application at the end – stick with me!
- The key to this passage is the last verse – **its about praying for the Holy Spirit**. Its not about stuff, its not about prosperity, its not about well being (directly), its about praying for more of Jesus so that we are equipped for service to the Kingdom; how much more of the Holy Spirit will the Father give? Hence more Holy Spirit.
- **During ministry times** – it’s a way to lead – Come Holy Spirit; More Holy Spirit; More Jesus – we ask for more...well that’s biblical! Jesus taught the disciples that as part of his teaching on prayer.
- He wants us to ask for more!
- The Lord’s prayer – we know this already
- 11 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.”**
- ² He said to them, **“When you pray, say:**
- **“Father,^[a]**
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.^[b]
³ Give us each day our **daily bread.**
⁴ **Forgive us** our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.^[c]
And **lead us not into temptation.^[d]”**
- More Holy Spirit...is the Lords Prayer about it?
- When you pray – assumed; HSp – gives us the words, groans⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)
- God is hallowed , exalted, worshipped; HSp – points to God
- Kingdom is coming ; HSp – acts as a vision of kingdom breakthrough

- Pray for provision ; HSp – daily infilling?
- Pray for forgiveness ; HSp – strength to forgive, release and reconcile
- Release your relationships from encumbrance ;
- Protect us from the distractions that take us off course; HSp – keep us pure and cleansed from sin **But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. – (Gal 5:16)**

- An odd story...
- ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him **at midnight** and say, ‘Friend, **lend me three loaves of bread;** ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and **my children and I are in bed.** I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet **because of your shameless audacity**^[e] he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

- Jesus’ teaching progresses
- ⁹ “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. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
- **Be audacious; be expectant** – ask – given; seek – find; knock – opened
- ²⁰ *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Rev 3:20) – Jesus knocks, we open; we knock he opens*
- **Discernment** journey – 3 years of pushing doors and nobody closed them; but I had times when I just didn’t want to push!; God opens the doors we are meant to walk through
- Good gifts from the Father
- ¹¹ “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for^[f] a **fish**, will give him a *snake* instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an **egg**, will give him a *scorpion*? ¹³ 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!"

- **Be audacious; be expectant; expect good gifts**
- **Us-** fish/eggs? NOT snake/scorpion – duh! **BUT WE ARE EVIL** (separated from God, not of God, not as good as God) and give good gifts – How much more will the Father who is good give good gifts
- **SPECIFICALLY** – the Holy Spirit – come Holy Spirit; not a sports car or a holiday or a good job or a playstation but the Holy Spirit

- What are the Gifts from God
- Creation – breath of life
- Covenant promises
- Law
- Prophets
- His son – the incarnation, Christmas
- Salvation and eternal life, Easter
- The Holy Spirit, Pentecost

- All good gifts.....
- What do we do with those gifts?
- Here is a question. Have you ever thought about the golden calf? We find it in Exodus 32, Moses is up the mountain receiving the law from God on the tablets of stone. Down below the Israelites, thinking Moses has been gone a long time, say "Come make us gods who will go before us". They collect their gold jewelry, melt it and cast it into the idol of a calf and they worship it.
- Now here is the question – **where did the gold come from?** They were slaves in Egypt, they had nothing.. If we look back at chapter 12 we see the flight from Egypt. Pharaoh and the Egyptians are terrified of what the Lord might do next after the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn. So they are ordered out of Egypt.

- Gods gifts made into an idol....
- The Lord makes the Egyptians open to generosity and the Israelites, as instructed, ask for silver and gold and they give it to them. The Israelites plunder the Egyptians, made possible by God. It is a gift from God.
- They took this good gift from God, and made it into an idol that they worshipped instead.
- It is a temptation, even today. To take the gifts from God and make them into an idol.
- What gifts do we now idolise, turning our attention from the gift giver, today?
- Here are two examples....
- 1. Charismatic experience (Warm up)
- One church I know had experienced a season of revival which carried with it the trappings of charismatic experience – ecstatic worship, howling and shouting, uncontrollable laughter, tongues and prophetic words, people falling over and healings.
- It was a season and it was exciting
- 10 years later these things were hankered for and anything less was sub standard and meant that God was not moving
- The Good gift of the Holy Spirit had become an idol that was worshiped meaning that the true movement of God, in the gentle whisper not the earthquake or the fire, was missed. **The experience was worshipped** rather than the God who manifested the experience.
- 2. Christmas...this is the controversial one...
- This needs a bit of explanation and I may have lost you already by even suggesting it. BUT, even though I have a reputation for being a Bah Humbug within the team (carefully cultivated, honestly!) there is a serious point.
- I sent team a clip of Michael McIntyre talking about this time of year. Apart from talking about the strangeness that is November (“I cant believe its November”!) he waxes lyrical about the emotion known as being “Christmassy”.
- “Christmassy...”

