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Sermon Notes

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A Spiritual Beggar Is Satisfied: Jesus Teaches us to Ask Matthew 7:7-12

I. An Uncertain Future: Abraham called to venture forth

- A. None of us knows the future... temptation to be anxious
- B. Today's text contains one of the most comprehensive and gracious promises in all the Bible
- C. Puritan theologian: "Abraham didn't know where he was going, but He certainly did know with whom he was going!"
- D. As we travel through this life, today's text gives us evidence of our Faithful Traveling Companion

II. Difficult questions of context

A. Context in Sermon on the Mount

- 1. Some people see Sermon on the Mount as a raw collection of unrelated teachings, like Book of Proverbs
- 2. Absolutely false... Sermon on Mount presented to us as having been given right straight through by Jesus in one place at one time
- 3. Immediate context: Judging others
- 4. Large context: Inclusion... 5:17-7:12... the Law and the Kingdom
- 5. Ultimate context: Whole Sermon on the Mount
- 6. That brings us back to Beatitudes: "Blessed are the spiritual beggars, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

B. Context in Scripture: can we ask for anything at all??

- 1. Discouraged in prayer life... start out asking for things & don't get them
- 2. Others... "NAME IT & CLAIM IT"... "Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz?"

- C. Main issue here: Why aren't I living the kind of Christian life I want to? Why am I not growing more and more like Jesus? Why do I not see the fruit of the Sermon on the Mount in my life?
ANSWER: Lack of persistent asking, persistent seeking, persistent knocking!!

III. A Striking Command & A Marvelous Promise: Given Once, Twice, Three Times

vs. 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

A. Human underestimation of need

1. Constantly think we're better off than we are
2. Independence comes from pride... I'm OK, You're OK
3. Christ speaking to the people of Laodicea:

Revelation 3:17 “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”

4. We consistently underestimate how spiritually needy we are!!

B. Jesus' command here reminds us... and it is a command

1. Ask = Go to someone who has what you need and ask for it... must realize you need it first
2. Seek = Look for something you don't have but deeply want... searching and searching for something implies deep felt need
3. Knock = To go to another, knocking on their door implies deep felt need

C. The Need for Persistence

1. Keep on asking... keep on seeking... keep on knocking
2. Temporary attraction of the Christian life:
 - a. Sermon on the Mount's pure ethics
 - b. high moral tone

- c. irresistible power of truth
- d. farsighted faith
- e. freedom from judgmentalism

All of this is so marvelous... the person sets sail with enthusiasm in their new Christian venture... ready to volunteer time, excitedly taking new faith steps, attending all the Bible studies, talking to friends about this new life

BUT THEN the person fizzles, flickers once or twice, and soon sputters out entirely... what happened? He lacked true Christian perseverance; HE ALSO MISSED THE FIRST BEATITUDE... the issue is persistent asking, persistent seeking, persistent knocking

D. Persistence in what?? PRAYER

1. The commands are tied to our prayer life:

Ask = Ask God... "make your requests known to God"

Seek from God = Search for something diligently; keep searching until you find it

Knocking on God's door = Urgent need; summoning the one inside to come deal with you

2. They underscore our status as spiritual beggars

- a. a person asking does not have all they need... there is some lack
- b. a person seeking is needy; they are looking for something they don't presently have
- c. a person knocking is also in need... they want something from the person inside

E. The Corresponding Promise: God's Amazing Grace and Why He Delays

1. Keep on asking AND IT WILL BE GIVEN... Keep on seeking, AND YOU WILL FIND...
Keep on knocking, AND THE DOOR WILL BE OPENED TO YOU
2. Foundation: God is more willing to give it than you are to ask for it!
3. This is why He delays... to intensify your desires
4. Our desires for the kinds of things God gives is far too weak... God delays to cause us to become more and more zealous in the pursuit

Luke 18:1-8 The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Luke 11:5-8 [The Parable of the Friend at Midnight]

