

The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12
Halifax: 19 September 2004

Introduction

Today we are going to look at what has often been called the Golden Rule.

- It is found in Matthew 7:12:
 - “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

This has well been called the Golden Rule...

- What a difference it would make in our nation, our church, our families, if we would observe it.
- This not a rule for us to skim over...
 - It is something to spend some time thinking about...
 - Today, I want to direct you to consider how this golden rule applies...
 - But it will do you no good to sit here and listen to a sermon about this rule unless you take this rule and apply it to your life.
 - Hearing a sermon is just the beginning—doing what God commands is what matters...

So to consider now what Jesus is calling for with these words:

- “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

I. To better understand what this rule, I want to contrast what He is saying with what He is not saying!

- The first contrast is one that is really quite obvious...

A. The standard Jesus sets here is **not**:

- “Do for others at least as much as others do.”
 - Perhaps you would be quick to say,
 - “Of course not... that is not a good standard...”
 - But do you really know that?

1. Be honest—don’t you find you often live by that standard?

- Don’t I hear you saying things like:
 - “Well, Joe didn’t help me five years ago when I lost my job;
 - why should I help him now when he has lost his job?”

- This is certainly not the standard of doing to others what you want them to do to you!
 - It is, “do to others according to what they have done to you!”
 - God has not called you to do that, but this standard is far too common among us.
2. It is easy to fall into this false standard because of custom...
- You simply in with doing things the same way everybody around you does them.
 - a. If nobody respects their parents in all the movies you watch, all the books you read, and all the friends you associate with...
 - It will be easy for you to live according to what everybody else does.
 - You will treat your parents the way everyone else treats their parents instead of the way you would want your children to treat you if you were a parent.
 - b. Likewise, if you work in a place where everybody slacks off as soon as the boss leaves the building...
 - It will be easy for you live by that same standard without even thinking about it.
 - To just fall into the pattern of what everybody else is doing...
 - Instead, you need to wake yourself up with the golden rule and say:
 - “If I were the manager,
 - How would I want the employees to act when I left the building?”
 - And them act accordingly.

TRANS> Yes, it is obvious enough that Jesus is not saying

- “Do at least as much as others do.”
- That is clearly an inferior standard...
 - But I begin with it because I think it is probably the one we most often live by!
 - You need to see clearly that you are called to live by another standard.
 - The second contrast is a little less obvious, so listen carefully:

B. Jesus is **not** saying that you are to do what you think is **reasonable and fair** for others to do to you—

- He is calling you to do what you **want** them to do for you!
1. Even so, I must that the standard of what you think is reasonable and fair is a pretty good one!
 - a. The hockey players are now having the same problem the workers at Aliant have had for the last several months...
 - What they think is fair and reasonable treatment is quite different than what the owners think is fair and reasonable.
 - There is a big quarrel because both sides have a different standard of what is just.
 - But why do you suppose it is that the hockey players didn't look at the profits (or losses) and say to the owners:
 - "You know, we are getting paid too much. You should cut back a little on what we are getting. We are just hockey players and you are losing money?"
 - And at the same time, why do you suppose the owners didn't look into the situation and say to the players...
 - "You know, if it weren't for you players, we couldn't survive. We want to do everything we can to maintain your salaries at the current level. After all, we made a commitment and it is only right, even if we have to take a loss."
 - b. Isn't it safe to say that if both sides were doing what is fair and reasonable there would be no quarrel?
 - 1) I'm not making a judgement about what is fair and reasonable because I don't know enough about it...
 - But don't you think they would have worked it out if both sides had that as their standard?
 - 2) But even the rule of justice if rarely followed...
 - History teaches us that both sides will take all that they can get with consideration for the other side!
 - The industrial revolution shows that owners will try to suck out as much as they possibly can from the workers, and will be perfectly content to place them in intolerable conditions in order to line their own pockets...
 - Studies show that the working hours, conditions, and standard of living was much higher for slaves in the cotton fields than it was for the average factory worker.
 - But look at what happened when labour unions become dominate!

