

## 5. God's Generosity

Matt 7:7-14

Feb. 4, 2018 - Epiphany 5

**Big idea: Keep asking so that you can change your world.**

### Trust God to keep giving

Life is filled with troubles that bring us down and make us lose heart. We or someone we love get ill. We have the water heater or the furnace break down and it will cost us more than we have. Things at work fall apart and we get chewed out or are even afraid we will lose our job.

Where do we turn? Often we dismiss God because he should have kept those bad things from happening. Because my furnace is broken or my friend is facing cancer, he must not be doing his job. Millions think that God doesn't care because life is not perfect.

It wasn't perfect in Jesus' day either. The average person struggled to have enough food to feed their family for a day. They lived under an oppressive Roman government that wanted more and more in taxes. Life was short and filled with pain and no real hope for the future.

To them and to us, Jesus says trust God to keep on giving. This lesson is about losing faith in God so that you don't even ask. You have gotten so down that you think there is no reason to ask. Jesus wants us to see that we have a generous God who keeps on giving and so we should keep on asking.

### Keep asking

**A. Keep asking for more – be patient v. 7** *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

Jesus tells us to persist in our prayers. Translated from the Greek, it is keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking. Did you ever watch a little kid with their parents? They ask and ask till they wear Mom and Dad down or till they explode.

God wants you to keep on asking, not because you need to wear him down, but because you need to be ready when the time is right. Keep asking so that the heavenly father can teach you what you need to know. Keep asking so that God has time to arrange all the pieces of the solution in place.

Too often we give up after a few halfhearted efforts. We conclude that God doesn't want to help or that God thinks that something is not right when it doesn't come immediately. Yet, we quit praying too early even as God is working behind the scenes on our behalf.

Daniel prayed for 3 weeks and Nehemiah prayed for 3 months before the answer came. When it came, their hearts were ready and God had all the pieces in place for a miracle. Keep asking and be patient. Prayer is powerful and it will change you and the world, but it can take time.

**B. Keep asking – He knows what is best v. 9** *"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?"*

Keep asking because God knows what you need. Often we stop praying because God didn't give us what we wanted. Jesus says that is foolish because people often ask for things that will harm them. They ask for the corner office promotion when they don't realize that the travel will hurt the family.

They ask for answers of why grandma had to die or why life has fallen apart when they are not ready for the answers. God will not give us something that will harm us or something that we are not ready for. He will give us things that will help us and give them in the right time.

We can't take these words as a blank check to obtain whatever we want. God will not give us snakes or stones instead of what we need. He is too loving for that. We need to let our patient time of prayer be a time when God can teach us what we need and prepare us for the answers we seek.

God is not hostage to our wishes. We need to keep praying till we find out what God sees that we need. We want the best and not just the whims and answers that we think we need. Our ways will often lead to disaster. God's gifts will lead us to a better future. Pray and accept His path for you.

**C. Keep asking – He is very generous v. 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!*

Those who keep asking will see miracles. God is not selfish or stingy. We don't have to grovel or bargain with God to get what we need. This is a loving God who cares for us and willingly gives us the good things that we need and that will help us to have a better life.

All the governments of the world do not have the resources that our God has at His disposal. Who else can make plants grow or extend a person's life even one day? Who has the riches of the entire world at His fingertips? God can and does miracles without putting a ding in the resources that He has.

The Father loves his children. As a loving parent, wouldn't you give money, time and your help to one of your children to help them move forward in life? If we do that imperfectly because of our limitations, what do you think a Heavenly Father with no limitations of love or resources would do?

Jesus says keep asking and stop doubting. Your Heavenly Father loves you and wants to help. He is just waiting for you to ask what will really help you. He is waiting for you to grow so that you are prepared for the miracle that He is wanting to give. God is generous. You need to trust Him.

**D. Keep asking – He gives plenty to share v. 12** *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

He gives so much that you have plenty to share. This is the key to radical discipleship and to the power of prayer. Other religions say that we should do no harm to other people. Christianity says that you need to show love and mercy to others because of the great love that God has given you.

Do to others as you would have them do to you is often taken as the Golden Rule. It is seen as a kind of "What would Jesus do"? to guide your actions. I think it goes further in this context. Be generous just as God is generous to you. Give to others because you would hope that they might give to you.

Out of the abundance that your generous Heavenly Father has given to you, help someone else. Pray again and again and allow God to bless you so greatly that you can be His method of answering someone else's prayers. Maybe that person will later be God's method of helping you.

Those who keep asking and keep being blessed can become God's conduits of help to the world around them. They trust their God and by their actions, they teach others to trust the Lord as well. They show the generosity of God by being generous themselves. Keep asking, God has plenty and will share.

### **The sky is the limit**

#### **We have a very generous God**

It all comes down to how you view God. Many see Him the way that the Greeks saw their Gods. Zeus was a powerful god who was fickle and liked to manipulate people for his own enjoyment. People would have to bargain with him and do heroic things to get his attention.

Many see God that same way. We should see him different. Our Heavenly Father is the one who gave His son to die for our sins. He is the one who loves us so much that there is nothing He wouldn't do for us. We don't have to beg. We just have to ask and to let our Father choose what is best for us.

The problem is that we want to be in control. We think that He must give what we want and give it in a way that makes things easiest for us. It can't work that way. God knows what we need and when we are ready to receive it. We have to see his choice and time as an act of love.

We have a generous God, but we need to trust Him. We need to see all the loving things that He has done for us in life and keep asking so that we receive even more of the things that will make our life even better. Never doubt his generosity. Our God loves you and will show you what is best.

**Take the narrow path and be a prayer warrior v. 14** *But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

God calls you to be different. Many will complain that God never helps them, but they seldom give more than a halfhearted prayer to the Lord. They pray once and figure that since God didn't give them their heart's desire that God just isn't listening.

You are to be different. You are to be prayer warriors that will patiently pray for days because you want the answer to come at the time that you are ready and the time that God has the pieces in place to do a miracle. You want big answers from God and you are willing to wait.

You are to be different because you want God's answer and not your own. You realize that this loving and generous God will give you what is best. He will give you answers and help that you could never have dreamed of. He will never give you a snake answer, but will always give you wonderful gifts.

You are to be different because you will pray and through prayer receive so much that others will benefit as well. Your prayers will be answered in a way that changes your world and helps others in need. Be different. Keep praying to your generous God who you trust with your future and your life.

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**Church at 9 PM**  
**Sunday school at 10:15**  
**Everyone is welcome**