
Third Presbyterian Church
Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 24
“Our Father in Heaven”

Matthew 7:7-12 (NIV)

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
⁹ "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ 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 good gifts to those who ask him! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

1. Do you feel the Jesus' reference to God as our Father in Heaven is problematic? Why or Why not
 - a. What is the problem today with society moving to stop the use of God being referred to as Father or even beginning the model prayer with “Our mother.”
2. The sermon spoke about five different areas characterizing our Father in Heaven. Speak to each by Giving testimony to affirm:
 - a. My Father in heaven is my provider.
 - b. My Father in heaven is my disciplinarian.
 - c. My Father in heaven is my security.
 - d. My Father in heaven is personal.
 - e. My Father in Heaven is always there.
3. What is the biggest request you have made of God that was granted? How did that impact your faith?
4. How would you encourage someone who had a traumatic experience with their earthly father to open themselves up to a relationship with their heavenly father?
5. When is it hardest for you to treat others with kindness and respect?

Workshop: Vs. 7 tells us to ask see and knock and with will be given, found and opened. Do you believe that? Is this applied to anything or what would the qualifications of this verse be? If you ask and it's not given, if you seek and don't find, if you knock and it's not opened then is that on God or on you? Explain.

6. After listening to sermon, what is your greatest takeaway and why?

T. The Key to Prayer: Persevering in Prayer, 7:7-11

(7:7-11) Introduction: "Ask...seek...knock": the Lord commands and challenges us to persevere in prayer.

1. What is persevering prayer (v.7)?
2. Why persevere in prayer (v.8-10)?
3. How does a person persevere in prayer (v.11)?

1. (7:7) Persevering Prayer: What is persevering prayer? It is asking, seeking, and knocking until the answer is received, found, or opened. It is being so obsessed with getting something that a person never gives up until God responds. The words ask, seek, and knock are in the present tense. A person is to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. He is to persist in prayer. The words *receive*, *find*, and *open* are also in the present tense (Matthew 7:8). This shows that the answer to prayer is more than just a promise for the future. The person who perseveres in prayer possesses the answer now. Perhaps the thing has not yet happened, but by faith the believer knows that God has heard his prayer (cp. 1 John 5:14-15). (Cp. Ephes. 6:18.) Christ taught several important lessons about prayer.

1. True prayer is persevering prayer. God expects all of our prayers to be persevering. When we sense a real need to pray, we not only ask, but we seek and knock. We do not play around and glibly murmur a prayer. We pray, really pray.
2. Prayer is to be often. Christ commanded prayer. He pointedly said: "Ask...seek...knock." And, as pointed out above, He demanded that we pray often and pray with intensity.
3. The answers to our prayers are assured (Matthew 7:9-10).
 - a. God is not reluctant to give. He is not sitting back disinterested and unconcerned about our welfare. He is as a loving father is to his child—loving and caring. He will not refuse the request of His dear child.
 - b. God will not mock our requests. He does not give grudgingly (James 1:5). He does not even hesitate to give. And what He gives is not of less quality than what an earthly father gives. God does not give ragged substitutes. He gives exactly, or better than, what we ask (Matthew 7:11; Ephes. 3:20).
4. The thing wanted must be in God's will. It must not be asked from selfish desires and motives. God gives only what is good and wholesome for us (1 John 5:14-15; cp. James 1:17; James 4:2-3).
5. True prayer, persevering prayer, acknowledges our dependence upon God. When we are genuinely in need, we come to God and ask and seek and knock. This has been the experience of all believers time and again.

The very fact that we are asking, seeking, and knocking demonstrates that we are truly dependent upon God. We are His children and He is our Father. Christ said that true prayer is prayer that really means business: it is sincere and genuine in its requests and it keeps on asking and asking until God answers.

Thought 1. There is more to prayer than just asking. A person asks, then he seeks and knocks at the door of heaven until God grants the request. Note two things.

- 1) Seeking contains the idea that we seek to meet the request ourselves. This is especially true if the request can be met by human effort. There certainly is no idea of sluggishness or complacency in the tone of "ask...seek...knock." The thrust is action, a *get-to-it* attitude.

2) Knocking contains two ideas. First, we approach every door that we can until the right door opens. We certainly would not pound and pound away at the same door. We must move about knocking until the right door is opened. Second, we must continue knocking at the door of heaven. We must wrestle with God, not giving Him rest until He opens. Such action shows dependency upon Him. And coming to Him in fellowship and communication is bound to please Him, just as such communication pleases an earthly father.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephes. 6:18).

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17).

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29).

"Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually" (1 Chron. 16:11).

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

"Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore" (Psalm 105:4).

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17).

DEEPER STUDY #1 (7:7) Persevering Prayer

2. (7:8-10) Prayer: why persevere in prayer? There are three reasons.

1. Prayer is conditional. Christ is pointed: if we ask, we receive. If we do not ask, we do not receive. If we seek, we find. If we do not seek, we do not find. If we knock, it is opened to us. If we do not knock, it is not opened to us.

"Ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:3).

Thought 1. Failing to persevere in prayer shames God and ourselves. True prayer is persevering prayer. Our genuineness and sincerity are known by how much we persevere in prayer.

- 1) We show disrespect to the Giver when we ask and walk away before receiving what we ask.
- 2) We show our gross insincerity when we seek once or twice and stop.
- 3) We leave any resident questioning when we knock once or twice and walk away before he comes or has time to open.

2. Every believer is heard and every prayer is answered. It is not just the believers who are well-known—the leaders and official laborers—whom God hears and answers, He hears everyone who "asks and seeks and knocks."

