

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/26/21
Matthew 7:7-11 “The Kingdom Belongs to Those Who Ask”**
Series: The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Living 101

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Main Idea: In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus shows us the proper response to the sermon on the mount. The kingdom belongs to those who ask. It’s such a simple response. Asking. But what does it mean to ask? Jesus gives us three insights into asking. He gives us explanation, illustration, and application.

- I. Jesus explains the promise of asking (7-8).
 - A. He gives three commands.
 - B. He gives three promises.
- II. Jesus illustrates the promise of asking (9-10).
 - A. He uses a question about bread.
 - B. He uses a question about a fish.
- III. Jesus applies the promise of asking (11).
 - A. We learn about ourselves.
 1. We are evil.
 2. We know how to give good gifts to our children.
 - B. We learn about God the Father.
 1. He is personal.
 2. He is in heaven.
 3. He gives good gifts.
 4. He wants us to ask.

Make It Personal: Three basic questions to consider...

1. What do I need?
2. Do I continually ask the Father for what I need?
3. Do I believe His promises?

Let’s turn our attention to the final chapter in Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Every sermon has an ending, and effective sermons have the ending in mind throughout. This is certainly the case in Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Let’s read this passage, and then meditate today on its hope-giving message.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:7-11

What was Jesus’ intent as He preached the sermon on the mount? What was He after? What effect? What response?

Here’s where the confusion enters. There’s difference of opinion as to Jesus’ purpose for this sermon. For instance, some dispensationalists view the Sermon as law for the future, millennial kingdom, which has nothing to do with Christians in this age.¹ If that’s how you see the sermon, then you would expect the invitation to be something like, “This is for the future. Stay tuned for more information.”

Other dispensationalists agree that it has primary relevance for the future kingdom age, but assert that it is indirectly relevant to Christians today.² So the invitation would be, “File this away. Don’t lose it. But also, put the principles into practice now.”

Still others see this sermon as basically a set of moral guidelines, sort of “an interim ethic view”. If that’s how you see it, then you would expect the response to be, “Okay, thank you Jesus. You’ve been very clear. Now I know better how to live, and by Your help, I’m going to do it.”

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ See David Turner’s article, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/53/53-4/JETS_53-4_697-716_Turner.pdf

² <http://1024project.com/2014/02/17/is-there-a-dispensational-approach-to-the-sermon-on-the-mount/>

And there are other views, and other combinations of these views. But the question remains, what purpose did Jesus have in mind when He preached this message? It's possible He had more than one purpose in mind, and if that's the case, what were those purposes?

I wouldn't presume to have the final word on what has baffled godly Bible scholars much smarter than me. And yet, as someone who has preached hundreds of sermons over the past three decades, when I read this sermon, it seems to me that Jesus gives a strong indication as to His purpose in the invitation He gives at the end.

In a good sermon you basically do three things. One, you tell people where you're taking them. Then two, you take them there. And then three, you tell them why. So look at how Jesus ends this sermon in chapter. What did Jesus say is the *why* of this sermon? I've tried to answer that question in the title I've given to today's message, "*The Kingdom Belongs to Those Who Ask.*"

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

This is *a* purpose, if not *the* purpose of Jesus' sermon. Jesus preached this sermon to create a people who *ask*.

Think of it this way. There are essentially two kinds of people in the world. Those who don't ask, and those who do ask. That's true for how people seek to arrive at destinations, whether that destination is a week in Florida, or an eternity in heaven.

And so, there are essentially two kinds of religions in this world. One type emphasizes *doing*, which is essentially, *not* asking. And then there's biblical Christianity, which is all about *asking* God to do what we with broken hearts admit we *should* do, but could *never* do.

In other words, there's salvation based on works, which includes all world religions. And there's salvation based on the mercy and grace of God alone, which is received merely by *asking*.

So at the end of His sermon, Jesus shows us the proper response to the sermon He just preached. He shows us that the kingdom of God belongs to those who ask. It's such a simple response. *Ask*. But what does it mean to ask? In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus gives us three insights into asking. He gives us an explanation, an illustration, and an application.

There's something we need to do before we listen to Jesus' invitation. If you walked into this room at the end of my sermon, you'd likely feel a little lost. Why is calling for me to respond in this particular way? To make sense of the invitation, we must have in mind what's been said prior to the invitation.

