

Matthew 7:7-12—The Father of the Kingdom

- Read Text
- **Intro:**
 - Easier to grasp God as judge who forgives sin than as Father who delights in us
 - More vulnerable, humble, dependent, emotional, relational—less formulaic, religious, stale
 - Rather than our smallness, sin, timidity, humanity causing us to WITHDRAW from prayer, those are the very things that ought to DRIVE us to prayer.
 - Jews (who Matthew is written to) had this trouble too—they would never have used such a familiar, family word for God as ABBA. Jesus used it all the time, though, and authorized his disciples to do the same.
- **MOVEMENT FROM RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE TO RELATIONSHIP TO GOD**
 - Makes sense because not living judgmentally, not casting pearls to pigs and living in a non-hypocritical way is FAR BEYOND OUR REACH WITHOUT GRACE!
 - Why these promises here at the end of the sermon on the mount and last week's text?
 - The standard of last week (and the whole sermon on the mount) leaves us asking, "who is sufficient for these things? How could I ever possibly live up to this standard?"
 - You know how—you ASK, SEEK and KNOCK and your Father gladly gives all we need
- **Persist in Prayer for the Kingdom—ASK, SEEK, KNOCK (v.7)**
 - **Persistence**—Tense = Present Imperative—continuous and ongoing—KEEP ON DOING THESE THINGS
 - **Intensity**— when God seems to not be answering or calling you to wait, you keep knocking. Not going away; not becoming disheartened; we keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking...why? Because God is a good Father and he ALWAYS answers
 - Jeremiah 29:13—You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart!
 - Kids—never ending, "mom, mom, mom...dad, dad, dad...where are you? where are you? what are you doing? will you come play? will you come play?"
 - Eventually they find us and eventually we give in—want to know what prayer looks like? Don't look at crusty religious people, look at children with their dad.
 - You would not respond the same way to a random stranger in a restaurant—why? No relationship!
 - If you can see your dad...you ask! If you can't find him...you seek! If he's locked in a room...you knock!
- **God always answers the persistent prayers of his children—EVERYONE WHO ASKS RECEIVES—NEVER come to him and gets nothing! (v. 8)**
 - Why does asking precede giving—because God wants to give when we are ready to receive. Question not is he ready to give, but are we ready to receive? Asking expresses our need and dependence on him!
 - We must be willing to recognize our state of NEEDINESS before we will fly to Christ for help!
 - James 4:2—you do not have, because you do not ask.
 - **NOT TEACHING YOU GET EVERYTHING YOU ASK FOR**—we know this. That would place an unbearable burden on us as we pray knowing we would get it!
 - Rather, being GOOD, God only gives the good gifts...wise, he only gives WISE gifts...
 - 1 John 5:14—ask anything according to his will and he hears and answers!
- **GOD RESPONDS TO OUR PERSISTENT PRAYERS AS A GRACIOUS, LOVING FATHER (9-11)**
 - **HOW MUCH MORE**
 - This parable is more about a contrast than a comparison. Focus is on the "evilness" of parents and the "goodness" of God...how much greater he is than them!
 - "evil"—a strong word! The same as "the evil one" we are urged to pray for deliverance from in the Lord's prayer!
 - He gives us the common analogy (Father) but blows it away with God's total superiority!
 - He has infinitely more GOODNESS and infinitely more RESOURCES ("in heaven")

- You have a Father who is completely GOOD and completely SOVEREIGN! Wow!!
- YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN
 - How do you have God as Father?
 - John 1:12—as many as received him (Jesus) he gave the right to be called children of God
 - Again, this is scandalous—no Jews would ever think to call God as Father!
 - The warm blanket = not a forceful demand to pray but a loving, gentle invitation!
 - We are ABLE to ask, seek and knock because, in the finished work of Christ, grace is given, sins are forgiven and we are adopted into the family of God, with him as our Father. We now come as children!
 - Romans 8—he did not spare his son but gave him up; he will graciously give all things
 - GIVE GOOD THINGS—the Father is the delighted giver of good things to his children
 - James 1:7—Every good and perfect gift is from above
 - Seek first the kingdom and “all these things will be added”—these are those things! Seek God. Seek to know him. Seek his kingdom. Hunger for righteousness and all these things will be given as well.
 - Obvious connection between ASKING and RECEIVING
 - Parallel Passage = Luke 12—Luke differs in that it says, “how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”
 - DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD’S CREATION/Common Gifts AND HIS REDEMPTION GIFTS.
 - Common grace gifts—jobs, kids, money, life, rain, health—given to all people
 - Redemption gifts—salvation, fruit of the spirit, forgiveness—given only to his children
 - It is these gifts that Matthew is concerned about and that we MUST pray for!
 - THE GLORIOUS PROMISE HERE
 - Jesus does not promise ease, he does not promise to take away the difficulties/persecution/tribulation...its not all roses, no thorns....what he promises is that HE IS WITH US AND HE HEARS OUR PRAYERS AND HE ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS IN ALWAYS GOOD, WISE, LOVING WAYS!
 - God’s children, who receive his gracious love, go and do likewise—(V.12)
 - The movement from our VERTICAL relationship to the Father to our horizontal relationships
 - Golden Rule—not “golden” because of how precious it is but because it was rumored that Emperor Alexander Severus had this verse in gold in his throne room.
 - HUGE—fundamentally, the Christian gospel teaches we have 3 relational realities—we have God as our Father and the Christian Church as our brothers and sisters and we have a responsibility of love and service to those outside the family
 - This is a family affair in which we are desperate for the Father’s help as we navigate our lives together with one another.
 - Especially as it relates to judgmentalism (but in all things) we need the help of the Father to do this well! We need his help to not live hypocritically with a plank in our own eye!
 - V. 12 = the Golden Rule, related to all those human relationships
 - This the law and prophets—the entire law was driving at two things—to call the people of God to love him completely and, in obeying the law, to live with an interest in the well-being and flourishing of one’s neighbor the same way one would live for their own!
 - Problem—we have a VERY HARD time implementing this “Golden Rule”
 - Truth—Jesus didn’t give this rule for us to COMMENT ON but to CARRY OUT!
 - Earlier...you are evil, your Father is good. He gives you GOOD GIFTS even though you are evil and don’t deserve them.
 - v.12—basically, “now go do the same for others!” See beyond the ugly, the difficult and love!”
 - This is the summary of the entire revealed will of God and certainly, for us, the summary of the entire ethic of the Sermon on the Mount!
 - Golden Rule NOT just a good social pattern but a demonstration of the gospel!