3. God cares *much more* than an earthly father cares. God can be approached as Father. Above all others, He knows what a father should be. Whatever good is within earthly fathers has come from Him. He made fathers. He put within their hearts an *instinctive attachment and love and desire to nurture*. Therefore, we can expect Him to be personally attached to us and to love and nurture us (cp. Psalm 103:13).

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29).

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17).

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

DEEPER STUDY #2 (7:8) Prayer

DEEPER STUDY #3 (7:8) Prayer— Promise— Hope

3. (7:11) Prayer: How does a person persevere in prayer?

1. The believer must come to God as his Father. Christ explicitly tells us how to come to God.
 - a. We must come to God as "Our Father which is in heaven." The words "in heaven" acknowledge His sovereignty. God is able to do whatever we ask, and we are to expect Him to grant our requests.

b. We must come to God as we come to an earthly father: freely and openly, communicating and fellowshipping. And we are to come often, not neglecting the love, respect, and trust due Him.

Note the words "how much more." Whatever earthly parents are, God is much more. He is much more as a Person and as a Father. He knows our every request and He has the knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, and power to grant them.

Thought 1. God has taken the initiative to create the family relationship with us. He has adopted us as children of God. Therefore, we can come to Him in much more trust and confidence than we can to our earthly fathers. (See Deeper Study #2—Galatians 4:5-6.)

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:15-16).

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:4-6).

Thought 2. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). He is so loving He compares His love and tenderness to that of a mother (Isaiah 66:13).

2. The believer must come to God for good, wholesome things (see Deeper Study #4—Matthew 7:11).

Thought 1. Earthly fathers are human and sometimes carnal, and some fathers are even deliberately evil. Note three things about earthly fathers.

1) Earthly fathers sometimes make mistakes in what they give. They can and do give stone and serpent-like things to their sons, not deliberately, but mistakenly. They are simply deceived by what the world calls acceptable and good. But God is not deceived. God gives only "good things," things which are truly wholesome and beneficial. If we ask for that which is wrong and harmful to us, God will quickly and pointedly say, "No," or else He will give what is really needed.

2) Earthly fathers are sometimes ill-natured, cross, provoking, and wrong in their response to a child's request. But not God. He always understands and knows exactly how to respond and what and when to give.

3) Earthly fathers are sometimes evil and harmful, threatening and dangerous, forsaking and deserting. But not God. God knows exactly how to meet the need of the son or daughter who is forsaken or deserted (Psalm 27:10).

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephes. 1:3).

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

"And ye shall serve the lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exodus 23:25).

"And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

DEEPER STUDY #4 (7:11) Good (*agathos*)

DEEPER STUDY #1

(7:7) Persevering Prayer: there is a difference between the words ask, seek, and knock.

1. The word "ask" says the following.

- a. We ask when there is a need or want.
- b. We ask when there is someone who has plenty and who can give what we need or want.

2. The word "seek" says the following.

- a. We seek when we need or want something of value.

- b. We seek when we ourselves are responsible for finding what we need or want.

3. The word "knock" says the following.

- a. We knock when we are shut out and need or want entrance.

- b. We knock when there is someone on the other side who can open to us.

Note: Christ says our prayers are answered. We receive and find and the door is opened to us.

DEEPER STUDY #2

(7:8) Prayer: Why does God not always answer our prayers immediately? Why is it necessary to ask and seek and knock and to keep on asking and seeking and knocking? Why do we need to ask at all when God knows our needs even before we ask?

There are at least four reasons.

1. Prayer teaches us to communicate and fellowship with God and to trust and seek God more and more. When God holds the giving back, we keep coming to talk and share with Him more and more. Just as a human father longs for our fellowship, our heavenly Father longs for our fellowship.
2. Prayer teaches us both patience and hope in God and His promises. When God does not give immediately, we patiently (enduringly) keep coming into His presence, waiting and hoping in what He has promised us (Matthew 21:22; John 14:26; 1 John 5:14-15).
3. Prayer teaches us to love God as our Father more and more. Knowing that God is going to answer our prayer and having to wait on the answer causes us to draw closer and closer to God and His gifts. Then when the prayer is answered, our hearts are endeared to Him much more than before.
4. Prayer demonstrates how deeply we trust God and how much we love and depend upon Him. A person who really trusts God—who really knows he is going to receive what he has asked—will bring more and more concern to God. He will come to God in prayer more and more. But the person who is not quite sure about receiving will only occasionally come, usually only in emergencies. God easily sees how much we love and trust Him by our prayer life.

DEEPER STUDY #3

(7:8) Prayer—Promise—Hope: when we pray as Christ says, we have our request immediately. He assures us, yet the answer is not always in our hands immediately. What then does Christ mean? There are two ways we receive things whether dealing with men or God.

1. We receive things by promise and hope. If some reliable person promises something to us, we know beyond question the gift is ours. (Cp. monthly interest promised on money deposited in savings.) What we tend to forget is this: the promise is as much a fact as an immediate receipt is. The only difference between promise and receipt is time, and whether we are willing to patiently wait and demonstrate our belief in the Giver and the gift. If the Giver is reliable, then His promise is sure: the gift is ours. It will be handed to us when the time and conditions are right.

Now, note two simple but sure things.

- a. Promise and hope are as sure as receiving immediately if the Giver is reliable.
- b. Promise and hope are as sure as the Giver. If the Giver is reliable, the promised gift is coming at the appointed time.

2. We receive things by receipt—just receiving the gift when it is handed to us.

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"

DEEPER STUDY #4

(7:11) Good (agathos): wholesome, beneficial, honorable, needful qualities.