

Whatever You Wish...

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 7. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy you can have. Take one with you. There's one here in the front.

Thank you. Connor, you did a fantastic job with your announcements. Matthew is the first book in the New Testament, which is about the last fourth of the entire Bible.

The first book in the New Testament, before Mark. We're in Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 to 12 this morning.

We need to pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Father, there are many things we can learn and store up in our minds.

Lord, we need you to move those truths so that what we know and believe to be true transforms our lives.

[1 : 29] So that our faith does not remain theoretical, but functions day to day.

And Lord, that's what we desire this morning. That our faith in you as our Heavenly Father would become more real, more functional.

Every day of our lives. And that the good news of Jesus Christ, His life, death, and resurrection, which has given us, your people, the right to be called the children of God, might be more real in our hearts this morning.

So please do that work by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. If you're able, please stand so we can honor God as we read from His Word.

Matthew chapter 7, verse 7 to 12. All of you have left for us. Ask, and it will be given to you.

[2 : 42] Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?

If you, then, who are 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?

So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. This is God's holy and authoritative Word.

Please be seated. Sometimes, nailing down what Christianity is all about can seem elusive to us.

[3 : 48] After all, there are thousands of Christian denominations. Who can say, truly, that this is what Christianity really is all about?

Certainly not me. There's only one person who has the authority to tell us definitively what being a Christian is all about. And that's Jesus. The Christ.

The Messiah. After whom all Christians are named. And this morning, we're in Matthew 7, 7-12, which is nearing the close of Jesus' most famous sermon, often called the Sermon on the Mount.

And in this passage, Jesus sums up His entire sermon. And, in fact, He sums up more than His entire sermon. We can say, it's not far-fetched to say, that the entirety of the Christian life is summed up in this passage.

What does it mean to be a Christian? What does it look like to be a faithful Christian? A mature Christian? According to verses 7-11, it involves relating to God as our Heavenly Father.

[4 : 54] And according to verse 12, it involves treating our neighbors the way we like to be treated. Christian maturity, defined in this way, looks like this.

Becoming more childlike in our relation to God. And becoming more Christ-like in our relation to man. That's my main point for this morning, and I'm going to talk about it in two parts.

First, whatever you wish, ask God. And second, whatever you wish, do to others. First, this passage is the second-to-last teaching block of the Sermon on the Mount, before Jesus concludes His entire sermon with the importance of obedience.

And leading up to this passage, for those of you who need a refresher, and those of you who are just joining us for the first time, Jesus taught us not to judge our fellow Christians with hypercritical, arrogant, and hypocritical judgment.

If we do that, then we are irrigating for ourselves the divine seed of judge and lawgiver, by harping on the small sins of others, while we give a pass to our big sins in our own lives.

[6 : 05] He also taught us not to be anxious about life, about the needs of our lives, what we'll eat, what we'll drink, what we'll wear, because our Heavenly Father feeds us and takes care of us and provides for us.

It is pointless to worry about tomorrow, for worrying about tomorrow does nothing to help us for tomorrow. It accomplishes nothing. Instead, it just preoccupies us when there is already enough for us to be occupied with today.

So instead, we should concern ourselves with seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. Before that, Jesus taught us to not store up treasures here on earth. Since earthly wealth is fleeting by nature and do not last beyond this life, every form of earthly wealth has an expiration date. Instead, Jesus taught us to store up our treasures in heaven, seeking His purposes and His priorities, because when we do that, those rewards that we pile up for ourselves in heaven will never perish.

Those who love and serve money can never love and serve God. Jesus also taught us not to practice our righteousness before men, to be seen by others and to be praised by them, because if we do that, that kind of self-centered and self-exalting righteousness is no righteousness at all.

[7 : 26] Instead, we should pray in secret, fast in secret, do our righteous deeds to be seen by God and not to be seen by others. And as if those things weren't hard enough already, Jesus also taught us not to retaliate against evildoers.

He told us to love not only our families and friends and neighbors, but also to love our enemies. Pray for those who harm us and persecute us. Jesus taught us not to swear falsely or to take oaths. Instead, He taught us to be so truthful that everything we say, yes or no, can be taken at face value and is as good as an oath. He taught us that adultery is evil, but not only that, He taught us that lusting after someone, just lusting after someone with our eyes and in our own hearts is tantamount to adultery of the heart.

