

How to Grow in Holiness

2024.04.21 Morning Sermon in Matthew 7:7–12

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
⁹Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! ¹²Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Main idea: progress in holiness comes through fellowship with Father, Who even uses us in our brothers' lives.

Introduction: growth in holiness turns out to be difficult and often imperceptible. Is something wrong with me? Does this mean that I am a “fake” Christian? In the following verses, our Lord proceeds to tell us what growth in holiness often looks like.

1. **Neediness, v7.**

1. Neediness isn't just an expected state for a Christian; it is the blessed state of the Christian: spiritual poverty, mourning, lowliness, hunger (cf. 5:3–6).
2. Askers have no resources. Seekers need direction for where to get them. Knockers can't get in to the place where they are. Ask/seek/knock is therefore an acknowledgement about the great extent of our ongoing neediness.
3. The judgmental man of v1–2, who thinks that he has arrived, is not the asker/seeker/knocker. And the dogs/swine of v6 don't care for those things for which we should be asking/seeking/knocking. The Christian, then, has the new life to delight in God's law in his inner being, but feels very much his ongoing neediness for the very thing that he desires (cf. Rom 7:12–25).

2. **Dependence, v7.**

1. Asking, seeking, knocking are prayer words. Growth is obtained entirely from God and therefore is sought primarily by prayer.
2. The Lord uses means (cf. Eph 6:14–17), but all of these means are to be accompanied by prayer and employed in an attitude of prayer (cf. Eph 6:18).
3. Effort is commanded, but it is rewarded by way of mercy, not achievement.

3. **Persistence, v7.**

1. Ongoing, present tense.
2. Not merely done and disposed of. This is always the way of life, the way forward, for the believer.

4. **Confidence, v8, 9–11.**

1. Father knows what we need before we ask.
2. We are evil, so whatever willingness we have to provide good things, or whatever wisdom to know what a good thing is, is a grace from God. He extends this to many, even in common grace.
3. But where we evil are somewhat willing, and somewhat wise, He is perfectly willing and wise.

4. Asking, seeking, knocking come from the Father and are guaranteed by Him. Prayer is not only asking but obtaining, not only seeking but finding (cf. Heb 4:16).
5. **Affection, v9–11.**
 1. What is true of willingness and wisdom is true of love. Natural affection is left to many wicked, to give us an inkling of God's Fatherly affection.
 2. Our holiness comes to us in the adopting love of the Father, Who is making us to bear His image in conformity to the beloved Son and union with the beloved Son by the indwelling and working of His blessed Spirit.
 3. Therefore our asking/seeking/knocking should come with childlike affection of beloved children unto a beloved Father.
6. **Submission, v11.**
 1. We must import the lesson of 6:8–13 here. It is Father Who knows what we need and what we should ask.
 2. Growth in holiness begins with trusting to the wisdom of Father in what we should ask and how He is pleased to answer. And as growth progresses, we become more conformed in our desires and more content with His responses.
7. **Imitation, v12.**
 1. Part of submitting to God's will in how He grows us in holiness means being a willing, zealous, diligent member of His church. For, He uses us in His growing others, and He uses others in His growing us (cf. Rom 12:3–13).
 2. Having learned from Father what to desire also from men, we must do accordingly unto them.

Conclusion: growing in holiness is hard (impossible) but sweet (because it comes through fellowship with God, and in/under Him, with each other; cf. 1Jn 1:3).

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Matthew 7, verses 7 through 12. These are God's words. Ask. And it will be given to you. And you will find. And it will be opened to you. For everyone. Who asks, receives? And he who seeks finds. And to him who knocks, it will be opened. Or. Hot man is there among you, who, if his son asks for bread, Will give him a stone.

Or if he asks for a fish, Will he give him a serpent? 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 good things. To those who ask him. Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you?

Do also to them. For this is the law. And the prophets. Manla, sends this reading of God's. Inspired and didn't worked Rejoice. That he blesses the preaching of To our building built up into Christ. Please be seated.

So, since Earlier part of chapter five. In much of what has come to be called The Sermon on the Mount. And the conclusion to chapter 7 does Teach us to take chapters five through seven as a unit. We have had the Lord Jesus, rehabilitating our view of Holiness. Uh, not just

redefining it for us or defining it correctly for us, expositing his own word in a way that those who were hearing him on this mountain had just not hurt.

Uh, and in a way that if we have not heard the word opened according to the Interpretation principles, the hermeneutics. Of Christ in chapter 5. Then we have not heard Holiness to find that way. But not just the definition of Holiness, but the necessity of it. That we must haven't.

