

Lent Reflection: Thursday 25th February – Matthew 7:7-12 [Isaiah 55:10-11, Psalm 138]

'7 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 'Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.'

In today's Lent reading, Jesus gives us some of the most encouraging and amazing promises. Ask, seek, knock. This passage is a call to prayer. Throughout the sermon on the mount Jesus returns again and again to the important subject of, and teaching about prayer. In this passage, however, it must be noted that Christ does not tell us **what** to ask, or what to seek or knock for. Because of this, some Christians have considered this prayer like a blank cheque. We can ask for anything, and if we have faith, we will receive it. But this not the context of the Sermon on the Mount—Christ is teaching about the great righteousness of God's kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This is kingdom teaching. This about kingdom prayer.

God never promises us that we will be wealthy, healthy, and free from problems. If we pray for those things, we have no Scriptural assurances that God will answer our requests.

However, we do have promises that if we pray for God's will, which includes us developing righteous character, God will answer positively.

Listen to Psalm 138:1-3

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise.

I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness, for you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame. When I called, you answered me; you greatly emboldened me.

Here is prayer in the context of praise and worship – seeking after God's kingdom.

1 John 5:14 says, *"And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."*

When we pray God's will, we can be sure that he will answer that prayer. Therefore, in order to pray effectively, we must give ourselves to studying God's Word to discern God's will.

Verse 11 of our Isaiah reading says – *my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

God's will, when properly interpreted, is meant to be pursued in prayer.

Christ's promise of receiving when we ask, seek, and knock is true only when we are pursuing the will of the King. God promises to answer those prayers.

What is the will of God for our lives? In a general sense, his will is for us to become more like his Son. His will is to mould us by filling us daily with the fruit of His Spirit.

So, if we truly hunger to get rid of sin in our lives, if we truly hunger to have his peace, patience, love, and joy in our lives, God will give them to us. But he commands that we pray for them.

Do we want the Spirit's peace? We must pray for it. Do we want God's wisdom? We must ask? Do we want Divine love to love the unlovely? We must cry out for it. Are you crying out for righteousness? James 4:2 says that we have not, because we ask not.

Ask for these things, seek His will and knock to see which door God longs to open for you.

And when we pray, we must pray in faith,

In verses 9-11 of our Matthew reading, Christ gives a somewhat humorous illustration of a father being deceptive with his child to show our heavenly Father's generosity and how we must pray in faith. He describes how human fathers, who have evil inclinations, generally provide for their children. If a child asked for bread, the father wouldn't give him a stone. In addition, if a child asked for fish, a father wouldn't give him a snake.

Certainly, God, who is perfect and not deceptive, will provide for all his children. By giving this illustration, Christ seeks to provoke faith in his disciples. Our God is a good God and longs for us to come to him in prayer. If we feel we don't have enough faith, ask for it! Faith is the doorway to receiving God's good gifts and faith is in itself a gift from God.

And so, this Lent let us consider:

Asking – for more faith, for more of His Spirit, his fruit and His gifts.

Seek – God's will for your life and his kingdom mission in the world.

Knock on the door with the plans you have and see if God opens the door because they align with His will.

If we keep asking, keep seeking and keep on knocking, we will get far more than what we ask for, we will see far more than we could ever imagine, and God's kingdom will grow in us and in our community as we open the door, he has already set ajar for us.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you that you are a good God who longs for us to be in close relationship with you.

We thank you that you have good plans for our lives.

Help us to come to you in prayer and align our lives with your will for them.

Help us to ask kingdom requests, so we may grow in knowledge and love of you.

Help us to seek your will so that your kingdom may grow here, in Chatham.

And as we knock at your door and learn to discern your will, may the floodgates of heaven fly open at this time.

In the name of Jesus Amen