He taught us that murder is evil. And not only that, murder in the heart, when we harbor sinful anger towards someone, and bitterness against someone, and unforgiveness towards someone, that that's tantamount murder of the heart.

When we look at God's law and all that Jesus taught us, it corrects our delusion that we can keep God's law on our own, in our own strength.

[8 : 50] We have all of us fallen short of all of these commandments that God gives us through Jesus. It's relatively easy to look good on the outside.

It's relatively easy to act apart, convince people around us that we're pretty good people, or even maybe mature Christians. It's harder to convince God who sees inside our hearts.

So Jesus in this sermon in the mouth chisels away at all of our pretensions, our outward pretensions, and He drills down to the very core of our heart.

He tells us, stop looking good on the outside, and actually be good on the inside. But how can we do that?

Who is sufficient for these things? There's so much evil and selfishness in our hearts. Jesus knows that if we actually pay attention to His words, we will be driven to despair.

[10 : 00] Last week was a pretty busy week, and I got desperate. So I asked my four-year-old daughter to go to the grocery store to pick up something for me.

I was joking with her, of course. It was fun to interact with her in that way. She misunderstood my question at first, because she was like, there's no way that's what he's asking me.

And she's like, you mean this? And I'm like, no, no, no, that's not what I mean. This is what I mean. And then when she realized what I was saying, she like half laughed and half snorted. I can't do that.

You do that. That's exactly what she said. That's the effect that discernment amount is meant to have on us.

As children of God who are weak, who are poor, we ought to cry out to God, our Heavenly Father, and say, I can't do that. You do that.

[11:07] Our spiritual need is meant to drive us to our knees in prayer. Our spiritual poverty is meant to drive us to prayer to God, asking God for what we do not have.

And that's why the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapters 5 to 7, is deliberately structured to bring the focus and attention on what is at the very center of the sermon, the Lord's Prayer. The prayer that our Lord taught us, taught God's children to pray. The prayer of God's children. This is also why Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount with this passage.

Right before He concludes at the end, very end, with the importance of obedience, before He tells us and hammers us with the importance of obedience, He tells us here how we can obey.

How we can have the strength and the power to obey. How we can receive the grace from Jesus Christ to obey. How we can receive the power from His Spirit to obey what He tells us to do. So in verses 7 and 8, Jesus encourages us to pray, and with it He gives us some shocking promises that seem way too good to be true.

[12:24] Jesus says, Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find it. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. And the one who seeks, finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. Jesus' promise is simple, but powerful. If only we took Jesus at His word, it would completely transform our prayer lives.

We give all kinds of excuses for why we don't pray, don't we? As much as we should. We're so busy. We have so many responsibilities.

There's not enough time in life. But don't we make time for things that we deem truly important? And necessary. We still make time to eat.

We still make time for sleep. We still make time for work. We still make time for vacation. So then, the real reason, underneath all of our excuses, for why we don't pray as much as we should, is that we don't really think that prayer is all that important.

[13:39] We don't really think that prayer really works. How many times have we told people, I'll keep you in my prayers.

I'll lift you up in prayer. And I forgot all about it. Why do we never get around to it? Because we don't think prayer really makes a difference.

As Christians, we believe sometimes that prayer is important in theory, but too often not in practice. In 2 Kings 5, we're told the story of Naaman, who's the commander of the Syrian army.

Even though he occupies such a high rank and position in society, he suffers from a debilitating skin disease called leprosy, where his skin begins to decay and fall out, fall apart.

Very shameful disease. A stigmatized disease. But one day he hears that there is a prophet in the land of Israel, named Elijah, who does many miracles and wonders and can actually heal him of his leprosy.

[14:51] So he makes a long journey with his retinue, with heaps of gold for payment for this important prophet. And finally, when Naaman arrives at the door of Elijah, Elijah doesn't even deign to come out to meet him.

He sends his messenger to Naaman, to tell Naaman, wash in the Jordan River seven times, which is the river in Israel, so that you can be cured.

And then Naaman turns around in a rage and leaves huffing and puffing. Who does this prophet think he is?

I'm a very important person. I came a long way to see him. And he wants me to wash in the Jordan River?

There are scores of rivers that are way better and cleaner and more beautiful than this river in Syria. Why do I have to wash in this stuff?

[15:51] And as he's turning around in a rage, his servants, who are much wiser and faith-filled than he is, tell him, But, but sir, did the prophet really tell you, go wash and be cured?

