

MATTHEW 7 : 7 – 11

A S K !

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Last week while Judy and I were visiting extended family, several of us were talking and the conversation naturally included a cell phone photo. The screen was shown to those standing there, but missed me. Hmmm. Should I flat out be so bold as to ask, like a child, “I wanna see. Kin I see that?” Or should I just keep silent, telling myself, “The photo’s probably not that good . I don’t want to see it anyway.” The best I could muster was sticking out my hand, hoping the phone would be passed to me. It was. Why was it so hard to ask? Why is it so hard to ask? Why is it so hard to ask God in prayer?

Consider a student at school needing help, or someone sitting at the table wanting more potatoes, or a do-it-yourselfer fixing on a vehicle and needing some input, or a chef in the kitchen, or a driver in a strange city.

Reasons: Embarrassment, fear, pride. Not wanting to appear stupid to self or others. Having to admit I-don’t-know. A sense of unworthiness, as in I’m-an-outsider-and-I-really-don’t-count. Reluctance because I’ve- already-asked-too-many-times. Stubbornness. Uncomfortableness at putting self “out there.” I don’t want to bother anyone. Sour grapes—it won’t be the right answer anyway, it’s not that big of a deal. Passing the blame—they should automatically help me, what’s wrong with them? And laziness.

This concern is not merely a practical matter for life. Jesus is talking to us about prayer, teaching us to ask God, telling us to “ask-can” all those “baloney reasons” for not bringing requests to the Father in heaven in prayer. Jesus says, ASK. Don’t be afraid, too proud, or too lazy.

Jesus also says SEEK: Seeking is different from Asking. Seeking is more intense than Asking. Seeking is un-walking-away and un-dropping-out, when things don’t immediately materialize. Seek! Search! Investigate! Think of losing your wallet or purse, or a specialized tool needed right now, or a sheet of paper with importance notes on it, or losing a document in the computer somewhere, lost cows, lost calves, a lost invoice due for payment now, a lost check to be cashed. In such cases, one searches diligently. One SEEKS. When you were a child, did ever hear “You didn’t look!”—because Mom found very quickly what you had lost and said you had tried to find. Or does your dear wife find what you want, because you didn’t take the time to look there? In every need, SEEK diligently from God in prayer. Nothing is too small, nothing is too big. Don’t give up, Seek.

Jesus also says KNOCK. Knocking is more intense than asking or seeking. It’s putting yourself out there, putting away your pride, putting aside your laziness. It’s a bold action. Go right up to the front door and KNOCK or right up to the front desk and ring the bell. Not just timidly—tap, tap, tap—but with determination, and, if necessary, repeatedly. Imagine going to someone’s front door and not knocking (or ringing the bell), just standing there expecting someone to come to you! Go boldly to God in prayer—not just mechanical prayer—but heartfelt prayer. Ask, and seek, and KNOCK.

Jesus says, *For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

Do you think God doesn't care? Do you think that He ignores you—like one ignores junk mail in the mailbox or junk mail in the inbox? The Lord cares for you diligently. He is your Father. How many Dads would answer their hungry little boy's request for a piece of bread, by giving him a bowl of gravel? Or if he asks for a fish to eat, give him an eerie snake? Only a dead-beat-Dad. God Himself says, *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel—an unbeliever—(I Timothy 5:8).* God in heaven is not a dead-beat-Dad."

Jesus continues, *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*

Are you evil? Are you a sinner? Do you disobey God? Your mouth wants to answer, Nooo. But the heart sighs, Yessss. How non-generous are you? How greedy are you? This is MINE—get your own! How content are you? Do you always want MORE? Do you find money and immediately grab as much as you can lest someone else get some too? If there are give-away-items—do you take all you possibly can? Or allow others share? If you figure out how to get free pop out of the pop machine, do you keep coming back? Do you beat a businessman, or a "friend," out of \$50.00? Human hearts are evil. You are evil. You and I are evil.

Even "evil" people help *children*. Don't children in need melt your heart? It's tough to see needy children on TV. Jesus says "your" children. What if they were your children in need? To what extent would you go to help? What would you sell, forego for yourself, or do to help them? Would you give only half-heartedly for them? Would you give a run-of-the-mill type assistance for them? You would give good gifts for their needs and stop at nothing to help them.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! It's a crystal clear comparison. God isn't going to ignore, snub, or brush off you and your request. He is your Father!

How is God your *Father*?

1) He brought you into being. He created you. He gave you life. He put together the particular genes and chromosomes from your parents to make you what you are. You are not a result of fate, or of good luck or of bad luck. He made you just the way you are, in His loving and powerful wisdom. (Don't be dissatisfied with who and what you are.) When you His child bring a request to Him, He cares and answers, always in the best way. Note that He's your Father in heaven!—in the highest position. Think of a supervisor's office in a factory, where the office is located in the middle and above the production floor with windows on all sides. God sees, knows, and cares for all.

2) God is also your "Father" in even a greater sense. He has adopted you into His family!—back into His family. You were His child, but you cut the ties, you took off, you became a run-away. He has brought you back and adopted you at the price of His Son's sacrifice of Himself on the cross. In Jesus your sins and your evil are dis-counted and taken away.

It's as if you were a golfer, and on a round of 8 holes you needed 40 strokes over par to finish—what a lousy performance! But in God's Son, your performance and scorecard are altered. In Jesus, you played a perfect round—8 holes with 8 holes-in-one! 20 strokes under par! Are you ae in need? Go to your loving, adoptive Father, trusting that Jesus' score is credited to you. He is your forgiving Father through Jesus, and you are His own dear child. ASK Him in every need. SEEK His help. KNOCK boldly on His door. He always hears and always answers in the way that is best for you His child. If His answer is No or Not Yet, it's only because in His love, He gives the best answer, whether you understand it or not. He Himself invites: *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. (Psalm 50:15).* Do not despise His invitation. Ask, Seek, Knock. Don't be like I was—too afraid to ask to see the phone.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---