- Once power was given to labour, history shows us that they did not know when to stop either!
 - It was not enough to make a decent living and have decent hours and working conditions!
 - The workers demanded more and more pay until the companies they were working for could no longer turn a profit!
- c. We all have very high standards about what others ought to do for us...
- But we are not very good judges of what we ought to do for others.
 - The same person who condemns his parents for treating him unjustly...
 - will then turn around and treat his own children even worse!
 - What a difference it would make if we applied even the same standard of justice to ourselves that we apply to others!
2. But Jesus is calling for even more than that!
- a. He is not simply calling you to do whatever it is you think others ought to do for you—
- He is calling you to do whatever it is that you **want** others to do for you!
 - The word He uses here that is translated “want” or “would” is a word that means “to desire,” or “to wish.”
 - It is the same word that is used when the blind men came to Jesus begging for mercy and He said:
 - Matthew 20:32: “What do you **want** Me to do for you?”
 - It is not, “What would be just and fair for me to do?...”
 - But, “What do you **want** me to do for you?”
 - This is the standard He is giving us in the golden rule—
 - What would you **want** your neighbour to do for you?
 - Do that for him.
- b. Suppose you just had a baby...
- Wouldn't you love it if somebody came over and did your ironing and your dishes and cleaned your bathroom and watched your children so you could nap?
 - Wouldn't it be desirable for you to have meals brought to you and thoughtful visits from your friends?

- You would not hold anybody to this or expect it of them—
 - but it would certainly be greatly appreciated!
 - Jesus is saying, “This is what you ought to do for others.”
- c. Suppose again that you are basically content and happy with your job and believe that you are treated justly...
- But what do you **want** your employer to do for you?
 - Do you want more vacation? more pay? more authority?
 - Jesus is saying,
 - “Next time someone comes to work for you, apply that same standard to him—more pay, more breaks!”
 - “Next time you go to a restaurant, remember that standard when you leave a tip for the waiter.”
3. You can see that the more selfish and covetous you are, the higher this standard is for you...
- a. Selfish people always want a lot from other people!
- They want to be understood by others and excused from certain responsibilities...
 - They want to be thought well of by others, even when they have been rude and unkind...
 - They want others to show more appreciation to them, more concern for them, more interest in them.
 - If you get hurt a lot, this is probably the reason.
 - Jesus tells you that you are to turn all these desires about what you want people to do for into action for others.
 - The more you want for yourself, the more you are called to do!
- b. Have you ever noticed how it is when you have a problem in your life?
- 1) Suppose you are sick and have to have surgery...
- Doesn't it seem like a much more serious problem than when somebody else has to have the exact same surgery?
- 2) Somehow, we seem to think that other people's problems are not quite as bad as our own—even if they are worse!
- “They should be able to handle it, but not me!”
 - But if you apply this standard, you will put yourself in that other person's shoes and turn that compassion on them.

- You will show the same concern for them that you would want them to show for you.
- The more tender a person you are and the more sensitive you are...
 - the more you have to do for others!
 - A positive way of saying this is that God has gifted you to be compassionate...
 - so don't spend all your compassion up on yourself!

3) Children, I want you to think about this too...

- I bet you are very concerned when you lose your favourite toy...
 - You want your brothers and sisters to help you find it, don't you?
- But I wonder what you are like when your little sister loses something?
 - Do have some concern for her that you want others to have for you?
 - Or does it seem less important when it is somebody else who is missing her toy.
 - Her toy is not as important to you as your toy.
 - Jesus says you ought to be just as concerned about her loss as you are about your own.

TRANS> So you see that Jesus is not just calling you to do what you think is reasonable and fair,

- He is calling you to do for your neighbour what you would **want** him to do for you!
- That is the second contrast...
 - The third contrast adds even more to the requirement...

C. Jesus is not calling you to do **some things** you want others to do for you, but He is calling you to do **whatever** you want others to do for you!