If so, isn't that an amazing thing? He said, if you wash there, you will be cured. Why not do it?

So Naaman humbles himself. He washes in the Jordan River seven times, and he's cleansed of his leprosy and becomes the convert. What is the difference between the posture of Naaman and the posture of his servants?

The difference is faith. Naaman believed the word. Naaman did not believe the word of the prophet, at least initially. Naaman's servants believed the word of the prophet.

That is what happened, as he said. If you hear the word of the prophet with faith, then you realize what an amazing promise that is. Do you hear the promise that Jesus is making here?

[17:10] Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened.

What an incredible promise that is. If you see it with the eyes of faith, you mean all I need to do is ask? You really mean that all I need to do is seek?

It says in James chapter four, verse two, you do not have because you do not ask. Why are our Christian lives so impoverished?

Why do we not obey Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount more perfectly? Because we do not pray, your kingdom comes, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God, make your rule and kingship evident and apparent in my life and in my heart. Why are we wrapped with anxiety and know not how to receive and to rest in the provision of God for his children?

[18:12] Because we do not pray, give us this day our daily bread. Why are we harassed by and fall to temptation so often? Because we do not pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

19th century Christian pastor J.C. Ryle, an ancient pastor once said, what is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others?

I believe the difference in 19 cases out of 20 arises from different habits about prayer, private prayer. I believe that those who are not eminently holy pray little, and those who are eminently holy pray much.

It seems too easy, doesn't it? It seems too good to be true. I think even now, the enemy is sowing seeds of doubt and skepticism in your mind. But what if?

It really is as simple as that. You do not have because you do not ask. Then we're left without excuse.

[19:23] God Almighty has offered His hand to help us, and all we need to is avail ourselves of that. But does this mean that anyone can ask God for anything, and He will give it to them?

Like a free vending machine? Is God like a cosmic genie that gives us unlimited wishes, not just three? Let's look at the passage a little bit more closely.

It says in verse 8, that everyone who asks receives. But who is? Everyone. We get an answer in verse 11. If you then, who are 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?

Everyone means every one of God's children. Since only children can call upon God as Father. Who then are the children of God?

All people, Christians and non-Christians, can in one sense be called offspring of God. In the general sense that we are His creatures, we are created by Him. Acts 17, 28, 29, Paul addresses non-Christians in such a way.

[20:38] He says, We are indeed His offspring. But the Greek word that is translated there as offspring is *genos*, where we get the word generation. It's kind of a generic word.

It's an impersonal word that refers to a generation, or a kind. It's saying that all humankind are created in the image of God. We share in some part His resemblance, His likeness.

It's not a word that means children that's used here in our passage. That word, that's used here in Matthew 7, is never used to refer to unbelievers, or to non-Christians.

So here in our passage, Jesus is referring to the spiritual children of God. Those who belong to God. They're the ones that 17 times, throughout a certain amount, that is addressed to, that can address God as our Father.

Now, Jesus is addressing believers, Christians, those who have been adopted by God, and therefore can call upon Him, Allah, Father. But what exactly does it mean to be children of God?

[21:45] In Luke 18, 15 and 17, Jesus welcomes the children, even infants, into His midst, so that He might bless them. He says, Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God, like a child, shall not enter it. But what does it mean, to receive the kingdom of God, like a child?

Jesus doesn't explain any further, because, in the immediately preceding passage, in Luke 18, 9 to 14, He had told us exactly what it means, to receive the kingdom like a child.

And that's the parable of the Pharisee, and the tax collector. In that parable, as many of you know, the Pharisee, the self-righteous Pharisee, and this poor, humble tax collector, they both go to God to pray, in the temple.

The self-righteous Pharisee, just barges in, to the middle, and goes right into the center. And then he's looking up to God, boldly in heaven, knowing that God is happy with him, and smiling upon him.

[22 : 52] And he says to God, thank you, for making me, not like that tax collector. I give 10% of all my income, to you.

I fast, not once, twice a week. But in stark contrast, the tax collector stands far off, because he does not feel worthy, to approach God.

He does not look up to heaven, he's looking down, because, how can he, a sinner such as he, dare to look upon God?

And as he looks down, he beats his chest. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus, in his kindness, teaches that it's not, the Pharisee, the self-righteous Pharisee, but the tax collector, that goes home, justified by God.