Uh, in order to enter the kingdom, our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees and And, Necessity, being married to a delight. That the Perfection that is required of us, is actually a reflection of our father as we heard, At the end of chapter 5. And so our pursuit of perfection even as in God's Providence to us just now we have heard at the end of first John 2 in the beginning of first John 3 is the pursuit of that which reflects the father perfectly and of which we have the living embodied example in the Lord, Jesus Christ, who is not only returning again soon, and will appear.

We will as it were appear on that day. We will appear as he is. Uh, but we are not yet. As he is. And so, as Uh, we went through chapter six and we learned about this. Religion in pursuit of that Holiness, The Works of Mercy and the prayer and the fasting and how very much it is the transacting the interaction of our soul with our father in the secret place.

And taking seriously then, well, how we are interacting. With the Lord himself. And having that then shape, what we go after. Not that, which is Earthly, not that which is Apparent to even fleshly men even unconverted, unregenerate still in death, still in darkness men, but that with our hearts and with our lives, we would go after our God himself, and that Holiness that we must have in order even to enjoy him.

And of course, to be admitted into his presence that even as we saw in our Isaiah reading, the Lord, Jesus willing Resolute intentional. Going by his suffering, to secure his inheritance and to secure it as a joint inheritance with us. So Jesus has earned heaven for us. We cannot enter into what he has earned, unless we are made like him and it would be no Heaven.

It would be no Heaven at all if we were not made like unto him, And so, Uh, so the last part Of Matthew 6 teaching us, not only not to worry about Earthly things. But you remember when we had that portion opened Also not to worry about our worrying.

But to depend upon father, as those who are still needy and this, of course, in last week's portion, as we turned the page, as it were into chapter seven. Depending upon father as those who are still needing excluded judgmentalism. That we could not look. Uh, at our brother or sister in the church.

Wherever we are in our spiritual growth and maturation and wherever they are. We could not look them. Look at them. As if we have arrived and they have not, and what they need is for us. What they need is to be brought up to our standard to be made, like we are Uh, but that we are receiving that holy and precious gift from father who continues to remove from us.

Those foreign objects in our eyes Uh, and uh, and gives us more and more as he does. So to see clearly how greatly needy we still are to see clearly. How faithful and merciful he is in, giving us the Holiness and increasing uh our Holiness and the progress of our sanctification, and the kindness of our God.

That is. The point at which we left off. Then in verse six, not giving what is Holy to dogs or casting pearls before swine as if the treasure of sanctification could be given. To those who are unclean or they could even want it. But sanctification growth and Grace growth.

And Holiness is only for those who are united to Christ only for those who have a new life in him. Uh, the unbeliever cannot grow in Holiness. He has none. That's, But we still need to grow in Holiness and the fact that we are still needing the fact that our sanctification, our likeness unto Christ, Our reflection of the character of our heavenly father is so imperfect, still is often one of the great difficulties in the Christian Life.

Uh, you Now, if you were a Christian, you have been made alive and you have been brought to Faith in Jesus Christ. You have rested upon him alone. What he has done as your righteousness, his sacrifice alone. What he has suffered to take away your guilt and to completely neutralize and dispel the wrath of God, the fury of God against your guilt and against your sin, and you have come to love God.

To love his law for his sake. You have come to call the Commandment holy and righteous and good but not just in the pharisaical way. But in that way, in which you Delight in his law, and your inner being, But you remember,

The existential crisis. The experiential distress that that brought for the Apostle Paul. Because he loved the law of God. He delighted in the law of God and his inner being he testifies. And you remember where he testifies that. To that right in the middle of a paragraph in which he is greatly distressed, that the good that he wants to do, he doesn't do and the evil that he hates he keeps on doing And so, one of the things That we find here.

As we come into verses 7 through, 12 is as the Lord Uh, the Lord Jesus turns his attention then. To these children of the heavenly father to these who are being adopted in him through faith. He addresses for us this difficulty, Because growth and Holiness. Is not only difficult but it's often imperceptible.

And we feel like there is something wrong with us and we wonder am I a fake Christian? Am I one of these who really just goes after the uh, what is apparent to men? Do I in the words of Christ in chapter six, do I already have my reward?

Uh, or Have I really been made alive? And, Am I really righteous with Christ's own righteousness? Counted for me. And so in the following verses, our Lord proceeds. To tell us or show us what growth in Holiness. Looks like, So that when we find that we are needy, when we find that we are dependent, when we find that this is an ongoing neediness and dependence, That we find that the Lord Jesus is addressing us as children of the heavenly father.

In verses 7. To. And so, we'll see several things now about what this pursuit of Holiness, and not just pursuit of Holiness, as those who are receiving a good gift from our father, a holy and precious gift a pearl level treasure as it were From our father. But also those who are being used in one another's lives.

