

Matthew 7: 7 – 12

The reading from Matthews Gospel is headed ‘Jesus teaches about asking, seeking, knocking.’ This seems at first glance a strange heading but when analysed it means so much for us as followers of the one true God and His Son Jesus Christ and what they do for us in contrast to us humans.

Last week Jenny taught about the plank in Karen’s eye which she had to deal with before removing the splinter from John’s eye. Jenny also used this example to teach us about envy/jealousy and not being judgemental about people and I wonder how many of us would admit to be judgemental, I know I would have to admit that I can be judgemental although I do try hard not to be.

In verse 7 Jesus is telling us that all we have to do is ‘ask and it will be given to you. Knock and the door will be opened to you.’

Someone knocks at my door and what is my reaction. ‘Good morning how lovely to see you, do come in.’ Is that a pleasant greeting? Now I am eating dinner and you knock. My reaction is what? Who knocks at dinner time, I’ll ignore them and they’ll go away? Is that right? No but I am sure it is something we have all done.

The picture by Holman Hunt in St Pauls Cathedral shows Jesus beside a door, with no handle and all we have to do is knock and open that door to Jesus and God by turning the handle on our side of the door. By doing this we let Jesus into our lives.

So, what is Jesus talking about here and trying to teach us? Like a person knocking at a door, they have to persist in knocking until they get an answer but our relationship with God is not like this, all we have to do is knock and open our lives to God. Jesus is telling us to persist in pursuing God and not to give up when we feel lost and we’re not getting an answer. To know God takes patience, faith and focusing on Him and the teachings of Jesus, as in this parable. Knowing God takes faith to follow what He wants. Faith in God and Jesus Christ is not easy, which is why many people give up. Why, because I have found faith is not just believing and that’s it, perhaps saying ‘I have got the package what more

do I need,' it is about developing or growing and developing that faith. I repeat that word developing because as we grow in our faith it too grows or develops. That is what faith is to me and it comes from a growing, developing, maturing faith which will only end or come to fruition when we meet God in His Heavenly Kingdom.

Jesus then talks in verses 9 and 10 about giving stones and snakes and instead of bread and fish. Something horrible instead of something nice.

I need two young volunteers and their mum or dad; I'll come to you. Do you ask your mum or dad for sweets? What do you say mum or dad?

I have some jelly babies; would you like to share them?

You know what it's nearly lunchtime, I'll give you a stone each so as not to ruin your lunch. That's not nice is it.

So, what are we meant to learn from this and verses 9 and 10. God knows when we are praying and asking for things but when those things are like snakes or stones, things we really don't need God will not give them to us? God will give us what is good for us and what we need when we pray and develop in faith.

Jesus then uses the words 'though you are evil' in verse 11 to contrast God's giving to the human idea of giving. We can be stingy, greedy, give grudgingly or not at all. Jesus, however goes on to say 'how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him.' Jesus is showing a loving God and Father, which is the heart of God. He is a loving, caring God who understands us all and will give what we need when we ask for it. If we as humans were not stingy, greedy or grudgingly giving, just imagine how much better this world would be. However, that does not make us Christians, we still have to knock and open that door to Jesus.

We then turn to verse 12. 'So, in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.' This, I did not know is commonly referred to as the golden rule. Jesus is talking in a very positive way whereas in many religions it is stated in the negative. 'Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.' By speaking in a positive way, it is made more significant to us; while we may be able to stop harming or threatening to harm other people it is so

much more difficult to follow Jesus' positive teaching and offer to do good for them, to follow the Law, the Commandments, and the prophets who did Gods work under very trying and difficult circumstances. If we are going to truly love our neighbour it is for us to take the first step or initiative no matter how difficult that is. This verse or rule as taught by Jesus is a Christian life of active love, goodness and mercy for others which is exactly the kind of love, goodness and mercy which God and Jesus show to us every day. Amen