1. The word "whatever" in this verse could also be translated "all things" so that it would read:
 - "**All things** that you want men to do for you, do also for them!"
2. It is a very easy thing for us to do one or two things that we might want others to do for us and then stop at that.
 - a) For ourselves, we have a whole list of things we want...
 - But for others, if we do one or two things, it is enough.
 - You know what I am talking about...

- You feel like you ought to do something, so you go and do it...
 - and then you say:
 - “I’ve taken care of that”
 - and go on your way!
- b) King Saul was like that...
- When God told him to utterly destroy the Amalakites,
 - he only partially destroyed them...
 - And when Samuel came to inquire about it,
 - Saul said, “I obeyed the Lord...”
 - He thought that by doing part of what God said he could claim to have done all of what God said.
 - But he was wrong. The Lord did not think he had obeyed.
 - In the same way,
 - the Lord does not think you have obeyed the golden rule if you only do some of the things that you want others to do for you...
 - Jesus calls you to do all things that you want others to do to you.
3. One of the places where this partial obedience is perhaps the most odious is in the man who does charity work to be seen by others...
- I talked about him in Matthew 6:1-4...
- a. He is the guy that will go out into the community and volunteer or give a donation or whatever...
- But then at home he is stingy and selfish!
 - People look at his wife and they say,
 - “What’s wrong with her? Her husband is so generous and kind and she is so bitter toward him.”
 - The truth is: She is sick of his hypocrisy!
 - He has the praise of men, but she knows what he is really like!
- b. Another version of the same thing is when you have someone who is all warm and friendly and kind and considerate at church...
- But snarly and cantankerous at home.
 - Doing to others as you would have them do to you is not something you only do to gain approval—

- It is not something to do part time!
- It is something that you are to do all the time...
- **“Whatever** you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

TRANS> You see that with this third contrast, we have quite a high standard that our Lord has given us!

- But you must understand that this standard is not an absurd or unreasonable standard—
- The fourth contrast makes that clear...

D. Jesus is not saying, “Whatever **others want you to do** for them, do;”

- but rather
- “whatever you want others to do to you, do also to them.”

1. If He were telling you to do whatever **others** want you to do, that would be absurd.
 - a. What if your little toddler wants to play with a bee’s nest that is hanging under the back porch!
 - Are you supposed to give him what he wants just because he wants it?
 - Of course not!
 - b. The standard Jesus gives should be applied quite differently...
 - 1) When you think about doing to your child as you would have him do to you,
 - you are not to think about what you would have wanted when you were two...
 - You are to think about what **you**...
 - (with your thirty-five year old understanding)
 - would want your mother to have done for you when you were two and wanted to play with a bee’s nest.
 - 2) The bee’s nest is a very obvious illustration...
 - But what about when your neighbour wants a handout but you know that he has been lazy and refusing to work?
 - The question is not “What does he want?”
 - But what would I want someone to do for me if I was being lazy and refusing to work...

- Your neighbour may end up criticising you for not helping him, he may call you selfish and all the rest...
 - But that is not so if you are doing to him would you would have him do to you.
- 3) And husbands, this is a very important principle for you to apply in governing your home!
- You are not to always do what your wife wants you to do!
 - You are to do what you would want the head of your home to do if you under his authority!
 - You are to lead according to what you think is right, not simply according to what you think everybody wants!
 - This requires a strength and toughness that many men simply don't have!
 - Would you want a wimpy father or husband who caves in about every decision when a little pressure is applied?
 - Is that what you really want for your wife and children?
 - Is that the way you provide confidence and security for them?
 - I think not—not if you understand what a husband and father ought to be!

TRANS> The standard is not:

- “Whatever others want you to do for them” but
 - “whatever you want others to do to you...”
2. This principle must also be understood covenantally or holistically...
- a. Suppose you are a Chief Executive Officer for some big corporation...
 - The people who work for you want more pay and more responsibility.
 - But there is a problem...
 - The people you work for (the stockholders and such) want more profit.
 - Are you supposed to say, “Well, if I were an employ, I would want more pay and more benefits...” and give it to them...
 - or are you supposed to say,
 - “If I were a stockholder, I would want more profits,” and cut the pay of your staff.
 - b. You have to take a holistic look at the situation...