And, Uh, in whose lives, God is using our brothers and our sisters. So, that one of the things that he does, As. Clears our eyes more and more. Is he makes us more and more useful under him as he uses us in one another's lives. And that is the context in, in which Verse 12.

Whatever you want men to do to, you do also to them Uh, comes to us. Uh, in this passage. And so we will see neediness and we'll see dependence. We'll see persistence. We'll see confidence. In our Heavenly father. Provision and wisdom and love will see affection, then. In the love with which we should ask seek and knock the love with, which we should receive the love with which We should also then love our brother.

We'll see submission. Um, and we'll see imitation. So, the Lord helping us. We will hope to see those seven things. Together in our time, that remains first Neediness. Ask and it will be given

to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. You see neediness isn't just the expected state for the Christian.

We see here. The asking and seeking and knocking, these are all needy words. You don't ask unless you have need you don't seek unless you have need you do you don't knock. Unless you have need and so immediately Jesus implies to us that the Christian Life is a life of neediness.

And so he teaches us that it is the expected state for a Christian. And so, if you have begun, Out of Delight in the Lord, Jesus Christ and certainty that he alone can be your righteousness before God and desire to please him, who has saved you and hunger to see him and to know him who has saved you for himself and this, and the knowledge from the Lord Jesus that in order to see him in order to enjoy him, you must be holy.

And so you make this, start in Holiness, and you discover that you are still needy. Then here now in Matthew 7 verse 7, this is the expected condition for a Christian In this life. A Christian is someone who is needy. And you may have already begun to remember, then that this isn't just the expected state of a Christian.

It's the Blessed state of a Christian. Isn't that how we heard him? Start out the sermon? Blessed. Are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. That you're coming to see yourself as spiritually impoverished bankrupt. That the only thing that you can have before God that is worthy is Jesus himself.

And so, The the the question. Um, that many of you have heard at a membership interview You stand before God. And he says, why should I let you into heaven? And you learn to answer, don't you? Because Jesus Because Jesus is my righteousness because you gave me Jesus, to be my righteousness because Jesus has taken away my sin.

It is also the answer to how can I live? How can I grow in in Holiness? I am impoverished. All I have is Jesus. That's not just the expected state of the Christian. It's the blessed state of the Christian. Because one of the ways you can describe a Christian, is someone who knows that all he has before.

God is Jesus Christ. He is poor in spirit in himself, but Christ is the riches of God to supply all our needs. And so blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn? For they shall be comforted. And here again, it is especially that spiritual mourning. That spiritual grieving they don't pretend like the remaining sin is okay, because they have been forgiven Now, a Christian is not someone who has taken spiritual morphine, by saying a prayer and getting a sticker in his Bible and knows that he's going to heaven now.

And he can do anything that, uh, that harms himself or others morally and spiritually and feel fine about it. No, a Christian is someone who Mourns A Christian as someone who Grieves. He's still a sinner, his brother is still a sinner, the world is still full of sin and death.

And yet while he already has the Kingdom of Heaven 5. He shall be comforted five. Sins day is are numbered. His own sins. Stays are numbered if you are in Christ. Your remaining sins days. Are numbered. Well, we could go on and re-preach all the way through verse 9.

Uh but blessed are the meek the lowly blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. And you remember we made the point at the time that verse 4 verse 5 verse 6, They're all in the future tense. Verse three. They have the kingdom already but we are not yet to the point where we have received our full and final Comfort.

We have not yet. Inherited the Earth, indeed, the new heavens and the new Earth. And we have not yet been filled. With righteousness, our character and our conduct have not yet, been perfected. And so neediness is the expected state of the Christian. A Christian is an asker a Christian as a seeker.

A Christian is a knocker. But it is the Blessed state of a Christian. Because he asks and seeks and knocks as one who has been, given those things by God for the sake of Christ and one who is guaranteed to receive For the sake of Christ. And so we see that.

We are askers, which means we don't have the resources. You ask another because he has the resources. We are Seekers. Because we don't even have the wisdom to know from ourselves where to get the resources. We ask and seek and asking and seeking together. Like, The one with the lost sheep or the woman.

With the Lost coin. We need Direction. For where to find. And we find at the throne of grace. And we are knockers. Because we can't let ourselves in. To where we need to be. It must be opened to us.

Uh, Um, well, it was very personal I heard Testimony, once of A man who didn't want the idolatrous purported pictures of Christ. In the church building. In his church building to come down. And the reason that he gave made me tremble for his soul. Was that he had seen a picture?

Of Jesus knocking. And he noticed that there was no, Handle on the outside of the door. And he realized that Jesus had done all. He could And this man, it all depended upon this man to let him in what a dreadful, Wicked view of both, Jesus Christ and himself.

