

Who Do You Say That I Am?
Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**
55- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 35
The *Uniqueness* of Christian Prayer- Part 2

Church June 4, 2023

Matthew 7:6-14

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

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, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

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 what is good to those who ask Him!

12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now as we have “journeyed” this far in the Gospel Record that the Apostle Matthew wrote- possibly as early as 50 AD- we have found out that there were at least four things that Jesus wanted the people to know about Himself:

1. He is the long-awaited Messiah
2. He is Immanuel

3. He is the 2nd Moses
4. He is the One by whom the Old Covenant is fulfilled; and the New Covenant is brought forth

And *part* of what it meant for Jesus to be “*Immanuel*”-is that He was (and is) “*God with us*”. About 700 years before Jesus was born- the Prophet infallibly said this in **Isaiah 7:14**:

... Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

.. and at the beginning of this Gospel Record, Matthew was careful to tell his Jewish brethren about this in **Matthew 1:18-25**, that says:

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,

25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Now, in Reality- we know that Jesus’ actual Name, that the Angel gave to Joseph, was the Hebrew, “*Y’shuah*”- which *literally* means, “*Ya-saves*” or “*Yahweh’s Salvation*”. Later that Name was *transliterated* into Aramaic into, “*Yeshuah*”, which was then *transliterated* into ancient Greek as, “*Ieosus*”; which later was brought into the English as, “*Jesus*”.

But Matthew was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to tell his Jewish readers (and us) that the Title, “*Immanuel*”- meant that Jesus was actually,

“God with us”

So, in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ- God is no longer distant from His people. He is near. He is close by. God is now *with us*!

So, in the “Incarnation”- which is the “fleshing of God”- the Owner and Creator of the Universe has *inserted* Himself into His Creation and has become a part of it. And that had NEVER happened before Jesus was born. So, this “*Nearness*” of God- is *unique* to Jesus and the New Covenant.

Under the Covenant that God gave to Moses- God was NOT close by. He was NOT personalized with His people. In fact, under the auspices of what King David lived under his entire Life- it was a Sin- it was Evil; it was Blasphemy to suggest that God would be close to human beings. So, in **Psalm 50:21b**- Asaph¹ wrote this,

... You thought that I was just like you ...

Here Asaph *infallibly* speaks for God and *rebukes* the Children of Israel because they had sought to “*close the Gap*” that existed between them and God; and make God more “relatable” to Man. This Effort to “*bring God near*”- was classic Blasphemy under the Old Covenant- punishable by Death.

So, when Isaiah prophesied that God would be “born of a Virgin” and be called, “**God with us**” (**Immanuel**)- this Prophecy shook the Jews down to the core of their being. For hundreds of years- no one dared to say that God would “*draw near*” or be “*close by*”- sinful people. At *best*- the people of the Old Covenant tried to “*draw near*” to God (**1Samuel 14:36**; **Ecclesiastes 5:1**; **Ezekiel 43:19**., etc.). But the main Way that God “*drew near*” to His people under the Old Covenant- was when He judged them (**Malachi 3:5**).

So, Isaiah’s Prophecy was *not* received well by the Jews under the Old Covenant. And they *continued* to reject the radical Notion of the “*Closeness of God*” while Jesus walked the earth. This is one of the main Reasons *why* the Scribes and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus- because He constantly called God, “*Father*” and made Himself equal with God (**John 5:18**).

History tells us that Matthew’s Gospel Record was *officially and formally* rejected as a “*work of Fiction*” by the High Priest in Jerusalem- a man named,

¹ Asaph is said to have written twelve Psalms (50 & 73-83). In **1&2Chronicles**, Asaph was a descendant of Gershon- the son of Levi. He was also known as one of the three Levites commissioned by King David to be in charge of singing in the House of Yahweh.

Ananias, the son of Nedebeus², who verified that ANYONE who held to the View that, through Jesus, God was now “*with us*” was guilty of Blasphemy. And to this Day- most Jewish scholars *categorically* reject that Isaiah’s Prophecy has *anything* to do with a person named, “*Jesus*” or even a Virgin Birth- but references the Nation of Israel.³

Yet the Fact that God Almighty is now “*with us*” - in, by, and through a real Relationship with the Virgin-born Jesus Christ (Salvation)- is one of the most *important* and *cherished* Beliefs of the Christian Faith. And so, the *first* Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem said this in **James 4:8a**

Draw near to God...