So let's take a view moments and look back at the sermon. What's happened up on that mountain? What message has the King delivered thus far?

This is King Jesus speaking. Matthew introduces Him as the King in the birth narrative in chapters 1-2. He's the King who has come to fulfill all righteousness for His people, as He did in His baptism in chapter 3, and in His righteous responses to temptation in chapter 4.

At the end of Matthew 4, we see the King preaching throughout the countryside, and doing miracles. He has also called His first disciples, and others are following Him too, other would-be-disciples, lots of them. Indeed, "great crowds followed Him," says the last verse in chapter 4.

What did Jesus do next? Matthew 5:1-2, “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.”

So Jesus has two audiences in mind as He preaches. He’s talking directly to the disciples, those who have chosen to follow Him. But He knows the crowds are listening too, those who are considering becoming His followers.

And what are the first words He proclaims to this congregation? Verse 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Stunning words. Who is blessed in the eyes of God? Who possesses His kingdom? The King says, “The poor in spirit do.” That is, those who lack, not financially, but spiritually. The spiritually bankrupt are the candidates for His kingdom.

And they *mourn* over their spiritual condition, He says in verse 4. And they are *meek*, too, meaning they’re not proud, but humble in the sight of God and others. And they *hunger for righteousness*, for they know that what they lack they must receive from outside of themselves, from God Himself.

And what God gives them affects the way they treat other people. They are *merciful*, because they know how much they need mercy. And they are *pure in heart*, and *peacemakers* too. And they value righteousness so much that they are *persecuted for its sake*.

This is the path to blessing, says the King. These beatitudes are the characteristics of the subjects in My kingdom. This is what He says God must see when He looks at us.

Next, He addresses what He wants the world to see. You are *the salt of the earth*. And you are *the light of the world*. He calls His followers to live such beautiful lives that the world sees our good works and glorifies our Heavenly Father.

So at this point in the sermon, how are we feeling? Hopeful, yes, for God accepts the spiritually bankrupt, and that’s us. But convicted too, for the King is giving us a benchmark of what we should be, which we are not.

And lest we miss the point, the King proceeds to say in 5:20, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

So how righteous must we be to enter the kingdom? More righteous than the people who knew the Bible the best in that day, the scribes who copied it, and the Pharisees who were so zealous in their attempts to attain righteousness that they developed a whole system of commands to help them.

“Why aren’t they going to enter the kingdom?” every listener must have thought. “And if they’re not, how can I?” Jesus addresses the first question in the rest of chapter five, showing that the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

So you haven’t killed anybody? Have you ever been angry and called somebody a fool?

And you’ve never committed adultery? Okay, have you ever lusted?

And you say you never break an oath? But why do you even need oaths? How do you treat someone who slaps you on the face? I say, turn the other cheek. And I say, love your enemy, and pray for those who persecute you.

Now how are we feeling? Wow, I find the King’s message to be very convicting, don’t you? What He’s saying is good, and it’s what I want, and it’s what I need, but it’s also what I *lack*.

Then in chapter six the King gets personal. He puts the spotlight on our religious deeds, like helping the poor, and prayer, and fasting. Good things to do, yes. But they're unacceptable in God's eyes if our motive is to please people, or if we're unwilling to forgive people.

Then He talks about our treasures, and says we cannot serve two masters, that we cannot serve God *and* money.

And then He repeats a command three times, "Do not be anxious. Do not be anxious. Do not be anxious (6:25, 31, 34)." The King forbids His people to worry, about anything. Instead, we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," with the knowledge of this wonderful promise in mind, that "all these things [food, clothing, our every need] will be added to you."

Now how are you feeling? Here's how I'm feeling. "Oh, King Jesus, your words are so good. You are describing the kind of life that pleases the Father. It's what I want, more than anything. But...I just can't do it."

But He has more to say. At the beginning of chapter seven, He puts the subject of judging other people on the table. He says, "Don't do it. Judge not, that you be not judged." When you see a speck of sin in your brother's eye, don't you dare talk to him about it. First, get the log of your own sin out of your eye. And then, don't just talk to him about it. Do the loving thing and try to help him get rid of that speck that's making life so miserable for him.