The opposite is true, isn't it? We cannot do anything. We cannot let ourselves in to Grace, or Holiness. Jesus Christ Alone. Can bring us to. We need to be. And so we have this great ongoing neediness and it's exactly the opposite. Our neediness. Our awareness of our ongoing neediness is the opposite of two Big things that Jesus was warning us about last week in verses one through six first that judgmentalism.

Having a Accurate, heart felt understanding of your own neediness before God is incompatible. With judgmentalism. Because you will, if you know your neediness then. You will judge and you will measure as one who is in great need of Mercy. And so, you will think of others, not as As being those who need condemnation.

But as those who are in great need of Mercy as well. They may not yet think, right? The Lord has given you to think they may not live yet live the way that the Lord has given you to live, but you are not the standard. For how to think and how to live, you are still needy.

And so, knowing our neediness knowing ourselves to be askers, Seekers knockers Will help us against this judgmentalism, but also, Is also a, The opposite of the dogs and the swine in verse six, isn't it This holy treasure is being given to them this, which is Holy and this, which is as pearls help in in conforming to God's law and conforming to God's character and being pressed into the shape of God's son help in growing in Holiness.

The way that the more you grow in the Lord Jesus Christ you bless God for rebukes and Corrections. Even when they come from enemies, even when they come from those who are judgmental, the evil part comes from the the evil person, but your father is doing you good. He's giving you opportunity to, to be humble and receive correction and examine yourself and cry out to him for help.

Both help in sanctifying you and help in being Vindicated against the Hostile attacker in that case. But but those who are holy. Those who have been set apart. To God in Jesus Christ. And they have that not just remember last week, the covenantal Holiness of being a member of his church, but also the positional Holiness positional sanctification of being in Jesus, through faith and that is what?

Produces and provides sorry. So dry today. That is what produces and provides that Progressive Holiness. And the if you are positionally holy in Christ, you love to progress in Holiness and you're grateful for that dogs and Swine. In verse six, they don't like to be helped to be holy They don't like when their Elder asks them about their family worship and their secret worship and their attendance at the public worship.

They don't like being asked about things in their lives that are inconsistent. With a profession of Christian faith. They resist that. They're not asking and seeking and knocking from God, to give them Holiness. And to give them Holiness in the way that he does, by his Apostles and Prophets and evangelists by whom, he's given us, the scriptures that Define Holiness to us.

And for us by the pastor teachers, who then take those scriptures and among the flock of Christ make application and lead and help, they don't like Having brothers and sisters, who are pursuing Holiness because it's uncomfortable to be one who is not pursuing when you're alongside many who are And yet, even your neediness, even your longing, even your desire.

And some of you have enjoyed the sweetness of this experience. When, when the remaining sin, Is the problem and your neediness is known and you consider Father in Heaven to be kind and generous and good as he progresses you in Holiness. You're grateful. You're grateful for the ministry of the under Shepherds.

You're grateful to be in a congregation where other needy ones like you are pursuing Holiness together. And you grieve together over. Over one another stumblings, and you rejoice together over one another's progress and where the Lord helps you in a situation that you're going into and you're saying, pray for me for wisdom or pray for me that I wouldn't stumble pray for me that I would be be gracious and then you come back and you share what the Lord has done.

And, One quick way to be outed as dog or swine is to be, oh, those goody goodies, always, you know, don't they ever turn it off? That's spiritual stuff that Holiness stuff. You be careful. Because Christians are Oscars and Seekers and knockers were needy and desirous Needy. So that we are not judgmental and desirous so that we don't resent.

Help. In Holiness. So that's the first thing. The Lord Jesus shows us about what it's like to be one who is in this. Ongoing. For an object removal process. To use. The the metaphor from last week's portion then we see dependence. This is. This is very closely connected to the neediness, so there's not just a lack that is in us there is a sufficiency That is in God for us.

There is a sufficiency that is in Christ for us as God's provision. Asking and seeking and knocking our prayer words and their prayer words that have guaranteed results. Whenever someone advertises to you something. As a man and he guarantees results. You probably have and rightfully so a measure of skepticism.

Uh, whenever somebody does not want to lose his business, his lawyer helps him to word things in such a way that he does not guarantee results. Past performance is not an indicator of future results. Uh you know, the fine print. Yeah. Yeah. This medicine works for good health when combined with good nutrition exercise and everything else.

That produces good health by itself, Etc. Who has secured? The outcome for you. In Christ guarantees results. It's a real and true guarantee. And so there's this dependence upon him. That the asking and the seeking and the knocking are not because asking works and seeking works and knocking works.