... which is in keeping with what people already understood from the Old Covenant. But then the *half-brother* of Jesus went much further and gave an inspired and unailing Promise to the new people of God who would draw near to God...

... and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8b)

... which has to do with the incredible and radical Truth that in Jesus- God is now “*with us*”!

And nowhere do we, as God’s people “*draw near to God*” and then experience God, “*drawing near to us*” any better than in the amazing and marvelous Gift of Prayer! And that is why I say that *Christian* Prayer is utterly *unique*!

As I told you last time- *billions* of people- all over the world- who have been deceived by false Religions and Doctrines of Devils- pray. And they pray *often*; and they pray *sincerely*. Women all over the world pray for their children. Fathers pray for their sons; and for success in Business; and for long-Life. People cry out to gods that *cannot* hear and that *cannot* answer for healing; and to win; and to get ahead and to avenge Wrongs that have been committed. And it sounds utterly *fantastic*- it even sounds *wrong*- that anyone could look at that level of Devotion; and that level of Sincerity; and say that those people are sinning.

But the insulting and humiliating Truth is that those who pray to false gods are NOT communicating with the one, true, and living God- they are *worshipping* demons. And those who cry to their idols- are insulting the one, true, and living God- to His Face! And their Sincerity and their Devotion only makes it WORSE- not better!

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_High_Priests_of_Israel

³ <https://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/isaiah-714-a-virgin-birth/>

You see, there is ONLY one God. And this ONE God is revealed in both Creation (*general* Revelation) and Scripture (*special* or *specific* Revelation). And this ONE God is *eternally* manifested in three distinct “Persons”⁴ of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. So, Jesus, the Christ is God. And the Holy Spirit is God. They are equal with God the Father in their Divinity.

But what makes Jesus utterly *distinct* from anyone else in all of the Universe- is that Jesus is BOTH God AND Man. But He is NOT 50% God and 50% Man. Jesus is *fully* and *truly* God; and *fully* and *truly* Man- in the SAME Body- at the SAME Time- without Conflict or Contradiction!

But Jesus is also NOT “God” on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays while being “Man” on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (with time off on Sundays). No! Jesus is *always*- 24/7- God and He is *always*- 24/7- Man.

Now that is enough to curl your hair. But Jesus gets even MORE unique; or different; or distinct (Holy) from EVERYONE else in all the Universe- in that, while it is true that Jesus was ALWAYS God the Son/the Lord/the Word- but He was NOT always, “Jesus”. Jesus was ALWAYS Deity- but He was NOT always Human. God the Son; the Lord; and the Word that was *with* God and that *was* God- was NOT a human being until He was literally “born” of the Virgin Mary- *probably* around 4BC.⁵

And at that moment- EVERYTHING changed! Immanuel was now here! God has taken on human Flesh and has become like one of us! And what was once Blasphemy was now God’s Glory. What was once punished by Death was now encouraged and promoted and blessed!

And so, the Glory of the New Covenant- is NOT that we seek God- but that God seeks after us. It is NOT that we draw near to God- but that God draws near to us. It is NOT that we are with God- but now- in Jesus Christ- God is with us!

Now last time we saw how that, now that Jesus has lived and died and risen again; now that Immanuel has come- now that we live under the Reign of the New Covenant- EVERYTHING is done “IN JESUS’ NAME” and “TO JESUS’ GLORY!” And we saw that in order for God the Father to be glorified- God the Son MUST be glorified. In other words, the ONLY Way for God the Father to receive ALL the Glory- is for God the Son to receive ALL the Glory. God the Father is NOT glorified simply by giving God the Father Glory. Without God the Son having the “*Preeminence*” in ALL THINGS- God the Father is NOT worshipped or praised or magnified or glorified- AT ALL!

⁴ The three Members of the Trinity are said to be “Persons” because they each have their own Personality.

⁵ Two things cause me to have the Date of Jesus’ Birth at or around 4BC- 1) Jesus was born when Herod was alive (**Matthew 2:1**)- and Herod died in 4BC. 2) The Calendar that we use today was changed in 1582- moving Time backward about 4 years.

Now the Concept of, “*Preeminence*” has to do with what God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle Paul to write down in **Colossians 1:13-20** that says:

13 For He [Jesus] rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Notice in verse 16 Paul said that “ALL THINGS” were created BY Jesus. So, God used Jesus as the Instrument by which all things were created. So, God the Father spoke the Word (Let there be.... Light; a Firmament; Dry Land; etc.) - which was Jesus (**John 1:1**). And God the Holy Spirit took the spoken Word of God- and created Reality with it. So, Jesus is the Instrument by which God created the Universe.