- You are called to do everything you can for the employees (that you would want done for you as an employee) without forgetting the stockholders...
- And you are to everything you can for the stockholders (that you want a CEO to do for you if you were a stockholder) without forgetting the employees.
 - You have to take both sides into consideration.
 - You have to apply the golden rule to **all** the people in your life.
 - You have to look at your life as a whole and not in pieces.
 - You are a covenant person and you have responsibilities to more than one person at the same time.
 - It is important that you never lose sight of that!

3. Now let me bring this right home to some of you...

a. Some of you are busy busy mothers!

- You heard the illustration that I gave before about the mother who just had a baby and who would love to have you come and iron and cook and watch her children...
 - But you can hardly get your own ironing done!
 - Sure, you would love it if someone came to help you like that,
 - but how can you do that for everyone?

TRANS> Well, this is where the principle comes into force that you are not to do simply what every individual person wants you to do...

b. You have to apply the golden rule holistically, just like the CEO.

- You could certainly spend all your time out of your own house ironing for busy mothers!
 - There is a lady at the Riverside church in Cambridge that actually does this for all the mothers and I don't think any of them have complained about it!
 - Every week, she goes from house to house ironing.
 - The only complaint I have heard about is that when she goes out of town, all the men have wrinkled shirts at church.
- But what about you, the busy mother?
 - Must you do what this woman at Riverside does?
 - Well ask yourself this from the perspective of your children—

- “Would I want a mother who totally neglected me because she was always running around helping other mothers do their ironing?”
 - Would I want to be left at home in dirty diapers because mom is helping the neighbours?
 - You might be doing what another mother would have you do for her,
 - but you are not doing what you would want your mother to do if you were a child!
 - You know that even Jesus didn’t do everything that everyone wanted Him to do...
 - There were people who had come for healing, and Jesus chose to go on to the next town in order that He might preach the gospel.
- c. You don’t have to feel guilty all the time!
- You are to take your whole life in context...
 - If you are a mother, that is your primary calling.
 - You have to do to others what you would want a mother in your shoes to do...
 - and that would be first and foremost to love her husband and to love her children.
 - You would want her to be a good neighbour for sure, but you would not want her to neglect her husband and children either.
 - You have to take your whole life in context.
 - I hope that you wouldn’t even want a busy mother to come and do your ironing to the neglect of her own children!
 - It would be wrong of you to want that of her!
 - though you would really appreciate it if she were able to work into her schedule to do something like that in a responsible way when you had a special need!

TRANS> And so now I hope you see from these four contrasts what a high, yet reasonable standard Jesus has set for us.

- He has not called us to do merely as much as others do...
- Nor has He called us to do merely what we think others ought to do for us...
- Nor has He called us to do some things we want them to do for us...
- Nor has He called us to do everything they may want us to do...
 - But He has said: “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

II. And now I want you to consider how far-reaching this standard is!

A. It is a standard that reaches to all of life...

1. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” certainly applies to the way you treat your neighbour to his face...
 - That is quite obvious from the many examples I have already given...
2. But it also has to do with the way you treat him behind His back...
 - Think about it—
 - Do you want others to be going around speaking ill of you to others?
 - Or do you want the people that work for you to cut corners and slack off when you are not watching?
 - No, the standard reaches to the actions they don’t see as well to the actions they see.
3. But it reaches even beyond that...
 - It also includes your **thoughts** about your neighbour.
 - Do you want your neighbour to be always doubting you and questioning you?
 - Do you want him to be questioning your motives and assuming the worst?
 - Do you want him to harbour resentment about past wrongs instead of forgiving you?
 - Do you want him to rejoice when you fail and to mourn when you succeed?
 - Of course not.
 - You do not want him to do any of these things,
 - Therefore, you should not do these things to him.

TRANS> You see then that if you are to keep the golden rule, you are required to keep it:

- in your actions,
- what you do to others behind their backs, and
- what you do to them in your thoughts...