My people are not to be judgmental, says the King. But neither are they to be undiscerning. "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs."

So we're not to judge people, as being better than thou. But we are to judge people, as in, we don't ignore sin and act like it doesn't matter.

Again, this is hard. Everything Jesus has said to us is good, and right, and helpful. And everything He has said is also convicting, for it's exposing the truth about us, about our relationships, with God and others, and about our hearts.

So what will I do? What will I do about my problem with self-righteousness, and anger, and lust? What will I do about my hatred of people who hurt me? What will I do regarding my need to forgive that brother, and my tendency to do good things so people think well of me? And what will I do regarding this love for money that seems to usurp the place God deserves in my heart and life? And what about my anxiety, my propensity to worry hour after hour about things out of my control, rather than trusting the One who is in control?

What I must do, says the King, is *ask*.

I. Jesus explains the promise of asking (7-8).

Listen again to the King as He calls for a very specific response in verses 7-8, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

Jesus extends to us three commands, and three promises.

A. He gives three commands. Ask. Seek. Knock. It's interesting that in the English language, the first letters of each spell the word "ASK."³ The kingdom truly belongs to those who *ask*.

³ Observation by F. D. Bruner, p. 277.

These verbs are in the imperative, but in the Greek there are two kinds of imperatives. One is the aorist, as in, "Shut the door behind you." It's a one time act. The other is the present, as in, "Always shut doors behind you." It's a continuous act.

Which kind of imperative do you think Jesus uses for these commands? Indeed, the present imperative. Our asking must be both consistent and persistent.

Granted, we're not to bring to God meaningless repetition, which Jesus just confronted back in 6:7. But we are to keep on asking, and seeking, and knocking.

It seems to be that these three commands are in essence one activity. The kingdom belongs to those who *ask*. But this is continual asking, and it's accompanied by seeking, and even knocking. We see this illustrated in Luke's parallel account. Right after Luke records what we call "the Lord's Prayer," he inserts this parable, in Luke 11:5–10:

"Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?' ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

This raises the questions, "Ask what? Seek what? Knock to obtain what?" Is Jesus giving us a blank check to gratify the desires of our carnal hearts? Certainly not. This promise has a context. This asking has to do with "seeking first the kingdom of God," the things our King has just spelled out for us, kingdom concerns. We're to ask for the very things we need that He's just exposed.

For example, Jesus just exhorted us to avoid judging others, and yet at other times, *not* judging others. How do we put that into practice? How do we know when and how to deal with people who have sin in their lives?

I think Dietrick Bonhoeffer's comment is helpful. "What are disciples to do when they encounter opposition, and can't penetrate the hearts of men? They must admit they have no power over others. . . . The only way to reach them is by praying to God. Judgment and forgiveness are always in the hands of God."

So you're struggling to forgive that person? Ask. So your temper is getting the best of you? Then ask, and keep asking. The Christian life is a *received* life. It's all by grace, through faith, in Christ. We begin the Christian life by asking, and God intends for us to live it that way, day by day, need by need. By asking.

And what happens when we ask?

B. He gives three promises. In verse 7, "It will be given you... You will find... It will be opened to you." Jesus repeats the promises in verse 8, saying that the one who asks "receives," the one who seeks "finds," and to the one who knocks, "it will be opened."

Again, there are three promises, and yet they are one and the same. When those who lack ask the Father for what they lack, they will receive what they lack, so that they no longer lack!

What a wonderful Savior is King Jesus! He commands us to ask, and then motivates us to ask by giving us these great and gracious promises.

As Martin Luther pointed out, "He knows that we are shy and timid, that we feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God. . . We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray. . . That is why Christ wants to lure us away from such timid thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly."

In the words of Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But this raises a problem. In the words of the hymnwriter...

O what peace we often forfeit; O what needless pain we bear;

All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.

Most of us know about this promise of asking. But a lot of us struggle when it comes to putting it into practice. So to help us, Jesus provides an illustration.

II. Jesus illustrates the promise of asking (9-10).

Jesus is the Master illustrator. In this case, He uses two rhetorical questions.

A. He uses a question about bread. Notice verse 9, "Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?"

B. He uses a question about a fish. Verse 10, "Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?"

In this illustration Jesus is asking His listeners to consider a very common situation, a child asking his father for something. If you're a parent, you know how often that happens! What man would give his son a stone when asked for bread? What man would give a serpent when asked for fish?