But it gets even better. Because at the End of verse 16- Paul also said,

... all things have been created through Him and for Him

So, EVERYTHING that has been created- was created THROUGH Jesus! But then Paul also said that EVERYTHING that has been created- has been created FOR Jesus!

Now as radical as that might be- Paul goes even further and in the next verse (v17) says,

He [Jesus] is before all things, and in Him all things hold together

... and when Paul said that Jesus is BEFORE all things- that includes God the Father! But only in one sense. Because Jesus is NOT BETTER than God the

Father- but He also is NOT WORSE. But Jesus is the Means; the Vehicle; the Way that God the Father is glorified- BEST!

Make no mistake about this, dear friends, God was absolutely glorified under the Old Covenant. The people who were saved by God under the Reign of the First Covenant- loved God; and they did what they did- for His Glory! Yes! But ALL of their Efforts were based on Shadows; and Types; and Symbols; and Images; and NOT on the actual Reality that those things represented.

So, instead of a “once for all” Sacrifice that was able not only to forgive Sin but to also cleanse the Conscience of the Sinner- they sacrificed animals- CONSTANTLY! But look at what the writer said about those animal sacrifices from **Hebrews 10:1-10:**

1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME;

6 IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE.

7 "THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.'"

8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law),

9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.

10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Now verse 4 clearly tells us that the ongoing Sacrifice of animals under the First Covenant- did NOT “take away” a single Sin. Yet the people were *commanded* to sacrifice animals. So, if they *didn't* sacrifice animals- they were

damned by God. Yet their Sacrifice didn't take away a single Sin. So, what was all that Death of the animals for? In one word- MERCY!

While it is true that their repeated Sacrifices didn't take away a single Sin- it is also true that their ongoing Sacrifices allowed for God to give them Mercy. So, their Sacrifices kept the Wrath of God *away* from them- just long enough- so they could kill another animal. And that is *why* they had to *keep on* killing millions and millions of animals for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Their Sins HAD to be judged by God. But in order for God not to damn them and their Sins- the Wrath of God had to be appeased. The Justice of God had to be satisfied. And the Way that God designed that to be done under the inferior Old Covenant was to slaughter animal after animal after animal!

For example, when the people dedicated Solomon's Temple- the Priests killed 120,000 sheep and 22,000 oxen! In a single Service! Without air-conditioning; or any running water; or stainless steel; or even a drain! So, if there were 1000 Priests- each killing one animal every ten minutes- non- stop- it took 24 hours of continuous slaughter to kill that many beasts.

But think of the stench; and the noise; as the animals were screaming; and slipping on the blood; and using the bathroom; as they were killed! And yet, with all of that death and blood and screaming going on- look what it says in **2Chronicles 7:1-3:**

1 Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

2 The priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house.

3 All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the Lord upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the Lord, saying, "Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting."

...and that was with an *inferior* Covenant based on Shadows and Types; and Symbols!

Just try to imagine the Glory that is brought forth from a Covenant that is based on *infinitely* superior Promises; made through the sacrifice of an *infinitely* superior Offering; given by an *infinitely* superior High Priest!

And that is part of what makes Christian Prayer so utterly unique! Now with all that in mind- please look again at verses 7-11:

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, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

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 what is good to those who ask Him!

When you pause to consider that God is infinitely *Strong*; and can do all that He pleases; and that He is infinitely *Righteous*; so that He only does what is "*Right*"; and that He is infinitely *Good* so that everything He does is *perfectly "Good"*; and that He is infinitely *Wise*- so that He always knows *perfectly*- what is "*Right*" and "*Good*" and "*True*" and "*Beautiful*"; and that He is infinitely *Loving* so that in all His Strength and Righteousness and Goodness and Wisdom- He raises the eternal Joy of His loved ones as high as it can be raised- when you pause to consider this- then the lavish Invitation of this God- for us to ask Him for "*Good Things*", with the Promise that He will give them- is beyond our wildest Imaginations!

And this means that one of the great short-term Tragedies in the modern Church is how little Inclination we have to pray. The greatest Invitation in the world is extended to us, and yet, *incomprehensibly*, we regularly turn away to other things! It's as though God sent us an Invitation to the greatest Banquet that ever was- and we sent word back, "*I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and look at it,*" or, "*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out,*" or, "*I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come*" (**Luke 14:18-20**).

