

Ask, Seek, Knock

Call to Worship: Psalm 19

1st Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

2nd Scripture: Matthew 7:7-12

Hymn Insert- *10,000 Reasons*

Hymn Insert- *His Robes for Mine*

Hymn Insert- *Seek Ye First*

Introduction

We've been looking at our Lord's description of the ungodly *actions* of the religious leaders, in contrast to those actions which ought to consistently proceed out of the hearts of those who are truly part of the Kingdom of God. This morning, we conclude this particular section of our Lord's sermon, before moving into the final section. And we know that this is the conclusion of this particular section, because of our Lord's summary statement, given in verse 12, "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*"

Now, interestingly enough, our Lord concludes this section with an encouragement for His disciples to freely go to God, and to seek Him, recognizing that He delights in hearing from His children, and in meeting their needs. Unlike the gentile gods, the true and living God has no dependent need which His people must meet. We don't have to bribe our God, so as to appease His roaring passions, with the hope that He might then take notice of us, and bless us in some relevant way. And this is especially relevant for all that we have been going over, concerning the ungodly actions of the religious leaders, because when we are confident that we can trust in our God to provide for our needs; when we are confident and content to rest in God's providential care, we will not be driven to harm or abuse others. As the common illustration goes, a thief steals, in large part, because he doesn't trust God to provide for him. And at the very root of the wicked actions, and the sinful hearts of the religious leaders of our Lord's time, was the fact that they simply did not trust God, in truth. At the very basic level, they didn't trust in Him for their righteousness, and that spilled over into every other area in their lives.

I. Ask, Seek, Knock - The Charge (vs. 7-8)

We begin then, by considering our Lord's general charge here. And you will notice that His charge contains three main verbs, which are suited to help us understand and apply what He calls us to do, all indicating conscious actions on our part. And each conscious action, follows with a certain response to that action, on the part of God. Each sincere action provokes, in a sanctified sense, a response from God.

1) "ASK" and it will be given to you. Here, our Lord puts forth the invitation for God's people to simply "ask." And those who ask, can be certain that God is more than willing to "give," in accordance with the need of the asker. And the blessing here, brethren, is that there are no strings attached. We will see this further, in the father/son analogy, in a few moments, but suffice it to say for now, that, our God does not barter with His people. He simply bids them to come to Him, and to ask, in faith.

2) "SEEK" and you will find. The use of this second verb, while emphasizing the same reality, adds the additional angle of exerting the conscious effort of diligently searching. The assumption is that you can't be led by your immediate senses, and that you must persevere in your efforts. Again, the whole element of faith is conveyed here. The Lord is saying, make the fervent effort to continually seek, and know that you will most certainly find. God will meet your faith with His blessing.

3) Finally, "KNOCK, and it will be opened to you. Again, as in both of the other cases, the critical element of faith is what's highlighted here. Go to the Lord, and ask, and you will find Him more than willing. God is not stingy with His blessings and His providential care. He is both able and willing. Seek; search for Him, and even though you cannot see Him with your eyes, you will find Him. And, go up to the door, and knock, and keep knocking. Don't walk away in despair. Don't be afraid. He's there and your seeking to gain a hearing with Him will be no interruption or hindrance to Him.

In all three cases, our Lord bids His people to go before the presence of the Lord, trusting that He will always be right there, and that, He will always be more than willing to receive us, to answer us, and to meet our needs...because He actually cares for us. He is trustworthy. Again, He is more than able, and He is more than willing to provide for those who ask, seek and knock.

And notice the universal application of this offer. For *everyone* who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Those who, by faith, sincerely ask, seek and knock, will most certainly receive, find, and have the door opened to them. Verse 8- “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

II. Ask, Seek, Knock - The Illustration (vs. 9-10)

Notice then, to further emphasize the reality of what He is saying here; to highlight the certainty of the promise, He adds a very touching and relevant illustration: “Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?”

What greater earthly illustration could the Lord possibly provide, as a means of conveying how our Heavenly Father relates to us, as we seek His aid, than through the example of a father/parent and his child? Ponder the illustration for a moment, before we move into its relevant application.