It's the tax collector, that's humble and poor, before God, that God declares, righteous, and fit, to enter into kingdom, and enter into his presence. It means, that the kingdom of God, belongs to, people like children.

[24 : 19] It means, that the kingdom of God, belongs to those, who humbly acknowledge, their spiritual poverty, their neediness, and their dependence, upon God. And so that means, if you think, right now, here this morning, that you're a pretty good person, oh, I'm a pretty good person.

I think I deserve, to get into heaven. I think, I've done better, than most people. I think God, should let me in. You're exactly, the kind of person, that's not fit, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

But if you're here, this morning, thinking, I am a sinner, in need of a savior, I am not worthy, to be in the presence of God, I have sinned against him, rebelled against him, who can save me?

And you're turning, from your sin, and God says, you are the one, who can enter, into the kingdom of God. That's what it means, to be children of God, those who have been humbled, before God, dependent on him.

How is it, that sinners are justified, before God? John 1, 12, 13 tells us, but to all, who did receive Jesus Christ, who believed in his name, he gave the right, to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will, or the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[25 : 45] Only those, who believe in Jesus Christ, for salvation, are given the right, to become children of God. Ed briefly mentioned this, when he was leading us, through the worship, we haven't coordinated that, I think that's the spirit, prompting us.

This is vividly illustrated, in the example, of Barnabas, not Barnabas, sorry, Barabbas, at Jesus' crucifixion. In Matthew 27, the Pilate, the Roman governor, at the time, gives the Jewish crowd, a choice.

At every Passover, the highest Jewish holiday, the Pilate released, one Jewish criminal, to extend amnesty, and to let them go free, without any punishment.

And he offers to the crowd, two options. One, Jesus, who was framed, and charged falsely, by the envious Jewish leaders, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and on the other, Barabbas, a dangerous insurrectionist, and murderer, who is on death row.

But the Jews, who are stirred up, by their envious leaders, choose Barabbas. They choose Barabbas, to go free, so that Jesus can be crucified. And Barabbas, his name in Aramaic, means, Son of the Father.

[27 : 03] Jesus, the Son of God, literally takes the place, of this Son of the Father, so that he is saved. Jesus serves, as the substitute.

The innocent Son, takes the place, of the guilty Son, so that he might be justified, free, and saved. That's the picture, of what God is accomplishing, for his people, at large.

Since God, refers to his people, repeatedly throughout the Bible, as his Son, collectively. We see this, in Exodus 4, 22-23.

God threatens Pharaoh, who is the king, of the Egyptians, who are enslaving, his people Israel. And he threatens him, with these words. He says, Israel, my people, Israel is my firstborn son.

Let my son go, that they may serve me. If you refuse, to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. On the night, of the Passover, God sends, a destroying angel, who goes through, all the homes, and kills, all the firstborn males, of the Greek family, in Egypt.

[28 : 13] Except, the households, that have listened, to God's instructions, and have sacrificed, the Passover lamb, and daubed, its blood, on the door. So that when, the destroying angel, goes through the town, and sees on the door, the blood, of the Passover lamb, the destroying angel, passes over, and spares, that son.

Is it no wonder then, that in the New Testament, Jesus is called, our Passover lamb. That he is called, the lamb of God, who takes away, the sin of the world. Do you think, it's a coincidence, that this substitutionary, exchange between Jesus, and Moravus, took place, on Passover?

Do you think, it's coincidence, that Jesus died, he was crucified, on the cross, on Passover? In order to save, God's son, which is us, the people of God, God's only son, Jesus, had to take, our place.

Do you want, to become a child, of God? Then humble yourself, before him, acknowledge that, you are a sinner, in need of a savior, and receive him, and believe in his name, that he died, for your sins, and was raised to life, raised from the dead, on the third day.

Then God, the father, will give you, the right, to become, children of God. And it's only, the children, who have, the right, to ask the father, to pray, expecting, to receive.

[29 : 52] Imagine, if, you go out, on the street, walking around the mall, and a random kid, comes up to you, and pulls your sleeves, says, hey, can you buy me, those pair of shoes?

I think most, normal people, would not, at that moment, be like, oh yeah, sure. Yeah. No, you would look around, like, hey kid, where's your parent? Right?

Because it's weird, that this stranger, this random kid, is asking you, to buy him something, that his parents, should be buying for him. Do you have a parent?