But that was then. And so, my Prayer is that God would use this Message today and this Word from Jesus in **Matthew 7**, and other Influences in your Life, to *awaken* a new compelling Inclination to Pray- both alone; and on Wednesday Evening- with the brother and sisters you have covenanted in Membership with in 2023. And I honestly hope you will ask God to do that in your Life- as we look together at what Jesus said here.

And I'll do it in two Steps. First, we will look at eight Encouragements to pray in **Matthew 7:7-11**. Second, we will try to answer the Question of how we are supposed to understand the Promises that we will receive when we ask; and find when we seek; and have the door opened when we knock.

Now six of these Encouragements are very *explicit* in this Passage- while two of them- are *implicit*. So, it seems clear to me that Jesus's main Purpose in

these verses is to *encourage* us; and *motivate* us to pray. So, Jesus *wants* us to pray. Our Savior *desires* for us to pray.

He *motivates* us to pray- by giving us fantastic Promises if we do.

Three times, our Lord *invites* us to pray- or you could say, Jesus *commands* us to pray- He commands us to ask Him for what we need- 3 different times! And it's the number of times that He invites us that got my Attention. Look again at verses 7&8:

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.

So, the repetition here is meant to say, *"I really mean this. I want you to ask your heavenly Father for what you need. I really want you to seek your Father for the Help you need. I want you to knock on the Door of your Father's House [Jesus] so He will gladly open the Door and give you what you need! Ask, seek, and knock. I invite you three times because I really want you to enjoy your Father's Help!"*

But Jesus goes way beyond this. So, even better and more amazing than the three Invitations are the seven Promises He gives. Verses 7–8: "Ask, and [1] *it will be given to you*; seek, and [2] *you will find*; knock, and [3] *it will be opened to you*. For everyone who asks [4] *receives*, and the one who seeks [5] *finds*, and to the one who knocks [6] *it will be opened*."

Then at the end of verse 11b (7):

how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Seven Promises:

1. It WILL be given you!
2. You WILL find!
3. It WILL be opened to you!
4. The asker- receives!
5. The seeker- finds!
6. The knocker- gets an open door!
7. Your Father will give you "Good Things!"

Surely the point of this lavish array of Promises is to say to us: "*Be*

encouraged to come! Pray to your Father (by Adoption)! It is not in vain that you pray! God is now with you- so He is NOT toying with you! He answers! He gives “Good Things” when you pray! So, be encouraged! Pray! Pray often! Pray regularly; Pray alone! Pray Corporately! And pray confidently in 2023!”

Christian Prayer is utterly *unique* because Jesus Himself- our Immanuel- *encourages* us not only by the number of Invitations and Promises- but also by the threefold *variety* of those Invitations. In other words, God stands ready to respond *positively*- when you find Him at different levels of Accessibility! Ask! Seek! Knock!

If a child’s Father is present- he simply asks him for what he needs. And if a child’s Father is somewhere in the house- but not seen- the child then seeks for his Father- so he may then ask- and get what he needs. But if the child seeks and finds the Father behind a closed door- the child knocks to get what he needs!

And the Point seems to be that it doesn’t matter whether you find God immediately close at hand; almost touchable with his nearness; or hard to see and even with barriers between- Jesus says that in, by, and through Him- Immanuel- God the Father WILL hear you! God the Owner and Creator of all things WILL give “Good Things” to you- because you came to God IN the Name or the Reputation of the Lord Christ- AND you are paying- IN ACCORD with the Father’s Will- so that God alone will be glorified!

Jesus encourages us to pray by making it very explicit that EVERYONE who asks- receives- NOT just some. Verse 8:

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

.. and when Jesus used the word, “*everyone*” in verse 8, He wants to overcome our Timidity; our Hesitancy; and our Feelings of Unworthiness- that Prayer may work for others- but not for me.

Now the Context of course is that Jesus is ONLY speaking to the genuine children of God here and NOT every single person on earth. If we will NOT have Jesus as our Lord and Master- then Jesus is NOT our Savior. And if Jesus is NOT our Savior- then these Promises don’t apply to us- at all. The great Reformer, Martin Luther understood that Jesus was motivating us to pray here when he said,

“Jesus knows that most of us are timid and shy, that we feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God. . . . We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray. . . . That is why Christ wants to lure

us away from such timid thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly.”⁶

What we have to try to keep in mind is what the New Covenant teaches about Prayer as opposed to what the Old Covenant taught. When we come to God through- or “in the Name of”; or “through the Reputation of”- Jesus- we ARE coming to our *Father*. Verse 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 what is good to those who ask Him!