But because God, Because his grace, Because he has given to you to ask and to seek and to knock. And he is the one whom you asked. And he is the one. Whom you seek and in whom you seek, And he is the one who opens. To you. The Lord uses means.

And they are means that include effort in sanctification. The means of your justification is Jesus. The alone instrument of your justification is not doing anything yourself but depending only on what Jesus has done. That's why there can be no other instrument, but faith for being made right with God.

Faith is the alone instrument because Jesus does everything. But when it comes to your sanctification, He commands you to be active and vigorous. He uses words like run and wrestle and beat and kill. He gives you armor. Ephesians 6. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand stand.

Therefore, having girded your ways to his truth. So his truth is a means having put on the breastplate of righteousness and so hoping entirely in your union with Jesus Christ who is your righteousness and the guarantee that you have of your righteous standing with God, the supper being one of these places where you put on the breastplate of righteousness, you eat the bread, you drink the cup, you show forth, the death of him who is your righteousness, and who has taken away your sin, and who sits on the throne of Glory.

With the preparation of the gospel of peace. Knowing and believing that God is for you in Christ and no one can be against you. And so this peace, this Alliance that you you have with God. Uh, enables you to be more than conqueror in all that you do. Above all taking the shield of Faith, which of course, corresponds to the Breastplate of righteousness, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

And you take the helmet of salvation. Not just that you have been saved, but as in God's Providence, we'll be having in the text for the midweek meeting. Uh, this week, our Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed the certainty. The God Who has made you righteous through faith in Jesus Christ will bring you into the full receipt of all that Jesus has earned and the full enjoyment of all that you receive that Jesus has earned and this is like a helmet on your head and so there are all these things that we do.

In our, In our Christian Life, in pursuit of Of Holiness. And the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, is you wield the word. Daily in the secret place and and their morning and evening. When you lay down and when you rise up, family worship household worship, And in the in the public worship as well.

So there are all these things that we do. But then Verse 18 praying, always With all prayer. And supplication in the spirit. You see the Lord uses means in. Saying in sanctifying us. And so we are not commanded to be passive in our sanctification, we're going to be active and vigorous zealous diligent to attend well, on the means of Grace, to use that phrase that we use for all of that.

But all of these means are to be accompanied by prayer. Praying in all things with all prayer. All of these things are to be used in an attitude of prayer. Not trusting that the things that we do. Are going to be affected because we do them. But doing them because he whom we trust.

To work in us has said to do them. And we trust that he is going to work in. Through what he has commanded. So effort in sanctification is command it. But it is rewarded, not by way of achievement. But by way of Mercy. Not by way of saying. Since you have Faithfully done this, it has made you holy That would be our faithfulness.

No, sanctification comes by God's faithfulness, since he, who has commanded you to do this. And sustained you in doing this is faithful. He has used it. He will use it. To make you, holy Dependence. Asking and seeking and knocking demonstrating to us, not just our neediness, but that everything that we do in pursuing Holiness Is done Independence.

In the third place persistence. So something that isn't Immediately obvious in the English text. Because we don't have these two different kinds of imperatives. Uh, the way the Greek language does one kind of imperative that is for a one-off completed action. You do it once you check the box, it's done.

Um, the other sort of imperative in this passage is for ongoing. Action. If you've studied Greek, they're present imperatives not heiness imperatives. And this means that this is something that is ongoing. It's not merely done and disposed of done and you check the box. I asked God for Holiness, check that box.

I saw it Holiness you check that box. I ask God to open to me the door of Holiness and check that box. No, this is the ongoing persistent. Condition or manner, rather. Of the Christian Life. And so, since this is to be something, That is persistent our neediness and our dependence.

This is something in which we ought to be persistent. And so, Perhaps you have read, or heard. Some in order to bring this out, we'll paraphrase this or translate, it keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. For everyone, who, Asks, in the ongoing way. By implication everyone who asks, receives everyone who seeks fines to him, who knocks it will be opened.

And so don't let yourself do as we sometimes do in our flesh. Say, well, I asked and it didn't work. I've been asking and it hasn't worked. I sought and I haven't found.

And the door has not been opened. No. God, who is faithful has given you these words and they are true. And, Everyone, everyone. Who asks? And seeks and knocks because this is the new life into, which they have been brought a life of neediness in themselves, but dependence upon the Lord and that in a persistent way through the rest of this life.

Everyone. Receives and finds. And to him it. Opened. Well, then he gives us The certainty. Uh, in this word picture verses 9 through 11. Or hot man is there among you? Who if his son asks for bread, We'll give him a stone. Now, in the word picture, You say, I've asked, but I didn't receive.

