

REAL PRAYER

BECOMING REAL: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT [MATTHEW, PART 3] · MATTHEW 7:7-11 · APRIL 18, 2021 · PASTOR RUTH THOMPSON CARVER

SERMON OUTLINE:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you..." (Matthew 7:7)

Jesus tells His disciples (and the crowd) that real prayer is simply making requests of God: asking Him for things. (Matthew 7:7-8)

Jesus tells a parable to show what God's heart is like. (Matthew 7:9-11)

- Earthly fathers are "evil" but still give their children good gifts when they ask.
- The Heavenly Father, even more, gives His children good gifts when they ask.

Why we sometimes don't ask God for things:

- We think God has bigger issues to deal with than our problems.
- We don't really think our prayers will make a difference.
- We don't feel worthy to ask.

How do we practice this kind of real prayer?

- Real prayer is persistent.
- Real prayer is in the context of our relationship with the Father.

Ways to step forward in real prayer:

- Ask God for your daily bread.
- Pray for things in the moment that you care about.
- Pray about what you and God are partnering on together.

When God says "no":

- Sometimes we're actually asking for a stone or a snake—something bad for us.
- Sometimes God is building our character and reliance on Him.
- God sees the big picture and we do not.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Think of a time your father or mother gave you something you asked for "just because". If you are a parent, think about a time you gave your son or daughter something he or she asked for just because you wanted to make your child happy.
2. Our passage today indicates that God gives good gifts to His children who ask for them. Does God give good gifts to those who don't ask Him, too? Read James 1:17 to get started thinking about this.
3. Do you agree with the assertion that prayer in its most basic form is simply asking God for things?
4. Think about these words from the Apostle Paul about prayer: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6) What other verses about prayer can you think of in the New Testament?
5. When earthly parents give their kids everything they want when they want it, the kids become what we called "spoiled". How does this damage the parent-child relationship? Do you think our heavenly, perfect Father is concerned about this in His children's lives, and if so, how might He ensure that doesn't happen?
6. What question does Jesus ask people in these passages: Matthew 20:20-28, Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:35-40, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43? How does this question show us the Father's heart?

DIG DEEPER:

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Has there been a book about prayer that has been helpful to you? Share the title and gist of the book with your small group.
- Look up and read the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, the complete Serenity Prayer, or other prayers you have learned. How can praying "other people's prayers" help us in our relationship with the Father?