- It is a very far-reaching standard that takes in all of life.

B. Jesus says that this rule is the Law and the Prophets.

1. As we learned back in Matthew 5:17, this phrase: “the Law and the Prophets” refers to the whole Old Testament!
 - a. Jesus is teaching that the golden rule is what the Old Testament is getting at!

- The Old Testament is not just a bunch of rules that we are to keep in a mechanistic way...
 - For example, when the law says,
 - De 22:1 "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.
 - It is not just concerned about oxen...
 - It is concerned to teach you how to love your neighbour in a thousand different ways.
 - The legalist sees his brother's lama going astray and justifies himself in doing nothing because the law doesn't say anything about lamas.
 - A case law like this is to be applied to all of life...
 - If you see your neighbour's garbage scattered in the yard and he is out of town—what should you do?
 - If you see a co-worker frantically trying to meet a deadline and you can help, what should you do?
 - The bottom line is,
 - "Do to him what you would want him to do for you."
 - That is the intention of all the laws in the Old Testament about your neighbour.
- b. The Old Testament can also be summarised by saying, "Love your neighbour as yourself."
- It is a calling to love our neighbour as ourselves which is the same thing as doing to our neighbour what we would have him to do us...
 - What do you want your neighbour to do more than to love you in thought and action?
 - Many people today claim that they do not love themselves and so they ridicule this standard...
 - But I wonder if you have ever met anybody that doesn't want other people to treat them well?
 - There may be those who are suspicious of those who treat them well or who are looking to be abused so they can gain pity...
 - but I have never met anybody that rejoiced because nobody was treating them well!
 - No, the fact is that most people who claim not to love themselves tend to be the **most** concerned about how others treat them.

- The very reason they are pouting is because nobody treats them well, not because everybody does.
 - Let these persons learn to do to others what they want others to do for them!
 - Jesus says that this is the Law and the Prophets!
2. Now if the golden rule is the Law and the Prophets, then it is also what Jesus has been talking about since Matthew 5:17...
- It is that righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - They had the law in a mechanistic way, but they did not do to others as they would have others to them...
 - They missed what the Law and Prophets really were all about.
- C. The Golden Rule is a standard that speaks to almost everyone's conscience.
1. Most people when they hear the words:
- a. "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them,"
 - will not dispute that it is a very just law that ought to be observed!
 - Of course there are some who will dispute it,
 - but many times they are not being honest (they know that this is a good and right thing to do)...
 - and if they are being honest, it is even worse for them—
 - it means that God has turned them over to such a deprived mind that they have very little ability to distinguish between good and evil.
 - b. Though we are miserably fallen so that everything we do is tainted with sin,
 - we are still moral beings who have a sense of justice.
 - This is what we looked at recently on Sunday evening from Romans 2:14:
 - Paul said:
 - Rom 2:14-15: for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)
 - There is still that sense of right and wrong even in unregenerate persons...
 - Unless your conscience is totally seared,

- You know good and well that you ought to do to others what you want them to do to you.
2. It is interesting to look in the history of Philosophy at how many Jewish and pagan teachers understood this standard:
- a. Consider these examples
 - 1) Hillel, an esteemed rabbi who was often quoted in Jesus day, said:
 - “What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else.”
 - 2) Confucius said:
 - “What you do not want done to yourself, do not to others.”
 - 3) Nicocles, a Greek king, said:
 - “Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of other people.”
 - 4) Epictetus, a Greek philosopher said:
 - “What you avoid suffering yourself, do not afflict on others.”
 - b. Some Christian teachers have argued that Jesus’ statement is unique because these others stated it negatively...
 - 1) But it still amounts to nearly the same thing...
 - If you don’t want others to ignore you or leave you to suffer,
 - doesn’t it mean that you want them to help you?
 - If the negative is stated, the positive is implied!
 - God states many of the commandments in a negative form...
 - “Thou shalt not kill”—
 - But doesn’t this negative statement include the positive idea that we are to do all we can to preserve life?
 - 2) Besides, Aristotle actually puts it in a positive form like our Lord:
 - When he was asked how we ought to carry ourselves to our friends,
 - He answered,
 - “as we would wish they would carry themselves to us.”
 - 3) To argue that this is something new and unique from Jesus is to miss the very point He is trying to make when He says:
 - “This is the Law and the Prophets...”

