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Precious Promises for Prayer; Matt 7:7-11  
GPBC  
1.27.19

Introduction – We’ve been away from our study through Matthew, so let’s quickly review the Sermon on the Mount before we settle in to today’s passage.

Remember the main point of the sermon is to distinguish false faith and true faith. So in the introduction Jesus outlines what a true believer looks like and what he/she does in the beatitudes and the salt and light passages. Then comes that pivotal, key verse of the entire sermon in 5:20, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

In the following section Jesus demonstrates how false righteousness fails to keep the law, which ironically is what they boast in and are relying on as evidence they are right with God. Jesus shows how true righteousness keeps the law from the heart, not from the checkbox.

In the next section beginning with 6:1, Jesus demonstrates how false righteousness also fails in its worship of God by worshipping only to be seen by others. Whereas true righteousness again is a matter of worshipping God from the heart knowing the Father sees.

The third section of the sermon begins at 6:19. Jesus directly instructs those of true faith to not do the things that are commonly found among those of false faith. Do not love the things of the world. Do not be anxious. And do not judge others in a sinful way.

This takes us to our passage today that begins the fourth and final section of the sermon where Jesus instructs those of true faith on what to do. So He moves from what not to do to what we should be doing. And as we’ve seen already, the first activity Jesus compels us toward is prayer. Let me make 3 quick observations before we walk through these verses together.

1. This passage is a great way for us to prepare for the associational prayer gathering on Sunday evening, February 17.

2. If you struggle with anxiety and worry, if you find yourself battling anxious thoughts and feelings, I want to point out an observation especially for you today. Note with me that Jesus' teaching on anxiety in this sermon is sandwiched between His teaching on prayer. Before He addresses anxiety beginning in 6:25, He teaches us how to pray beginning in 6:9. After He teaches on anxiety, He compels and moves us to pray beginning in 7:7. The lesson clearly is this: Our first recourse against anxiety is constant, believing prayer to our heavenly Father.
3. And just how does Jesus motivate and move us to pray? He issues two great promises that are attached to prayer. He doesn't just command us to pray, even though His commands are sufficient for us to obey. He goes further and reinforces that command with promises to keep us praying. Precious promises that will encourage us to pray even when we don't feel like praying or when we are discouraged and doubt that God hears or that praying will not help us. It may help others but not me. Jesus reassures us and compels us by attaching precious promises to prayer.
  - I. A Promise for Those Who Keep Praying (vv7-8)
    - a. Why do I say the promise is for those who keep praying? It is because the 3 commands in v7 are all in the present tense in Greek. "ask, seek, and knock" in the present means an ongoing action. Ask and keep asking. Seek and keep seeking. Knock and keep knocking. Don't quit. Don't give up. Keep praying!
    - b. What is the promise for those who keep praying? In God's time and in God's will, He will answer! Note the future tense of each response. For those who keep asking – it will be given you. For those who keep seeking – you will find. For those who keep knocking – it will be opened to you.
      - i. It will happen. Maybe not right when you pray. Maybe not the first time you pray – but it will be given, you will find, and it will be opened to you!
    - c. Note also with me that these responses are understood in the passive voice. It will be given to you – when you ask it is not you who will accomplish – it will be given to you. It will be opened to you – when you knock it is not you who opens the door. It will be opened to you.

- i. This is what we call the divine passive! It is the hand of God that graciously opens and gives to us. It is the hand of God that graciously turns the knob on that dead bolt locked door and opens it!
- d. That's precisely why we pray to begin with. Life gets too big for us to handle. Circumstances grow too difficult for us to manage. Direction gets too cloudy. Salvation is beyond what we can do. The reason why we pray is because the Father is able!
- e. Then look at v8. The truth has already been stated clearly and adequately in v7. There's no doubt about the command or the promise. And yet Jesus essentially restates the promise in order to further reassure us and reinforce the truthfulness of the promise and increase our motivation to pray.
- f. Everyone, everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Twice, God issues His word of promise to those who keep praying! In other words, this is how God works. This is how God responds to persistent, believing, dependent prayer. God means for us to be doubly certain that when His people pray, He moves! We have His Word – twice!
- g. Now we know Jesus is not teaching here that we can ask for anything and eventually we'll get it.
  - i. Ill. I've been praying for years pastor to win the lottery and God hadn't answered me yet!
  - ii. He's already taught us how to pray over in ch6. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!
- h. The promise for those who keep praying is for those who are praying according to the will and purpose and glory of God.
- i. The lesson is clearly this: Keep praying! You may be in the middle of a life crisis – keep praying! You may be under a cloud of darkness – keep praying! You may be in an impossible situation – keep praying! Your child or your spouse may be far from the Lord – keep praying! Your loved one may be hardened against the Lord – keep praying! You may not see anything good or any hope or any relief in sight – keep praying!
- j. Keep asking for those things you can't do yourself. Keep seeking for those things that you can't find on your own. Keep knocking at that door that seems impenetrable. For everyone who asks receives, and

the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

- k. III. Praying for lost friends.
  - l. Keep praying – the Father is able!
  
- II. A Promise for Those Who Trust the Father (vv9-11)
  - a. read VV9-11. The first promise is grounded in the power of God. This promise is grounded in the goodness of God. He is able, and He is good!
  - b. What does it mean that we who are evil, that means we are sinners, we know how to give good gifts to our children? How do we as sinners give good gifts to our children?
    - i. We withhold what is not helpful and give what is needed. A stone is not helpful when you're hungry. Bread is what is needed.
    - ii. We also withhold what is harmful. A serpent is harmful but a fish will nourish.
    - iii. If we as sinners with all our self-centeredness and limited capacity will give good gifts to our children WHEN THEY ASK, how much more will our heavenly Father who is perfect and sinless and sovereign and abounding in resources give good things to those who ask.
  - c. The promise is for those who trust the Father, that he gives good things! Now sometimes when He gives it sure feels like a stone instead of bread. Sometimes it sure looks like a serpent instead of a fish. But because He is our Father and He is always good, we can always trust that He gives good gifts. It may take a while to see the goodness, but if God gives it, it will be good!
  - d. He's our heavenly Father, so He sees much more than we do. And because He is our Father, He always gives good things. Whether He gives sickness or health, somehow it's good. Whether He gives comfort or poverty, somehow it's good. Whether He gives deliverance or strength to endure, somehow it's good. It's not in Him to ever give what is not ultimately, finally good.
  - e. The lesson is so clearly this: When we pray to Him we can trust Him beyond doubt, without question, to always give us good things.

Conclusion