And if he didn't have, a parent now, you'd be, rightly concerned, then you should probably, call the police, connect him, so he can, find his parents. It's only the children, who get to ask, their father, for things.

In this way, the fatherhood of God, is the linchpin, of Jesus' exhortation, for us to pray to him. Pray to God. So Jesus continues, that analogy of fatherhood, in verses 9 to 11, he says, or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?

[31 : 09] Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give, good gifts to your children, how much more, will your father, who is in heaven, give good gifts, good things, to those who ask him?

Jesus is not denying, that there are cruel, neglectful, abusive parents. There are. Jesus knows, that better than anyone else.

He says in verse 11, if you then, who are evil, know how to give, good gifts to your children. Jesus states, plainly here, that all earthly parents, are evil.

That they are sinners. Without exception, every single parent in the world. But even so, most earthly parents, will provide for their children's basic needs, won't they?

A stone superficially resembles bread. A snake superficially resembles, the most common type of catfish, that you would have found, in the Lake of Galilee.

[32 : 12] In Jesus' times. So, giving your child, a stone instead of bread, this snake, instead of a fish, is a very cynical, and sadistic thing to do.

Oh, you want bread? Here, this stone. It looks like bread. But what, what parent, does that?

give a stone instead of bread, a stone that will break, your child's teeth, a serpent that will bite, your child. We expect any parent, with basic decency, and even a minimal sense of responsibility, to give the child bread, and fish, when they ask for bread, and fish.

How much more, than will our Father, who is in heaven, who is not evil, like us, but good, good through and through. Give good things, to those who ask.

I'm using several analogies, examples from parenting, this morning, because it's relevant, to this passage, because that's exactly, what Jesus does.

[33 : 26] God intends, for our parental relationship, earthly parental relationships, to resemble, to be modeled, after our relationship, with our Heavenly Father. My children, often ask me, if they can eat something, it's not because, we don't give them, stuff to eat.

It's because, they usually want a snack, some kind of junk food. When they come to me, slightly after dinner, and they're like, Dad, can I have something? It's like, what do you mean?

I know exactly, what they want. Before they come, it's like, oh dad, I'm hungry. I mean, my older kids, they're not going through, the same, or my little one does. But dad, I'm hungry. What do you mean? You just ate. It's like, oh do you want some more rice?

He's like, no, no, I'm hungry. Sure, I know exactly, what you're hungry for. So they ask me, it's some kind of candy, or some kind of junk food, that they want, it's because we ration it out, so they get to have one candy.

So my youngest one, always comes, can I have my candy, candy of the day? It's her, it's her Halloween stash, from last October, with a few additions here and there, that we have, that she has been diligently consuming, one at a time, every single day.

[34 : 47] I think she finally ran out this past week. We control their diet, and junk food, why? Because we want our children to have a healthy diet. Because we want them to grow up healthy and strong.

That's why they ask me, dad, can I have this? Dad, can I eat this? Usually the request is about junk food, but occasionally, they'll ask me if they can eat something healthy. Like, they'll take a piece of fruit, and be like, can I have this fruit?

And my answer to them usually, unless it's like, right before dinner or something, I want to eat dinner first, my answer to them usually is, yeah, you could eat as many as you want.

Because that's the Father's heart. If they ask me for something that is good for them, as long as it's within my power, and means to provide it for them, I'm going to give it to them.

If I don't have enough money to get them what they need, I'll sacrifice my own needs, so that they can have what they need. And if I'm like that, and I'm evil, how much more will our Heavenly Father do so much more for us?

[36 : 13] Our Father who is in Heaven gives good things to us when we ask Him. Isn't that a wonderful promise? That He gives good things to those who ask Him.

Parents don't give their children whatever they ask for, do they? That's because children don't always know what's good for them. They ask for all kinds of things that are bad for them, and that's why they need parents.

They need guardians. A parent who grants everything that their kid wants will spoil them rotten.

That's a very unloving thing to do. Likewise, our Heavenly Father, He hears and answers all of the prayers of His children.

But like any good father, sometimes His answer to our prayers is no. It says in James 4, verse 3, you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

God is not going to answer our prayers for things that fuel our pride and sinful passions because God knows better. Because He loves us.

[37 : 19] You might have been praying faithfully every day that you might win the jackpot. But God's not going to answer that prayer because He says in His Word that the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word of God in our hearts so that it doesn't grow and it leads to our eternal perdition.