If you can imagine your hungry child coming up to you and asking you for something to eat, how would you respond, as a parent? You would, of course, want to satisfy that need, and show them that you love them, wouldn't you? You would want them to be very comfortable coming to you, with their requests, especially for things that you are able to provide for them. Indeed, you would take from your own dish and give to them, if you had all that remained of whatever it is that they were asking for. [Ill: Emmaleah grabs my finger to go with her and sit down with her—although I had to use restroom]

Now, take this a step further, as per the illustration. How many of you would give your child something harmful instead of whatever it is that they are asking for? If your young child asked for a piece of bread, would you give him a stone instead? Again, my little daughter trusts me. When she is hungry, I could easily give her something inedible, which she would choke on, or could cause her harm. But, what parent would do that? And if she asked for a fish, would I give her a poisonous snake? Of course not! And so, right from the outset, we find that our natural tendency, even as God's children, can be to assume such terrible things about the nature

of our God. We can actually think that He would wish to do us harm. Now, we might wrongfully think like this because of our understanding of the holiness of our God, and the severity of our sinful offenses against Him, but our Lord wants to assure us here, that that is absolutely as far away from the truth, as possible. God doesn't do anything to harm His children. He always does what is best and good for them. Even our greatest offenses have been dealt with at the cross of Christ. Indeed, Jesus Himself, received all that is cursed, for us, so that, God directs nothing but blessing toward us, even in the discipline that He provides for us.

And so, the point of this illustration is to get us thinking properly and biblically about God, so that, we will be motivated to go to him, and to ask, seek and knock.

III. Ask, Seek, Knock - The Application (vs. 11)

Finally then, consider the application, which our Lord brings out of the analogy, so as, to bring home His main point:

“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!”

I would like to think that I would do anything (within the bounds of God's moral law, of course) for my children. And of course, I would have to be certain that it is truly for their good, though. So, whatever it is that I would do, would not necessarily always be according to their natural desires. But, notice what our Lord states here. If we, being evil; that is to say, if we, being bound to a corrupt and fallen nature, inclined toward doing things for sinful and selfish reasons, know how to give good gifts to our children; if, in spite of my corrupt nature, I have the desire to do good to my children and to love them, how much more will our Heavenly Father (who is the purest of light, without any inclination of an inclination to sin), give good things to those who ask Him! We are fallen and have sinned far more times than we could ever count, and yet, our children can trust us, and come to us. How much more, will God, who is all righteousness, do what is good for us, with the purest of intentions and designs.

And so, I think that the analogy powerfully serves to get the point across here, brethren, doesn't it? But again, the fact that our Lord goes to such great lengths to convince us to “ask, seek and knock,” ought to teach us something about our wicked tendency, brethren. If we are

honest, we struggle with trusting God, in this way, don't we? Being led by our *subjective* feelings, rather than God's *objective* truth (His Word), how often do we, at the very least, think that God has very little interest in hearing our prayers, and at most, think that His wrath is turned against us, in some way? What more could our Lord say here, brethren, to convince us to go to our Heavenly Father, knowing that He will always; indeed, that He delights, in giving us an audience, where He is inclined to do us good?

Now, before we consider the final statement, given in verse 12, let me just address one other important matter, concerning the content and quality of our requests to God.

IV. Ask, Seek, Knock - The Content/Quality of our Requests (vs. 11)

We've looked at the general motivation to "ask, seek and knock," here, but something needs to be said about the types of things that we "ask, seek and knock" for. What exactly are the "good things" that our Lord willingly gives to His children, who ask? This is an important question to consider, because there are, at least, two wrong ways to apply this text; one, by way of abuse, and the other, by way of neglect.

1) Regarding abuse, there are obviously those who would wrench this text out of its context, and out of the entire context of the "sermon on the mount," attempting to see this as a means of treating God like He is a genie in a bottle. You just rub the lamp ("ask, seek, knock"), and whatever you ask for, Carte Blanche, God will give you. Such a gross, idolatrous, materialistic interpretation of this text, fails to consider that the promise, given here by our Lord, is given to those who are in the Kingdom of God. And those who are in the Kingdom of God, think, speak, act, live and desire, within the context of this Kingdom. They do not love the world or the things in the world, because the love of the Father *is in* them. And so, their requests are governed by a heart that is in keeping with the beatitudes (and the rest of this sermon), concerned *first and foremost* about spiritual things and about improving upon their abilities to bear fruit unto the Lord. The "health and wealth," "name it and claim it," philosophies are utterly atrocious abominations, which seek to abuse such texts like this for personal gain. And to that end, they ought to expect to receive nothing from God, who is not a Heavenly Father to those who covet such desires.

