

The Gospel of Matthew

SERMON ON THE MT: ASK, SEEK, KNOCK (7:7-12)

Before we can begin this study, we must first establish the context of this passage. Read Matthew 7:7-12 and Luke 11:1-13. The latter passage in Luke is a different occasion, but the Lord provides the same instruction almost verbatim. Who is “ask, seek, and knock” written to? Why is this important?

One of the great blessings of childhood is the unconditional love of a parent. A stable and loving home is a breeding ground for competence, compassion, and confidence in a child. Many of the evils in our world can be traced back to the absence of biblical parental love in the life of a child.

As we consider the Christian calling to holiness and love and our natural bent toward sin, how can God expect so much from every Christian? Well, we come from a good home... the best there is! Matthew 7:7-12 teaches us of the privileges of being a child of God and the constant love of our father, which enables us to competently and confidently show compassion to others around us.

Ask, Seek, Knock (7:7-8)

Jesus gives us three simple commands that often fall off our radar. I think to some degree we do not understand the nature of discipleship and therefore fall into frustration, confusion, and discouragement rather than simply falling on our knees. Ask, seek, and knock all presuppose something important... the presence of need. Read Lamentations 3:22-23, Matthew 6:11, 34, Luke 12:16-21, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, and Hebrews 4:14-16. What do these passages teach us about the dispensing of God’s grace and mercy? What does this teach us about the frequency of our need?

Importunity (the relentless pursuit of God) is interlaced through the words of this passage, as if a progression of intensity is portrayed. The words themselves are simple and straightforward: ask, seek, and knock. What constitutes asking, seeking and knocking? Consider Luke 11:1-13, Acts 2:41-42, and 17:11.

On face value, it appears the Lord is writing us a blank check here. Yet, when we compare scripture with scripture (Theological Analysis), we find there are three conditions God places upon answered prayer.

Ask in _____. (Mark 11:22-24, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:5-6)

Ask with a _____ and _____ life. (Romans 12:1-2, 1 John 3:22)

Ask in accordance with His _____. (John 14:13-14, 15:7, James 4:3)

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A Father's Love (7:9-11)

Such a bold promise of provision as we just studied is bound to be met by human skepticism. As my high school economics teacher repeatedly reminded us, "Nothing is free!" A little bit of life experience and hard knocks soon erases gullibility and faith in the goodness of mankind. How could such a promise be true? The answer is found in the nature of our relationship to God (remember the context of this passage) and the character of our God.

Jesus tries to provide a point of reference that even depraved humans can understand: the love of a father for his child. Although there are exceptions, most parents love their children and want what is best for them. Most parents try to provide what they believe is good for their children. Jesus uses this universal principle to explain why the Father would provide for the godly desires of His children.

Giving a hungry child something that would harm them (a stone) or unholy (a snake) defies common sense. If even "evil" men know this, how much more will our Father in heaven provide what is good when we have need? What does this imply about the character of our Father? Consider James 1:17.

For some reason, we need continual encouragement to enjoy and make use of this privilege of adopted life. Read James 1:5-6 and Hebrews 4:14-16 and describe the instruction given to us.

Our confidence in prayer (faith) is based in the character of our Father and His love for His children.

The Golden Rule (7:12)

"Therefore" is the hinge upon which this prominent passage hangs. It links the former thoughts with those that follow. God's abundant and consistent love is the foundation upon which we may show goodness to others, not in a limited fashion but generously, not in a judgmental spirit but in compassion.

This verse has been called, "The Golden Rule" because it is such a simple yet elegant and profound answer to so many of life's questions. It is also the summation of the, "law and prophets". Let's begin by defining the word, "would", as in "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you..."

Would –

Why is this definition important to the passage?

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Jesus calls the Golden Rule the “law and the prophets”. This is the first use of this phrase in the New Testament. Read Matthew 11:13, 22:37-40, and Acts 13:15. Describe the meaning of “the law and the prophets”, especially as it is used in the context of this passage.

Now read John 1:45, 5:39, and 13:34 and further consider how the Golden Rule is the “law and the prophets”.

Finally, discuss how Matthew 7:7-11 informs our practice of the Golden Rule found in verse 12. Consider also Philippians 1:27, 2:1-2, and 1 John 4:10-11.

The bountiful receipt of our Father’s grace (the gospel) must transform the way we think and live!