He says in 1 John 3, 22, whatever we ask, we receive from Him. In 1 John 5, 14 and 15, and this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. So our loving Father does not give us everything we ask for.

He gives us every good thing we ask for. How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

So what is it then that we should ask for? What is it that we should seek? Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Jesus told us exactly what we should seek earlier in Matthew 6, 31 to 33.

[38 : 35] Therefore do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

We are to seek God's kingdom first. We are to seek His righteousness first. We are to seek the purposes and the priorities of God first in our lives.

And when we do that and our purposes are aligned with His, God says, ask anything you wish. I'll give it. I'll give it. This is the meaning of Psalm 37, verses 3 to 4.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Not whatever sinful desire you have, but when you delight yourself in the Lord, when you trust in Him and befriend faithfulness, when your desires and what you seek in life is aligned with His desires.

[39 : 49] Because you delight in Him, God says, I will give you all that your heart desires. It's an amazing promise.

Our earthly fathers are finite. They have limited knowledge. Even the best of them can only do what seems best to them. And sometimes they make mistakes.

And what they think is best is not actually what is best. But in contrast, our Heavenly Father knows what is best for us. He always gives us what is good that we may share His holiness, it says in Hebrews 12, verse 10.

Our earthly fathers can only see a few consequences or steps ahead. But our Heavenly Father sees all. He knows all. In the past, the present, and the future.

And this truth is such an encouragement toward prayer. It's an invitation to explore the extent of God's grace and generosity.

[40 : 54] Assured of the fact that our good, loving Heavenly Father will only give good things to us. So I want to ask you, have there been some bitter pills that you'll have to swallow in life?

You can rest assured that even those things are for your good. Because God's promises in His Word that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

Romans 8, 28. Are there things in life that you're hesitant to pray for because you're not sure whether it's a good thing or not? Just ask away.

Because our Heavenly Father will only give you what is good. Our earthly fathers have finite resources.

Even the wealthiest of them have limits of what they can actually afford for their children. But our Heavenly Father has no such limits. And every loving parent knows the pain of wanting to give what is the very best for their child and being unable to because of their limitations.

[42 : 12] Our Father in Heaven has no limitations like that. Psalm 89, 11. It says, The heavens are yours. The earth also is yours.

The world and all that is in it, you have founded them. Our Heavenly Father has both the wealth and the will to give good things to His children.

Beloved child of God, do you relate to God as your loving Father? Do you know that He cares for you? Do you know that He takes an interest in you?

That He's concerned about you? Do you know that He provides for you? That He is zealously protected over you? Do you know that your Heavenly Father has good plans and good purposes for you?

Do you know that your Heavenly Father has great hopes and dreams for you? Do you know that He is more eager to bless you than you are eager to receive blessings from Him?

[43 : 18] It grieves our Heavenly Father so much that many of us entertain these harsh and critical thoughts of Him.

We imagine that God is this severe and stingy and stringent Father who is aloof and distant from us, too busy for us and annoyed of us.

This grieves our Heavenly Father because not only is it false, but because that false view of God alienates us from Him. It separates us and distances us from our Heavenly Father.

But it makes us reluctant to approach Him in prayer. But we must know God truly in the way that He has actually revealed Himself to us. Our Heavenly Father is extravagant in His generosity toward us.

He delights in us. Zephaniah 3.17 says that our Father rejoices over us with gladness. He criets us with love.

[44 : 22] He exalts over us with loud singing. That's how our Heavenly Father loves His precious children. We must remember this truth about our Father.

John Oman writes in his book Communion with God that if we did this, if we remember this, he says, then we would not be able to bear one hour's absence from Him. Instead, we find it difficult to

spend even one hour with Him.

Let then this be the first thought that we have of the Father, that He's full of eternal love to us. I've been reading some news articles lately that with the rise of AI that these criminals have gotten an upgrade and instead of kidnapping kids, they will just generate AI voices of these kids and then call the parents when the kids are not able to pick up their phone and then mimic their voices and basically use them as ransom to extort money from these parents.

And I'm reading these articles that have how many parents are being extorted to giving away thousands and tens of thousands of dollars to these criminals. And most of the time these parents are not dumb.

they suspect that this is a criminal enterprise and that what they're saying is false. But nevertheless, they send the money.