A couple of things stand out in this illustration. First, the items requested: bread and fish. These were perhaps the most common items of food eaten around the Sea of Galilee. Second, think about the items Jesus mentions. What's true of bread and fish? Several things, but here's one we may miss. What they *resemble*.

The first item Jesus mentions is *bread*. Don't think Wonder Bread in a plastic bag on the shelf at the grocery store, but rather a small loaf of home-baked bread. What shape is it? Well actually, it looks like something in my study that I found when living in Israel, a little round limestone found on the seashore of the Sea of Galilee.

The second item is a fish, possibly referring to the eel-like catfish which lives in the Sea of Galilee. At first glance, this fish resembles a snake.

In Luke's parallel passage (11:12), Jesus mentions a third item, an egg. In that example He asks whether a father would give his child a scorpion in the place of an egg. In its tucked position when rolled in a ball, a poisonous scorpion resembles an egg.

What's Jesus' point in the illustration? If your child asked you for bread, would you give him or her something that looked a bit like bread, but was not only different but dangerous to the teeth? And if your child was hungry and asked for fish to nourish his or her little body, would you give your child a similar looking, yet poisonous snake?

The obvious answer to both questions is, of course, "Never!" And why not? Because no good parent would ever do that. It's the natural, God-given instinct for parents to care for their children, not harm them. Any decent father would do just that, give only good gifts to his children when asked.

This brings us to the third insight. First, Jesus explains the promise of asking. Second, Jesus illustrates the promise of asking.

III. Jesus applies the promise of asking (11).

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!”

In His application, Jesus teaches us about two subjects.

A. We learn about ourselves. Two things, first...

1. *We are evil.* “If you then, who are *evil*.” Notice that Jesus presupposes the sinfulness of human nature. He uses the word “evil,” and says to His listeners, which would include the people He has chosen to follow Him, like Peter, James, Matthew, and other disciples, as well as everyone else listening...“*You are evil.*”

Don’t miss the pronoun. He didn’t say, “*We are evil,*” for that would not be true. Jesus excludes Himself, for He was not evil, but perfect. Indeed, if He had said, “*We are evil,*” we’d still be in big trouble, for a sinful Messiah would be in no position to rescue sinners.

You are evil, says Jesus. Is He being unkind? No. This is love in action. He’s helping us face the truth about ourselves, and He says elsewhere, “The truth will set you free.”

What does it take to be an evil person? In reality, you can be a "good" person in the eyes of the world, and still be evil in God's eyes. Jesus says that even "evil" people can be "good" parents who give "good gifts" to their children. Though not all humans are as bad as they could be, Jesus says we are all evil.

But notice the second thing Jesus reveals about us.

2. *We know how to give good gifts to our children.* So evil people can do good things, like feed their kids, and pay for their clothes, and give them an education.

What do you have to do to be classified as an evil person in God's sight? The answer is, absolutely nothing. It’s already been done. We all enter the world in this condition. We are “in Adam.” We have inherited his nature.

Friends, this bondage to evil goes way back to the first human being, according to Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

The word "evil" in verse 11 is a strong word. It's the same word used by Jesus in 6:13 to refer to the “evil one,” that is, Satan. We have a serious problem, friends, all of us do, and if we don’t grasp the severity of it, we’ll never appreciate why King Jesus came to earth in the first place.

Why did He come? The prophecy of Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” There’s our problem. We have gone astray. We have missed the mark. Who has? Every one.

But it’s not just our actions. The problem of evil goes much deeper. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

This is our problem, dear friends, and it’s universal. An evil nature, that shows up in evil action, flowing from an evil heart.

Perhaps no passage explains our sin problem any clearer than Romans 3:10-12, "As it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'"

Dear friends, this is why Jesus came, because we are evil. He used a different word to describe our problem in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Lost. Evil. That's our problem. And those who are blessed by God admit it. It's why they are poor in spirit, and mourn, and hunger and thirst for the righteousness they lack, which they receive simply because they *ask*.

Let this sink in. On the one hand, you may be a good parent, a good citizen, a good employee. Jesus doesn't deny that evil people are capable of doing good, and even being good, in man's sight. That's not the issue at hand. The issue is that apart from Jesus Christ, we are "evil" in God's sight.

