

Matthew 7:7-11

7 "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

My dad was a World War 2 veteran that served in the Sea Bees. When I was a kid I asked him about the war. He would politely satisfy my curiosity but in reality he did not want to talk about it. He was bombed, shot at once, and witnessed a massive amount of death. I remember as a small child asking him if he prayed during the war. He responded affirmatively. Then I asked if we won because we prayed. I was shocked by his answer. "Well, I'm sure the other side prayed too." I was confused as a little child and wondered whose side God was on. Simple questions aren't quite so simple to answer.

When reading the scriptures it is easy to make assumptions if we interpret the text literally without framing the text within its given context. It is easy to make assumptions if we interpret the text to suit the self instead of analyzing what it really says or means. If we interpret the text to suit our own satisfactions then today's Scripture offers us wonderful, marvelous, terrific news. All you have to do is ask and it will be given you. All will be given to you, anything you want, anything at all, just name it, all you have to do is ask God for it. Pray to God earnestly and you will receive. That is, of course, if I interpret the Scripture to suit the self. Can I do this? Yes. Can I interpret God's word to suit my own wants and desires? Yes. We can interpret it that way. But that does not mean that's the way it is. That does not mean the same thing that Jesus meant. If I interpret it to suit the self this means if I want a big new house, a new car, or to win the lottery, then all I gotta do is bargain with God "God you know I love you, I promise to be good, let me have it, please! I'll give you 10%."

In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus is teaching how to live a Godly life. He includes in his lessons an encouragement to pray and he encourages persistence in prayer. We are bound to a life of prayer because we are dependent on God. The focus of Jesus teaching is not on getting what you want. Knocking is a Jewish expression for prayer. Ask, seek, and knock - all three - are Jewish expressions for prayer. The lesson is not about having your wants granted to you. The lesson is on a characteristic of prayer. The encouragement is to bring human needs to God in prayer. It is an expressions of our relationship to God as dependents. We bless the food because we thankful to God for providing it. We are thankful that we did not have to worry about where our next meal would come from. Prayer is a dynamic part of relationship with God and the Bible is all about the relationship between God and humanity.

Jesus puts the lesson in the context of a parent and child relationship taking main things from the culture for his example. Bread and fish are staples of the Galilean diet. You do not give rocks to a child that asks for bread and you do not give snake to a child that asks for fish. God will provide good things to those who ask. If you ask for food God will give you food.

Some prefer the easy road in regards to Today's Scripture - all you have to do is ask and God will provide. You could pray for peace but you may not have world peace because of wars

and violence. But you can have internal peace. You could pray for love but you might find a world full of hate where people are rude and mean. But you can find love within you.

Many years ago, before I was preacher, or elder, I asked God for the winning numbers to the lottery. It was 1987 when the lottery was first legalized in Virginia. We were struggling financially and I pleaded and bargained and promised not only to be good but to also give 10% and to even use some to help others. One night in a dream God said "I have already given you the answer." I figured this was a divine sign so I began searching the Bible for clues. I searched for those numbers and stumbled across some Scripture that puts today's lesson in perspective. Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters - you cannot serve God and wealth." Well, that's not what I was looking for. Here is a problem that we face today. I wanted God's word to accommodate my wants and desires instead me devoting my life to the will of God. I prayed again more earnestly "God, let me win the big one. You know the numbers just show them to me." Maybe this time God will answer my prayers and then I stumble upon Matthew 13:22 "the deceitfulness of wealth chokes out the word."

God is not a genie in a bottle that will grant you three wishes. God gives life! God gives the necessities of life; food, water, air, and shelter. God gives an abundance; plenty of food with no worries about your next meal. God gives an abundance of comfort and luxury and then some. God gives a promise of hope, in the end, when life is over. God gives salvation!

We don't come to church. We come to worship. And we worship in reverence, in spirit, and in truth. We have faithful endurance because we appreciate all God has done for us. We worship in reverence, in spirit, and in truth because we owe a tremendous thanks to God for giving us life, for sustaining us throughout life, and for providing for us after this life is over. It's not about me. It's not about having it my way, or doing what I want, or doing what is popular. It's about having faithful endurance because we appreciate what God has done for us and as such, we worship God in reverence, in spirit, and in truth.