- The first couple of weeks of December people will announce that they “don’t feel Christmassy yet” and then one day they will announce “today I felt Christmassy for the first time!”
- And then we enter a season, 6 days between Christmas Day and New Year when most people don’t know what day it is, eat turkey sandwiches with vegetables in that they would never normally do and get confused by the most basic things, like relaxed parking restrictions! Can I park her today or not?
- The problem in context
- Don’t get me wrong. I love Christmas and have very fond memories of family Christmases as a boy, special presents and ridiculous family conversations. Christmas Day, even with the busyness of ordained ministry, with Sarah and the children have been special times and I look forward to spending time with them and catching up with friends.
- **But here is the point.**
- I look forward to family time and catching up with friends the rest of the year too. And no one puts pressure or expectation on those special times (well not often!)
- My thesis today is that “Christmassy” is a gift from God that has become an idol.
- Let me explain...
- This is not a Grinch or Ebenezer scrooge thesis! Believe me.
- To help us along I will make a distinction between the **feast and the festival.**
- To be more precise the feast has become the festival.
- First Christmas...
- Let me tell you about one particular Christmas. It was a couple of months after I met Sarah, my wife. For several years before that I had travelled north to Scotland to spend Christmas with my Mum and Dad. Overnight train to Glasgow, hit the shops 8am Christmas Eve, home by 11. Sorted!
- But this year it had been a particularly busy run up to Christmas, I had just bought a house and I would have had to make arrangements for my cat to be looked after. It occurred to me that I didn’t HAVE to go home at Christmas. I could spend time at home with my cat and have free use of the remote control.

- Christmas expectations....
- I had settled in for the few days at home, I got a phone call from Sarah about dinner time Christmas Eve. Her mum (now my mother in law) had insisted that **I could not spend Christmas on my own** and that I **had to come to them**. It seemed churlish to suggest that I was quite looking forward to time at home with Clive, but I went. It was the first time that I met my future in-laws. But that's another story...
- There are many people for whom **Christmas is not the special day** that society would tell them it should be – those who have lost loved ones, those for whom Christmas holds only sad memories, even violent ones, or memories of separation, those for whom Christmas is just too expensive, those for whom their vocation means that they are never available – health staff, transport staff, carers – the list is long and extensive.
- Yet the cry is that **“We must feel Christmassy”** at this time of the year
- Feasting..
- The feasting at Christmas involves presents, parties, large dinners, snacks, alcohol – lots of it, preparations, travel, larger gatherings than at any time of the year, locked in with people you don't normally see, TV and board games, excess and walking, talking and catching up – its different for every family
- It starts (in the shops) in October and runs through to January – the pressure mounts for almost a quarter of the year
- None of this feasting is wrong or bad in itself; the bible is full of feasts and there will, of course, be a feast in heaven and God is preparing the table as we speak!
- Festival
- But I think that we have **lost the sense of festival**
- None more so than in the church.
- “Its our biggest opportunity!” That is what we are told.
- **And in many ways it is.**
- BUT we put so much pressure on Christmas as an opportunity not to be missed that even church may make “Christmassy” into an idol. The myth that this is the only time that we have an opportunity to speak to people about Jesus.

- Every day is an opportunity to talk to people about Jesus.
- Easter is cancelled
- Your team are putting together a fantastic suite of online services to celebrate the festival that is the birth of Christ (plug, plug); yet this year is the strangest year to be getting ready for Christmas
- the news media are full of “Christmas may be cancelled” or “Boris Saves Christmas”
- What the media are talking about of course is **the feast** – the parties and family get together and the partying – “being Christmassy.”
- **But** our opportunity for the church is not the feast – **it’s the festival**
- In an early team meeting, as we planned what a Covid Christmas might look like, I stopped and said this “**Can I remind us all that we cancelled Easter earlier this year**”; its easy to forget with society’s emphasis on Christmas; we invite people to break away from the feast to join the festival; but in reality **they want to get back to the feast**
- Easter compared...
- Easter is not a feast in the same way; it’s a festival with one key focus – the death and resurrection of our saviour
- We prepare for it with a time of prayerful self reflection and readiness for mission, called lent; we engage holy week with reverence and thankfulness and we stare at the cross with sadness and anger and relief that its not us and a refreshed understanding of the Good News of the gospel and an urgency to share it with others
- Christmas on the other hand has become a three month feast with a short festival in the middle
- Advent has for centuries been a time of preparation for the celebration for 12 days of feasting starting on Jesus’ birthday, 25th December; we seem to have lost that or at least moved the goalposts!
- Input-impact ratio
- So what does this mean for us?

- When speaking about mission I often talk about an **input-impact ratio. We want maximum impact for minimum**
- We do not just do things because we have always done them or even because we ought to do them – we do them to worship and grow in our Lord, to make new disciples
- We can spend a lot of effort on something that has little impact in these areas and sometimes a small input can have a huge impact
- The best example of this is sharing our own story of why Jesus has changed our lives and why they need to receive this gift too
- Conclusion
- The Christmas feast is fun – enjoy
- Some cant or won't feel Christmassy – don't make them!
- The Christmas Festival is a gift from God – the gift of his son – the incarnation starts here; lets treasure it as much as the gift of Easter
- Beware turning God's good gifts into idols – honour them as they were intended
- See every day as an opportunity to feast with family and friends, don't put the pressure on one time of year; every day is also an opportunity to offer the gift of Christ – don't wait till Christmas
- Wishing you a blessed Advent – lets pray....