⁵ Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ ⁷ “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

- ◆ so the issue is persistent asking, persistent seeking, persistent knocking
- ◆ the issue is also God’s tremendous desire to give it BUT ALSO
- ◆ His tremendous desire to change & intensify your desires

IV. The Promise Intensified

vs. 8 *For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

- A. Christ knows us well... He intensifies the promise to show how certain it is
- B. Universal promise: Everyone who exemplifies persistent asking, persistent seeking, persistent knocking is rewarded by getting what they seek
- C. Remarkable power in prayer

V. The Promise Exemplified

vs. 9-11 *“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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!*

- A. Christ intensifies this again, now with an example
- B. Christ reasons with us... much as He did about anxiety...

"If this, how much more that..."

- 1. If God feeds birds, will He not MUCH MORE feed you?
- 2. If God clothes the grass, will He not MUCH MORE clothe you?
- 3. HERE: If sinful, evil human beings know enough to respond properly to their children's requests, HOW MUCH MORE does your perfect, loving, compassionate, heavenly Father?
- C. Evil fathers giving good gifts?
 - 1. Does it hurt? It's the truth... later Jesus said plainly

Mark 10:18 "No one is good but God alone."

- 2. We ARE evil... we are selfish, we are short-sighted, we are twisted by sin, we are attracted to evil things... YET even WE know how to give good gifts to our children
- 3. How much more does the pure and perfect Father know how to answer our requests
- D. Evil, yes, but sadistic??
 - 1. What kind of father would set a stone in front of his child when he asks for bread?
 - 2. A sadist would derive delight out of seeing his child break a tooth on the "loaf"
 - 3. A sadist would enjoy seeing the child run in terror from a snake after he'd asked for a fish
- E. Is God like that? Satan says so!!
 - 1. God derives pleasure out of what's best for us, not what hurts us
 - 2. Satan sells us a bill of goods that God is a cruel, sadistic cosmic Emperor who delights in tormenting us by refusing our prayers

Genesis 3:4-5 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good from evil."

- 3. Underlying accusation: God is holding out on us... there's good stuff out there that God doesn't want you to have!!

4. Especially vulnerable when your prayers go unanswered

F. A Faith-filled perspective on unanswered prayer

1. God gladly gives all good gifts
2. God also gladly chooses the perfect time for all good gifts
3. God gladly tests our faith by withholding good gifts until that right time has come

Therefore: If you have prayed for something and the prayer has not been answered the way you hoped, it's either

1) Not a good gift; 2) Not the right time... keep praying until God finally disposes of the matter

G. What is a "good gift"?

"Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."

Matthew 6:33 "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

2 Peter 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness..."

1. Good gift #1: God's Kingdom
 - a. salvation for your soul... do you yearn for forgiveness from all your sins?? God gives it freely in the blood of Christ
 - b. advance of the Kingdom... fruitfulness, seeing other come to Christ, full use of your spiritual gifts... all the fruits of the Kingdom!! Yes, yes, yes says God
2. Good gift #2: God's righteousness
 - a. character in total conformity to Christ
 - b. obedience to the Sermon on the Mount
 - c. purity and holiness... putting sin to death
 - d. fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control

3. Good gift #3: the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:13 “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 the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

- a. Holy Spirit does it all!!
- b. convicts us of sin, draws us to saving faith in Christ
- c. enables us to be fruitful in Kingdom ministry
- d. empowers us to put sin to death
- e. produces godliness—godly character—in us

4. Ultimate good gift: God Himself

Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek me and you will find me when you search for me with all your heart.”

Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

Psalm 42:1 “As the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”

- a. God changes our tastes
- b. we see that we would rather have God than anything this world affords

Psalm 37:4 “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

- c. Anyone who is “delighted with the Lord” has a whole new set of desires of the heart

O God, let me see your face!

O God, let me put this sin to death!

O God, let me be a truly humble person!