- Jesus is saying that the golden rule is nothing more than what the Law and the Prophets had said all along...
 - And what the Law and the Prophets said concerning the golden rule is nothing more than what every man ought to know from the light of nature and his own conscience.
- c. That is what is so convicting about the Golden Rule!
- You know you ought to obey it,
 - but you also know you don't obey it!
 - If you want to show a person his sin, ask him if he thinks he ought to keep the golden rule—
 - then ask him if he has kept it!
 - It is not some strange law that is imposed on us, but it is an obvious law to any moral being who is honest about it.
 - “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

III. This is a great problem!

- A. If the Law and the Prophets require us to do to others whatever we want them to do to us,
- who among you can say that you have done it?
 - Not a one of you can make that claim!
 - Not a one of you can claim that in every action,
 - you have done for others what you would have wanted them to do if they were in your place!
 - You have all done things that you know you would not want others to do to you!
 - If you are measured by this standard, not a day goes by that you fail.
- B. But there is a wonderful word that comes to your rescue at the beginning of Matthew 7:12...
- It is the word **therefore!**
 - “**Therefore**, whatever you want others to do for you, do to them!”
 - How does this word rescue you?
 - Well of course, it ties in to what Jesus said before!
1. And what was it that Jesus was just talking about?

- a. He was talking about the grace of God!
 - In verses 7-11, He was telling you that when you come to God asking, and seeking and knocking,
 - God will give you good things!
 - He will by no means turn you away!
 - b. And because of this grace that God freely gives, Jesus says,
 - “**Therefore**, whatever you want others to do to you, do to them!”
2. What is the connection?
- a. The connection is that you can take up the Golden Rule because God’s grace is sufficient for you.
 - You don’t have to run away from it!
 - You don’t have to modify it!
 - You don’t have to file off its edges!
 - You can take this rule because God will give you the grace to keep it!
 - b. He is giving you that grace even now if you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour!
 - 1) Several months ago when we looked at the basic teaching of the Law and the Prophets,
 - I showed you that there were two basic things that the Old Testament shows us we need—
 - a) A new heart to obey God...
 - b) A sacrifice to atone for all our sins.
 - 2) And I also showed you that the Law and the Prophets promised both of these...
 - a) That God would circumcise our hearts to love Him by giving us His Spirit...
 - b) That God would provide a sacrifice that would take away our sins.
 - 3) In verse 11, Jesus says that God will give good things to those who ask Him...
 - He has just told us what the Law and the Prophets require of us in Matthew 5:17- Matthew 7:6...
 - And if you heard Him at all...
 - You realise that you need a new heart and the forgiveness of sin!

- But you see, in Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus tells you the good news—
 - That God will give good things to everyone who asks!
 - Jesus Himself is the One who came as the minister of the promise!
 - He is the One who gives us the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and who offered Himself as a sacrifice to take away our sins!
 - These good things are yours for the asking!
- c. Therefore, you can take the golden rule, the law and the prophets...
- and you can keep it by the grace of God!
 - Here is the righteousness that Jesus said you must have—
 - a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees!
 - By the grace of God, you are brought from death into eternal life!
 - And it is this life of “doing to others what you would have them do to you...”
 - that you will be brought to when God has finished His work in you!
 - It is this life that will be perfected in you for eternity!
 - **Therefore**, because you are saved by grace,
 - “whatever you want others to do to you, do also to them.”
3. But I want you to understand that you are not made righteous by keeping this law.
- a. No, it is already too late for you to be made righteous by law keeping...
- You have been ruined by sin...
 - That is why you must be joined to Jesus by faith if you would be justified.
 - He has met the demands of God’s law...
 - He has even paid the penalty that the law requires of us!
 - And in so doing, He has the authority to give us the Holy Spirit to restore us to what God wants us to be...
 - To make us people who do to others what we want others to do for us!
- b. And now it is for us to imitate our heavenly Father who has given us such good things by giving good things to others!
- That is another reason for the therefore...