[45 : 55] They wire the money. Why? Why? Because if there's even just a one percent chance that what those criminals are saying is true, their child is there and it's just money that stands between the life and freedom of their child, the heart of the parent and the heart of the father is take my money.

Take my life savings. Take my life savings. Do you feel like that prophecy that Lauren shared that you're worth nothing, you're trash, disposable good thrown out on the river?

No, you are the treasure. God says in Exodus 19, 5 that his people are his treasured possession. I want to share a quote from Paul Miller's book of Praying Life.

It's a little longer but it's worth quoting in full. Just follow on with me and I'll project it to you on the screen. Let's do a quick analysis on how little children ask. What do they ask for?

Everything and anything. If they hear about Disneyland, they want to go there tomorrow. How often do little children ask? Repeatedly, over and over again.

[47 : 28] They wear us out. Sometimes we give in just to shut them up. How do little children ask? Without guile. They just say what is on their minds.

They have no awareness of what is appropriate or inappropriate. Jesus tells us to watch little children if we want to learn how to ask in prayer. The second thing we must do in learning to pray is believe like a child.

Children are supremely confident in their parents' love and power. Instinctively, they trust. They believe their parents want to do them good. If you know your parent loves and protects you, it fills your world with possibility.

So you just chatter away with what is on your heart. But as we get older, we get less naive and more cynical. Disappointment and broken promises are the norm instead of hoping and dreaming. Our childlike faith dies a thousand little deaths. Jesus encourages us to believe like little children by telling stories about adults who acted like children. The parable of the persistent widows who won't take no foreign answer from an unjust judge.

[48 : 36] And the parable about a man who badgers his neighbor to lend him three loads for a friend who has come at midnight. On the rare occasion when Jesus encounters an adult who believes like a child, he stands on a soapbox and practically yells, pay attention to this person.

Look how he or she believes. So be more childlike in your relationship to God our Father.

Whatever you wish, ask Him. It is this kind of relationship with and our confidence in our Heavenly Father that enables us then to obey verse 12.

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them for this is the law and the prophets. Whatever you wish, do to others.

I'll be brief in my treatment of this because we're going to come to it again in Matthew chapter 22. This is what is commonly called the golden rule. This moniker is attributed traditionally to Roman Emperor Alexander Severus from the 3rd century.

[49 : 41] He was not himself a Christian but because he was so impressed by the depth and the comprehensiveness of Jesus' ethical principle that it is said that he inscribed this saying, this verse, this teaching, in gold in his bedroom chamber.

And henceforth, people came to call it the golden rule. It's what Jesus later says in Matthew 22, 37, 40, as to love your neighbor as yourself.

Which is taken from Leviticus 19, 18. Paul calls this in Romans 13, love is the fulfillment of the law. Galatians 5, 14, the whole law is fulfilled in this one saying, you are to love your neighbor as yourself.

They're all echoing what Jesus says here in this verse. This command is so comprehensive that if you obeyed it, you would literally be obeying the fullness of God's commands in all of his scriptures. That's why Jesus says, this is the law and the prophets. How is this so? Because this command gets at the very root of all the sin and wickedness and evil in our world.

[50 : 51] This is as it says in James 4, 1 to 3, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder.

You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. It's because we covet and we desire what belongs to someone else because our desires are at odds with each other's desires that we fight and quarrel and make war.

Why is there war in Ukraine? Why is there war in Gaza? Why is there discord with you and your family members, your housemates, your friends?

It's because of our desires, sinful desires that are at odds with each other. Why do we murder? Why do people murder? Because to get what they want. Why do people commit adultery? Because they desire someone else's wife or someone else's husband. Why do they steal?

[51 : 58] Because they want, they desire someone else's things. why do they lie so that they can protect themselves and keep what they want? It's at the root of every sin.

Sinful desires. And the golden rule commends us to stop thinking about our self, the self, and to start thinking about others. It turns our selfishness on its head due to others what you would have them do to you and in doing so it solves the very root of our problem.

It's a sin at its very heart. We find variations of the golden rule throughout many cultures and centuries. For example, Jewish Rabbi Hillel of the first century famously summarized the Old Testament law this way, Do not do to your neighbor what is hateful to you.

This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. The first century Greek philosopher Philo writes, Whatever things anyone hates to suffer, let him not do.