O God, give me the boldness of a lion to share the Gospel with my neighbor!

O God, give me the peace of Christ to control my heart today!

O God, make me a truly persistent prayer warrior!

All of these are the requests of a spiritual beggar, and they honor God... if you persist with them, you will receive them!

VI. The Golden Rule

vs. 12 *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”*

- A. One of the most amazing statements Jesus ever made... summing up all the Commandments in one
- B. Some critics say its not original

Confucius lived in China around 550 to 470 years before Christ was born... He said “What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others.”

Greek philosopher Epictetus said “What you avoid suffering yourself, do not inflict on others.”

Jewish Rabbi Hillel said “What is hateful to yourself, do not do to someone else.”

Ancient Greek King Nicocles said “Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of someone else.”

- C. Jesus made a revolutionary change

Illus. Harpsichord vs. piano

1. All the above articulations are negative
 2. Basically, if you don't hurt someone else, you're a righteous man
 3. Jesus went so far beyond that!! An energetic life of actively seeking the best for others
 4. Relentless life of service, using imagination to think “What would minister to me? I must do that to others!”
- D. Radically reverses Pharisees' outlook

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. . . . For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

1. Pharisees hardly went through life using the Law to bless others! They used the Law as a sledgehammer to crush others
2. Pharisees were angry when Jesus healed on the Sabbath... but by the Golden Rule, they should have rejoiced... if it had been their hand he had healed, their legs he had made well, their sight he had restored, they would have rejoiced
3. The Golden Rule fulfills every command of the Law... both negative and positive

Negative: *Romans 13:9-10 The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Positive: *Deuteronomy 22:1-4*

If you see your brother’s ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him.² If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him.³ Do the same if you find your brother’s donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it.⁴ If you see your brother’s donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet.

Golden Rule also restatement of second greatest command

Leviticus 19:18 Love your neighbor as yourself

Pharisees missed the central Law of the Old testament: LOVE... the Golden Rule faithfully obeyed leads to a righteousness far greater than that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law

E. BUT why don’t we obey it??

1. Good for cross-stitched art to hang on walls; good for choosing as a life verse, good for even engraving in a gold plate... imagine... the Golden Rule engraved in Gold
2. BUT brutally difficult for us sinners to obey

3. WHY? Self-centered existence leads to self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, self-protection, self-concern... DO TO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU gets completely left out

F. This, too, should make us become a spiritual beggar

Ask, and it will be given you... Ask God : "Help me fulfill the Golden Rule today!"

VII. Application:

1. Seek first His Kingdom:

- 1) If you have never given your life to Christ, ask Him to save you and He will...

Ask for all your sins to be forgiven, and they will be in Christ's name

Ask to be able to go to heaven when you die, and you will

Ask to be adopted into God's own family as a child of God, and you will be

Ask to have your name written in heaven, and it will be done

Ask to have Jesus live in your heart, and He will

Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, and purify your life, and He will

- 2) Are you praying for His Kingdom to grow? Missions, outreach plans, discipleship...
- 3) Ask the Lord for a specific prayer burden for the Kingdom of God and for FBC for which you will faithfully pray for one year.
- 4) Pray daily for one year for these two burdens

2. Seek also His righteousness: "Name it and claim it"

- 1) Read through 2 Peter 1:5-7, Galatians 5:22-23 with your spouse, parent, Christian friend... someone spiritually mature & who knows you well
- 2) Ask the person; "Which of these character traits do you think I could most benefit from growing in?" Listen humbly & write it down.
- 3) Ask the person, "Which of these character traits would YOU most like to grow in? I will pray for you daily for one year in that area."

- 4) Pray daily for one year for each of these two character traits... one for yourself, one for the other person

Keep on asking, and it will be given to you

Keep on seeking and you will find

Keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you

5. Mark the date, write down your commitment, then agree to meet together one year from now and check the progress... see if God has been faithful!