2) But secondly, there is an unhealthy neglect of this text, as well, brethren, which would be a weakness amongst those of us who are reformed. Simply put, we need to “ask, seek and knock,” and we need to do so, recognizing that it is God’s intention to give, be found and open. And there is a place to see this in the context of our material/physical needs, as well, even as the illustration shows. As we saw a few weeks ago, as we were called to seek first the kingdom of God, God knows the needs that we have and He will provide. Why are we so afraid to state that, matter of factly, at times? Do we allow the truth of God’s sovereignty to cancel out the means that God uses to do all that He sovereignty ordains? With the exception of very rare occasions, where God is perhaps stretching our faith for a time or providing some form of necessary sanctifying discipline, He will always, always provide for our needs. And to this end, we can ask Him to do so, confident that He will bless us with every physical and spiritual blessing that we need in this life.

Now, let me add one other critical, final factor to this equation before we finish off with verse 12. In the parallel context to this text, found in Luke (which we read, in our first Scripture reading), our Lord states, “How much more will your Father give *the Holy Spirit* to those who ask?” Let this exhortation and encouragement, given here in our text, brethren, be the greatest motivation for us to ask, above all else, for the Holy Spirit. You see, when our Lord makes this statement in Luke’s Gospel, He is stating that God is willing to give us the greatest and most precious and necessary gift of all, if we would but continually ask. Because brethren, there is absolutely, nothing more critical and needful and precious to Christians, who understand even a fraction of their own weakness and the power of their remaining flesh, than the ongoing presence and influence of the Holy Spirit. To put it bluntly, brethren, we will not make it a single day through this life, and we will veer off the path in but a short time, if the Holy Spirit is not constantly, daily, guiding and directing us down this path to glory. And nothing that we ever seek to do unto the Lord, will ever bear even the smallest of fruits, if the Holy Spirit does not anoint our labors. And the tendency of us in the Reformed faith is to make way too light of the necessary work of the Holy Spirit, as a counter reaction to the abuse of some within the Charismatic Movement. We need to be far more “Holy Spirit” minded than we are, brethren. And we ought to pray, most of all, that God would give us His Holy Spirit, daily.

V. Conclusion: The General, Overriding Principle of this Portion of the Sermon (vs. 12).

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Here, we have our Lords, “In a nut shell” statement, if I can say that in some sanctified sense. What is the general principle which ought to govern all of our actions, particularly as we relate to all others? It really comes down to that second of the greatest commandments, doesn’t it? Whatever you want others to do to you, do also to them. And notice, how this is put in the positive. It’s not simply, “*Don’t* do to others what you would *not* want them to do to you.” That is assumed. But, you can *not* do things to others, and still fall far short of the actual intentions of God’s Law. We ought also to positively seek out the good of others, looking to positively serve them, and meet their needs, as we would hope others would do for us, if such needs came upon us. And that, as our Lord here states, is the very essence of what the Scriptures, as a whole teach, concerning our responsibility to others. That is the very essence of life in the Kingdom of God, and the key transformative principle that is bound to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. [**context**]

VI. Applications

1) Simply put, brethren, let us be a people of persistent prayer. Our coming to God, often, persistently and consistently, does not bother or irritate God. Much to the contrary, it reveals our utter dependency upon Him for all things, and God desires that. Ask, seek and knock. Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. This great privilege of being able to come before God, at anytime, of being able to enter into His very presence in the Most Holy Place of His heavenly tabernacle, has been purchased for us at the high cost of Christ’s sacrifice and shed blood. The veil has been torn in two. We are thoroughly welcomed into the presence of God, in spite of our frailty, weakness, and ongoing battle with remaining sin. Let us make good use of this precious privilege!

2) If you are presently outside of Jesus Christ; if you are not a Christian here this morning, see here the willingness of God to freely receive you, into His presence, by His grace, which comes to you through His Son. [The Gospel!!!]

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25