We're making ourselves the one who are asking for bread and God. We are saying implying and this would humiliate Us by the metaphor here. God having given us differently than we anticipated or imagined or desired who said ah Stone. No, that's not. What's happened. Is it? Who is evil and who is good here?

Jesus says, To his disciples. These are the ones who are up on the mountain. These are the Blessed ones who are salt and light already. These are the ones who are separate even from the ones having the religious festival at the bottom of the mountain. In this frenzy of excitement, because they saw Jesus sit down to preach.

And seeing him seated. They came to him. Because they would rather have preaching than partying. That's how chapter 5 began. But these are the ones. To whom he says, verse 11. If

you then being evil. It doesn't mean covenantally evil. Outside of the visible church, he doesn't mean Positionally evil that they aren't.

Holy to God in Christ and through faith in Christ. But he means having remaining sin. Having that from your former Nature. Which is still in you what Paul calls, the body of this death, the law that seems to be in my members. He says. Why you're why would you judge God?

About how he has answered your prayers. If you still have all of this remaining sin, And, And you are the ones who Having your experience. Your child comes and he asks you for bread, you didn't give him a stone. And do you think your heavenly father is giving you a stone?

When you asked for bread, Is it not the other way around? Aren't we discovering then that we're asking for stones but he's giving us bread. We're asking for serpents. But he's giving us fish. And so, There's confidence here. Because of whom it is that we're asking and how he is not like we are He is the one of whom chapter 6.

And verse 8 says, Your father knows the things you have need of before you ask him. And so, one of the points about the Lord's Prayer, Is not just what you should pray for. But the confidence for with which you should pray. Because of whom it is that you are asking and his wisdom.

He knows, and his power. He's Heavenly and his love. His father. So we pray with confidence. This was repeated again in the end of chapter six or towards the end. Of chapter six. Now, when he's teaching us not to worry, and even in the, the seeking of the Kingdom are hungering and thirsting after righteousness or seeking first, the kingdom, and his righteousness, which is, uh, just uh, which is a way of summarizing the way he taught you to pray.

Earlier in chapter six, pray in a way that seeks first the kingdom and his righteousness. And he comes again, just like in verse 8, your father knows what you need before. You ask verse 32, your heavenly father knows that you need all these things. And now we say, ask seek knock.

But not just the neediness and dependence and persistence but with confidence. Your heavenly father. Knows what you need. His wisdom, he is Heavenly. His power and his father, his love. And when you come to one with wisdom like that, and power like that, and love like that, Shouldn't you come in confidence?

So that even if what you anticipated and desired. Is not immediately the outcome. Your confidence. Overrules complaint. You say, this is not what I expected, because father is wiser than I. This is not what I expected. Because father in Almighty power is doing according to his wisdom. This is not what I expected.

Because my father loves me. And when we are asking, For bread and for fish. Doesn't he give it? We'll come back and think about that in a moment when we come to submission. But we want to. Uh, Confidence and affection together. So, one of the things that God has done in his Mercy to sinful Humanity, And some of you are familiar with the phrase, total depravity.

Right. We are sinful in every part of Of who we are, but praise God. Total depravity isn't utter depravity. Because God in his common Grace restrains, the extent of the expression of that sinfulness. That is complete in. And so, even those who are evil, And that's not just for those who have remaining sin in them as is as is the case here, but even those who are unregenerate Reprimate in darkness and death.

The vast majority of them know how to give good gifts to their children. It is a society that has come under great wrath. When there's not natural wisdom of fathers knowing better than the

children. Remember, he uses in Hebrews 12? The, the illustration of every father Every father. Disciplines his children.

Does according to his better wisdom than his child. You see God in his common, Grace has restrained, the expression of our sin. And praise God, that he's done so because He didn't restrain it. And if we expressed the fullness of the sinfulness that is in us, we would destroy ourselves almost immediately.

Fathers and children would hate each other, every, you know, abortion would be a universal rule. If God's common Grace did not restrain our sinfulness a child, would never make it to birth. Because they would be murdered before they had the chance. The fact that that happened. So, Much in our society.

Should make us tremble. Because even that, which we would call natural affection because God ordinarily by his Mercy. Restrains it Is disappearing. So, so he he says, You, you know that you should provide Do you think your father isn't going to provide? You know, that, you know, better than your children.

Or at least as well as your children. Do you not know that? Father knows better than you. So, he has left for us. Not just that which keeps us from destroying ourselves but something that is a picture that should shame us. Or put us to shame. If we think that we have been asking and seeking and knocking, and that somehow we aren't going to receive No, when you come to God and ask in accordance with his word.