So, remember, the Chinese philosopher Confucius writes in Analects, What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others. It's kind of ubiquitous.

[53 : 10] You find this rule, a version of it at least, everywhere in the world. But have you noticed the consistent difference between all of those things by other teachers and the saying of Jesus?

What is the difference? All the other so-called golden rules are formulated negatively. Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you.

But Jesus' teaching is formulated positively. So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

Instead of simply telling us not to do what we don't want others to do to us, Jesus calls us to be proactive and be attentive to the needs of others and to care for them.

We should treat others the way we want to be treated. These variations of the golden rule that we find in other cultures and societies are based on the idea of equity and reciprocity.

[54 : 18] and at its very root, actually, it's selfish. Do this for others so you have a society where others do the same thing to you.

Don't do this to others so that they don't do that to you. But what Jesus is calling us to hear is a selfish, sacrificial love that gives even when it hurts.

it entails foregoing our own desires and needs to meet the needs of others. Considering others more significant than ourselves.

Looking out for others' interests not just our own. If we obey the negative formulation of the golden rule we will never you know sock our enemy in the face because we don't want to be attacked like that ourselves.

But we're not going to go beyond that to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us as Jesus commands us to do in Matthew 5.44.

[55 : 22] If we obey the negative formulation of the golden rule we might never steal from someone because we don't want to be stolen from but it's not going to make us go beyond that to be generous toward others sacrificially.

Jesus' command goes beyond equity and reciprocity it goes to sacrificial love and this is a very difficult thing for us to do because it means loss for ourselves.

If you're a parent and then you have to wake up in the middle of the life middle of your sorry not middle of your life middle of your your sleep to attend to your crying child you really want to just sleep but your spouse is soundly asleep and then you say to yourself well I'm going to die to myself my selfish desire and needs because how I would want to be treated in a situation is for my spouse to go so I'm going to do that for her I'm going to do that for him I'm going to go attend to the child and you know what happens when you do that you're really really tired the next morning you've lost sleep when there's someone that you meet a neighbor who is poor and you must share your money with them or you must share your bread with them as Jesus commands us to and you give it to them you know what happens you're that much poorer you're that much hungrier when when you are hurt by someone you are wronged by someone and instead of taking matters into your hands and seeking justice taking vengeance well that's only fair that's only right instead of doing that you you eat that harm you bear the loss yourself you know what happens that still really really hurts and it feels like losing how can you possibly live like that you can only live like that if you have this unshakable confidence that you can ask your father whatever you wish so that you can do to others whatever you wish for yourself that when you give and you give and you give and you give and you have less and less and less to trust that no my

God my father is going to provide for me when you're hurting and hurting and hurting and wrong and wrong and wrong you trust oh but my father sees he's the king he is the judge there will be justice in the end and I will be rewarded for all that I have done it's only when you as a child of God can say whatever you wish I'm going to ask and I will receive it's only when you have that confidence you can go to others and do for them whatever you wish that's why the greatest commandment is always given in two parts love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength it is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like love your neighbor as yourself because you cannot have love of neighbor without the love of God I've mentioned to you before and I'll conclude with this that this sermon is structured in a way so that the first half of it mirrors the second half this passage we looked at this morning is mirrored by Matthew 5 17 to 20 there Jesus says in verse 17 do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them and then Jesus mentions the law and the prophets again in our passage this is the law and the prophets what to do to others what you happen to you Jesus says he fulfills that law Jesus says he fulfills that love of neighbor how does he do it we are sinners we deserve hell and eternal punishment and eternal separation from God but Jesus came as our neighbor as our brother and he said I will do for them what I would love to have them do to me is they were in my shoes I'm the only person that can save them I'm the only person that can die for their sins and to be the sacrificial Passover lamb so I will go to the cross and I will die so that I can perish but they might live forever Jesus was the perfect neighbor he's the one who treated us and loved us as he loved himself for it says in

[60 : 49] Mark 10 45 even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many it's only when we know God like that and we know that love that we can be changed to love other people in the same way let's pray together father thank you that we get to call upon your father thank you that you have given to us your children here the right to become children of God father help us to live like him give us the faith and the confidence to live like our father is the king of kings and the lord of the kings and the king of you king of you and the you and the king of as our neighbor as our brother that we might find our way to you rather than we might be found by you to be reconciled to you in the precious name of your son

Jesus Christ we pray amen ho