- Therefore, on account of God's goodness to you, whatever you want others to do to you, do also to them!
- Jesus tells us to love one another even as He has loved us and given Himself for us.
- He did for us far more than justice called for,
 - He did what love calls for...
 - And so He asks us to do for others what love calls for!
 - Therefore, in view of what He has done for you, do to others what you would have them to do you!
 - It is the way that God has called you to express your gratitude to Him for what He has done.

Conclusion—

And so brothers and sisters,

- you see that the golden rule is not very golden for you apart from the grace of God.
 - It is a wonderful thing in itself, but it does nothing else but condemn you if you are cut off from God's grace!
 - It condemns you the same way the Law and the Prophets condemn you...
 - All it can do is tell you that you have come short of what God requires of you...

But if you have come to God asking and seeking and knocking...

- If you are looking to His grace to save you!
 - If you are trusting in Jesus Christ who has now been revealed, crucified and risen from the dead...
 - Then the golden rule is pure gold for you!
 - Romans 8:1-4: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
 - "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them."

Please stand and let us pray to our God...

Gracious Heavenly Father,

We have heard your voice...

- We have heard what you require of us...
- We have heard you say that whatever we want men to do to us we are to do them...
 - We confess that your law is just and good...
 - We know that it is right...
- But we also confess that we are not just and good, for we have not kept it.
 - We know that we ought to do good, but instead we find that we do evil...
 - We confess that we deserve nothing but your wrath and judgement...
 - We confess that we are unworthy of the least of your mercies.

But we praise you this day that you call us to come to you in our distress!

- We praise you that you have said,
 - “Ask and it will be given to you,
 - Seek and you will find,
 - Knock and it will be opened to you.”
- We praise you that you promise to give us good things...
 - We praise you that you have sent your only begotten Son into the world...
 - And that He gives the Holy Spirit to His people to give them a new heart to love you and obey you...
 - And that He offered Himself on the cross a sacrifice to atone for our sins so that we might be forgiven.
- And so we ask you to deliver us from this body of death...
 - We ask you to bring us into step with your Spirit...
 - And to lead us into the high calling we have in Jesus Christ.
- We ask you as we come believing to the Lord’s Table...
 - to feed us with Christ, the bread of life...
 - and to cleanse us with His blood that was shed for us two-thousand years ago!
 - We have nowhere else to go, for He has the words of eternal life!
 - And He is our life!
 - All our hope is in Him and in no other.

Gracious Father, we are so thankful to you for so great a salvation...

- Nothing can separate us from your love!

- Now help us to go carry this glorious message of salvation into all the world...
 - Bless all the faithful ministers of the gospel and cause their preaching to be effectual...
 - Bring the unfaithful ministers of the gospel to repentance, and if not, put them to silence and crush them to powder.
 - Help us your people to adorn your gospel all over the world by doing to others as we would have them to us.
 - May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We also give you thanks for your many mercies to us in this life...

- We thank you for the sun that rises each day at your command to give us light and heat.
- We thank you for the rain that refreshes the land, and for causing our crops to grow and our cattle to multiply.
- We thank you for the bountiful supply of food for us and for our children.
- We thank you for the sons and daughters you give us and the provision for them.
- We thank you for those you place over us to govern our nation and we pray for their strength and wisdom, and that you would continue to turn their hearts that we might be sanctified by them...
- We thank you for the peace we have in our nation and pray that you would maintain it for the sake of your elect.
- And we thank you for the Lord's Day and pray that you would help us to profit from it and to delight ourselves in You.

Please prepare us for the week to come that we might serve you faithfully...

- that we might love our children and our spouses and our neighbours and our enemies and do to them as we would have them do to us.
- We look to you, O God, because you have called us and given us your Son...
 - And we ask all these prayers in His strong name,
 - Amen.