Come. And confidence. You see? Prayer is not merely asking it is obtaining And prayer is not merely seeking. It is finding we've pointed this out a few times before. Hebrews chapter 4. And for many of you, it is a favorite verse. So let me Let me read it to you again so that you can notice the difference.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain Mercy and find Grace. To help in time of need. Do you hear what the Christian is doing? Because he has a great high priest. Who is Pastor of the heavens? Do you hear what you are doing at the throne of grace?

You're not just asking for Mercy. You are obtaining it. You're not just seeking Grace. You are finding it. And so, We come with confidence and we come with confidence, not just only in his faithfulness and his wisdom, but also his love and that love That love demands response. That we not come.

Uh, like those turning in the proper requisition form at work and who in our job description and our job title have the right to whatever it is that we're turning in the form for and we're certain that we're going to get it. It's as good as done. Now, the certainty is there we should come with confidence.

But you're coming to a father. Coming to a father, who is good? And again, he He has left, even wicked Humanity for for the most part for the large part, with a natural affection that he continues to extend to us and in his common Grace, So that when a society like ours starts to lose it, It is an indication of an advanced stage or state of judgment.

And wrath. So what is true of his willingness and his wisdom is true of his love. He has left, natural affection to many unconverted fathers. To give us an inkling of his perfect infinite Divine fatherly, affection towards us. Your Holiness. Doesn't just come from someone who is, who is guaranteed to give it to you?

It comes from a father who loves to give it to you. It comes in adopting. Love that Holiness is an increasing Conformity, increasingly reflecting the character of your heavenly father that Holiness comes in an increasing Conformity being pressed into the shape of the son. The Lord Jesus Christ. This is what his adopting love has desired from before the foundations of the world.

Those whom he formed you. Those whom he loved ahead of time in his son, which is the the great truth of election. The great truth of election is not election from among men. It is election in his son. Uh, the, you know so so that You shouldn't really think of election.

As you know we preach the gospel with this broad spectrum spray and those who have the hidden hidden e, stamped on their foreheads are going to respond. No, the reason there's a gospel. The reason there is redemption. The reason that there is a creation is because God loved people ahead of time in his son and Those whom he loved Those whom, he foreknew in his son, He predestined to be conformed, to the image of his son.

And so there's there's something in your sanctification. That is really at the heart of your election. It comes in that electing love, that in the securing of your Redemption, in the accomplishment of your Redemption and in the application of your Redemption. Electing love is expressed as adopting love and when father is making you to be more and more a reflection of his own character and when he's pressing you more and more into the shape of the only begotten son he is pouring out adopting, love on you.

Jesus describes here, a dad, giving his son, a piece of bread, a dad, giving his son, a fish, and he's saying, don't you see how that is this? Infinitesimally smaller example. Of how your father is with you. When he gives you what, he's been describing the last two and a half chapters.

God sanctifies you because he loves you. Now we, we prayed together sanctify us by your truth. Your word is truth that comes from John 17. Which is this wonderful Glimpse? This. Holy Glimpse. Into the interaction between the father and the son, the father who loves his son so much from all eternity that he's giving him.

These people, the son who loves the father so much from all eternity and in that love between the father and the son and we would say, well say the spirit, although he's not highlighted so much. Person in John 17. It's it's in that love, and that desire. That he says sanctify them by your truth.

Your word is truth that he says, I desire that they be with me where I am to see my glory because you loved me. Before the foundation of the world and seeing the Father's Love for the son and the son's love for the Father. The, the Divine love within the, the Triune godhead is the great blessedness, uh, unto which Uh for for the goal of which all of creation and all of redemption uh has has been planned by God and is being carried out by God.

And as you ask and seek, And knock. You are obtaining and finding What he gives in fatherly love. So you should ask in childlike love. You see it. It doesn't just teach us what God is like towards us as we ask him. It teaches you how your heart should be towards him.

As you ask for Holiness.

And so, the growth and Holiness. Uh, yes, it's marked by neediness and dependence and persistence and confidence. But it should also be marked by affection. And submission. We've thought a little bit about prayer, we referred back to the Lord's Prayer and that section. Chapter 6, verses 8 through 13, there are people who ask And they don't receive.

James 4 tells us about it. You remember he says, you have not because you asked not and then there are those who say I've been asking and I don't have it yet. And I have, And you can use silly, ridiculous things. To have the private plane. I don't have the I don't know what the most expensive cars are.

Um, you know, I don't have whatever it is. I don't have instant sanctification in this case. And he says, you have not because you ask not. And you ask and do not receive. Because you ask and ask him Miss to spend it on your own pleasure. You see there ought to be a submission as we come to God.

Not just submission in what to ask for, is good to ask for sanctification. But a submission to him and his wisdom and love in how he answers. That he chooses to give you your sanctification progressively, and with difficulty, and with frustrations, and backslidings, and ongoing neediness and ongoing dependence.