Back in the 1st Century- the term, “*Father*” was not a “throw away” Label for Jesus. It is one of the greatest of all Truths. In, By, and Through Jesus- through Immanuel- God Almighty is our “Father”. That is strictly a New Covenant Truth. NONE of the Old Covenant saints had that kind of Relationship. And the Implication here- is that our Father- will NEVER give us what is “Bad” for us! Never! Why? He is our Father!

Then the Jesus encourages us to pray by showing us that our heavenly Father is infinitely BETTER than our earthly Father. And so, our heavenly Father will give us infinitely BETTER things to us than they did. There is no Evil at all in our heavenly Father and yet, even in the best of earthly Fathers- there is still that trace of Evil.

So, Jesus is very aware, that our earthly Fathers are sinful. This is why the Bible repeatedly draws Attention not only to the similarity between earthly Fathers and the heavenly Father, but also to the great Differences (e.g., **Hebrews 12:9-11; Matthew 5:48**).

So, Jesus goes way beyond the Encouragement of merely saying that God is our Father and says that God is always BETTER than our earthly Father, because ALL earthly Fathers are Evil and God is not Evil at all! Jesus is very blunt and unflattering here. This is a clear instance of Jesus’s Belief in the “Universal Sinfulness of ALL human beings.” So, He *assumes* that His disciples are all Evil as well. And when it came time to say that- Jesus didn’t choose a softer, more appealing, and less offensive word (like *weak*). He simply says that His Disciples are Evil (Gr. *ponēroi*).

So, please don’t ever limit your Understanding of the “Fatherhood of God” to the Experience you had with your own earthly Father. Rather, take heart that

⁶ Martin Luther; *The Sermon on the Mount*; page 234

God has none of the Sins or Limitations or Weaknesses or Hang-ups or Inconsistencies of your earthly Father.

And the point Jesus makes is this: Even fallen, sinful Fathers usually have enough “Common Grace” to give “Good Things” to their own children. Out in this Sin-cursed world- there are terribly abusive Fathers. But in most places in the world, Fathers are jealous for the “Good” of their children- even when they are unclear about what is “Good” for themselves. But God is always BETTER than any earthly Father. In Jesus- there is no Evil. At all! Therefore, the Argument is Strong: if your earthly, sinful Father gave you “Good Things”- how much MORE will your heavenly Father give Good Things to those who ask.

And there is something very implicit here that underlines Encouragement #4- the word, “*everyone*” — “**Everyone who asks receives.**” If Jesus said to His disciples, “*You are Evil,*” then the only people that can come to God in prayer are *evil* children of God. You are children of God. And you are Evil. Both are true. In other words, even after you are adopted by God into His family, some amount of Sin remains in you. But Jesus says, *everyone* will receive — *every one* of God’s *Evil* children!

Here is another implicit Encouragement to pray: God will give us “Good Things” *as* His children because He has already given us the Gift to *become* His children in the first place! Augustine said:

“For what would he not now give to sons when they ask, when he has already granted this very thing, namely, that they might be sons?”

... and the Apostle Paul said,

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

Jesus said to the Pharisees in **John 8:42**, “**If God were your Father, you would love me.**” But they did NOT love Jesus- *proving* that God was NOT their Father. They *rejected* Jesus. And that tells us that not all are “sons of God”. But if God has already freely done the *hard part* and made us to be His sons- how much MORE will He give us what we need now that we ARE His sons?

Finally, implicit in these words is the Cross of Christ as the Foundation for all the Answers to our Prayers. And the Reason I say this- is because He calls us, “Evil” and yet He says we are children of God. How can it be that Evil people are adopted by an all- holy God?

Jesus gave the Answer several times. In **Matthew 20:28b**, Jesus said,

... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus gave His Life to ransom us from the Wrath of God and put us in the Position of being His children- who ONLY receive “Good Things”. And in **Matthew 26:28b**- He said at the Last Supper,

... this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Because of Christ’s Blood, ALL of our Sins are forgiven when we trust in Him. This is why even though Jesus calls us, “*Evil*”, we can be the children of God and count on Him to give us “Good Things” when we ask Him.

So, the Death of Jesus is the Foundation underneath ALL the Promises of God; and ALL the Answers to Prayer that we ever get. This is why we say “in Jesus’s Name” at the End of our Prayers. EVERYTHING depends on Jesus and EVERYTHING is done for Jesus; and EVERYTHING done in Jesus’ Name- glorifies the Father.