An ongoing persistence. An ongoing confidence, an ongoing affection. Do you hear the wisdom of your father there? That he doesn't give it to you instantaneously because one of the things that he's given that he is doing and giving it to you is he's giving it to you in fellowship with himself.

In, in continuing to experience the greatness of your dependence upon it and continuing to experience the tenderness of his fatherly love towards you. So, that as you seek your growth and Grace from God, We ought, you ought to be contented. We're not contented with your remaining sin, not contented with how bad you still are.

And certainly if you stumble and you come and you need fresh application of Christ to your conscience. You Not in contentment with the filthiness. Having defiled your conscience. But still with contentment towards him. About the way he is growing you and the pace at which he is granting, the work that he has begun.

To be completed. Because the difficulty of the past never brings into question. The completion of the work. We are confident that he who began the work will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus. This is what makes fear and trembling. To be married. Confidence and Assurance work out your own salvation with fear and trembling why It is God.

Who works in you? Both the And to work. According to his good pleasure. And so submit to him. Submit to what to ask for Holiness submit to the pace at which he is willing to do it, trusting that he is good. Confessing that you are bad. Also submit to the way he does it.

Which includes his? And your brothers. Isn't that what we've just heard? That one of the One of the reasons for clearing our eyes from the planks. Is so that we may see clearly and be helpful to our brother who also has foreign objects in his eyes. And he uses us in one another's lives.

And so that brings us to imitation. If it is in wisdom. And kindness and love that father gives each of us Holiness from himself. Then we ought to Submitting to his design, for how we grow. In wisdom and love. The gentleness and kindness that imitates. Father participate, take our place in his work in one another's lives.

Part of submitting to God's will. For our Holiness. Means being a willing zealous, diligent church member The person who does not think church membership is important. Or the person who takes it lightly. Is not. Participating in the giving of this holy treasure. That we begin to hear about and think about last week, God uses each of us.

In growing one another and he uses our brothers and sisters. And growing each of us. This is what we saw. We won't take the time now. Romans 12 verses 3 through 13 and the language of gifts. Not being language saying in the 1970s, we should invent spiritual gift. Inventories, to figure out how to use people in the church.

No, it means Whatever the places God has given you in the home, whatever your place is in the church, whether it's Elder or Deacon, or church member, it is a gift from Christ for the rest of the church and you don't have the prerogative to keep it to yourself.

Uh, anyway, you can go listen to the sermons in Romans 12:3-13 Having learned from father, what to desire, not only from him, but also from men, So we learned from Father, the first half of verse 12. Therefore whatever you want men to do to you. Not in your flesh.

Whatever God has taught you to want. Him to use men to do to you. That's what it means in the context, isn't it now. Luke is going to use it in a different context in terms of loving enemies, and that's fine. You, you take it there as well. But here.

It means that having learned from father to desire that men would be useful to our growth and Grace useful to our Holiness. We ought to do for them. We ought to love them by doing whatever will be useful to them. And if they are unbelievers, that means evangelism But if they're Believers.

That means participating in his work in what another's, sanctification aiming at Holiness together. Not getting together. And having you know let our hair down time where we indulge. Carnality. But where we use the good things, he has given us as we sharpen one another and enjoy his goodness to us and stir one, another up to love and Good Deeds.

Which most of all means, not forsaking. The assembling of ourselves together. Growing in Holiness is hard. Indeed, it's impossible. But God has given it to us progressively in this life. So, although it is hard. By his grace, it is sweet. It's sweet because it comes through fellowship with him.

And his means And as he uses those means, he's appointed us. To be used in one another's lives. And so there's both the sweetness of fellowship with him and the participatory subsidiary, sweetness of fellowship with one another And so truly. He has written us, these things that we might have.

Fellowship with one another. And indeed, our fellowship is with the father. And with the So you find yourself need. That's the way it's supposed to be. It's not just expected, but blessed. And, Take that not just into how you interact with father, About how you interact with others as well.

Let's pray.

We thank you, Father that You have given even this praying. Not merely to be. Asking or seeking. But to be obtaining and finding And we asked that by the ministry of your spirit, you would grant that our hearing your word preached will have been the same That not only.

Uh, would we praise you for what you have done? And you're acting upon our souls through the ministry of your word. In this sermon. But that your spirit would continue to bring to mind and shape, our thoughts, and stir up our affections towards you and bend, and direct, and submit, and provoke, our Wills.

That your spirit would continue to use your word in. That it would continue to be living. Your word would continue to be living and active. As your spirit continues to use it. To conform us to Christ. Unto your glory. For, we asking in his name. Amen.