One final Question: Does what Jesus say here mean that we always get everything we ask for? And the Answer is, “NO!” But why is that?

Because we are human – we don’t know everything. We don’t know ANYTHING about the Future; we have forgotten almost EVERYTHING about the Past; and we really don’t interpret the Present very well either. So, we are Blind and Ignorant about much of what God has *already* done in the Past; what He is doing right now; and what He *desires* to do in the Future.

So, when we ask God something- it is almost ALWAYS pertaining to our own, very small and personal Situations. But our great God is usually doing ten million things all at once- even though we don’t see but about 3 of them. So, we ask amiss. And we ask things that will interfere with what God desires to do and go against what He has already done.

Yet even though all of that is true- Jesus tells us here to ask and seek and knock. So, what should we make of this? We should ask- and as best as we can- we should ask in accord with God’s Will; and we should ask so that God alone is glorified. And if God sees that our Prayers are in accord with all of that- He has promised to answer us- by giving us Good Things. But if God sees that answering our Prayer at this time- will interfere with something else that God desires to do- IN HIS MERCY AND LOVE- God will NOT answer those Prayers.

But it very well may mean that what God desires to give us- is much BETTER than what we are asking for. Yet because we are weak and fragile- we

think that God is angry with us; or He really doesn't love us; or He loves others more than He love sus- and that is why He doesn't answer those Prayers.

And this is where Faith comes in. Faith is really nothing more nor less than us coming to the Conclusion that God is NOT a Liar. That He means what He says and He says what He means. And Jesus says right here that God desires to give us "Good Things"; and that God is BETTER than our earthly Father. And that is very easy to believe when it seems that God is answering all of our Prayers and we are getting what we want from God. Anybody can love God and think God is super duper- when it seems as though God is blessing us and healing us and giving us what we want. Even lost people do that.

But what takes Faith- is believing that God's Promises are ABSOLUTE- when He doesn't answer our Prayers; or it seems as though God is ignoring us. So, Faith is trusting that even though we don't know what God is doing- God knows what God is doing- and that is enough for us. And Faith is trusting- that against everything we see- that God is BETTER than our earthly fathers- even though it seems as though God has forgotten us. Because the Bible teaches that God will NEVER forget us; He will NEVER ignore us; and He will ALWAYS give us what is the BEST. So, true Faith rises and thrives- when what we see and hear and feel- fails us.

The Bible says that God gives good things. And that God gives ONLY *good things*. He NEVER gives serpents to children. Therefore, the text itself points away from the Conclusion that *Ask and you will receive* means, *Ask and you will receive the very thing you ask for when you ask for it in the way you ask for it*. It doesn't say that. And it doesn't mean that.

The Reality is that it is a great Mercy to us and to the world at large that we do NOT get all we ask for. Because we are not God. We are NOT infinitely Strong, or infinitely Righteous, or infinitely Good, or infinitely Wise, or infinitely Loving. Jesus said we were Evil. But He also told us to ask; and to seek; and to knock. And when we do that- we show that we do believe that God is our Father. And we show that we believe that God is BETTER than our earthly Fathers. And we also show that we are His Children. And when we praise Him for answering our Prayers- we show that from God- all our Blessings flow.

But when we ask and we seek and we knock and the heavens are brass; and there is no sound; and there is no shaking- and we do NOT get what we sincerely asked for- but we use that opportunity to put our Hope and faith and Trust in Him all the More; and we then struggle to accept that the Answer was, "NO!"; and we praise God for being smarter and wiser and better than we are; and we do not allow that "No!" to hinder us from asking next time- we show that God is NOT a Liar; that the Bible is true; and that it is better- much better to receive what God desires

to give us- then it is to get ANYTHING else- And I tell you- that God is magnified by that.

Immanuel has come. God is now with us. He is NOT distant and will NEVER be distant from us ever again. And Prayer given IN Jesus' great and marvelous Name displays the infinite Worth and Value of Jesus- which glorifies the Father the MOST! And so, we ask; and we seek; and we knock. And the Promises of God are true. And that means that Christian Prayer is utterly unique.

So, would you join with me in a fresh new Commitment to set aside time for Prayer for the remainder of this year. That you will pray alone; and with your Families; and with your brothers and sisters for the rest of 2023- and let us put our Faith and our Hope and our Trust in Jesus- who is now God with us.

Amen. Let's pray. © 2021-2023 by *Enjoying God Ministries, Inc.* All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