The Bible says that being "evil" is a matter of the heart. We are all born into this world "evil" because we have hearts that are contaminated by sin. And because our hearts are bad, we are separated from God. We refuse to give Him control over our lives.

Thankfully, Jesus came into the world to take care of our hopeless condition. He came to free us from bondage to evil, and reconcile us to God. He came to give us new hearts, forgiveness, and eternal life. As this is ours...if we will simply *ask*.

B. We learn about God the Father. Four things...

1. *He is personal.* "How much more will *your* Father..." Through faith in Jesus, the Father becomes *your* Father. How does that happen? You must be born into His family, born again (see John 1:11-12). Then, by His gracious enablement, you do what Peter, James, John, and many others in this crowd had done, you put your total trust in Jesus. And when you do that, when you come to God through Jesus, *the* Father becomes *your* Father.

2. *He is in heaven.* "How much more will your Father *who is in heaven.*" Heaven is the realm of the Father. Hence, Jesus taught us to begin our prayers, "Our Father in heaven." This speaks of His greatness, His transcendence, His authority. He is a Father unlike any other Father, and while we could never reach Him, He gives us access to His holy presence. We pray to Him now, in heaven. And one day, we will go be with Him where He is, in heaven.

3. *He gives good gifts.* "How much more will your Father who is in heaven *give good things...*!"

Several years ago the Portsmouth Daily Times report the tragic story regarding the death of Eric Cottam. Eric was only 14 years old. He did not die of a disease. He did not die in an accident. No, Eric (while living in NE Pennsylvania) died of starvation. At death, the 5' 10" boy weighed 69 pounds. The Coroner, George Hudock, ruled the death a homicide caused by starvation. Who was the accused party that was being held in jail with a \$100,000 bail? Eric's parents!

There was not a scrap of food in the house. The family had not eaten in 42 days. Why hadn't they eaten? Were they poor? Did no one care? No. Neighbors and churches had tried to help. Eric's father, Larry Cottam, had a strongbox containing \$2131 in cash, as well as \$1643 in the bank. So what happened? Eric's father refused to buy food, believing that God would provide.

Here was a father who could have given good gifts to his son, but refused. Does your Heavenly Father ever do that? Does He ever withhold good gifts from His children?

Sadly, some tend to think so. They have a distorted picture of God in their minds. It could be because their earthly father mistreated them, or wasn't in their lives, or many other reasons. So now they see God as a reluctant, distant authority figure that they struggle to trust, or worse, as a selfish tyrant that they avoid at all costs.

Oh dear friends, let the words of Jesus wash away these distortions. "How much more will your Father who is in heaven *give good things...*!" This is the truth about your Father in heaven. He's not like your father on earth. He gives good things, and only good things, to His children.

What does Jesus mean by "good things"? According to the immediate context of Matthew 6:31-32, it includes our material needs, like food, drink, and clothing. But it's more than that, for we need more than food and drink. These "good things" include everything Jesus has been talking about in this sermon, the pure heart we lack, the ability to be salt and light in this dark world, the strength to honor God in our struggle with anger and lust, and everything we need to live the life God intends for us.

It's interesting that in Luke's parallel passage, Jesus says something else. In Luke 11:11-13, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit* to those who ask him!"

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate good gift. The Holy Spirit is the source of every blessing in our lives. Our Father in heaven graciously and willingly gives the Holy Spirit, who then Himself distributes good gifts.

But to whom? Does the Father give these gifts to everyone? No. Listen again to Jesus. "How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things *to those who ask him!*" What does that tell us about God the Father?

4. *He wants us to ask.* Sometimes people say, "Why pray since God already knows our needs?" Here's the answer. He wants us to ask. Yes, He knows our every need. When we pray, it's not because we need to inform Him of something He doesn't already know. The question is not whether God is ready to give, but whether we're ready to receive! And we're not ready to receive if we're not willing to ask.

Will God give us everything we ask? No, He's too loving and wise to do that! He only gives *good* things to His children.

Martin Lloyd-Jones acknowledged, "I thank God that He is not prepared to do anything that I may chance to ask Him. . . I am profoundly grateful to God that He did not grant me certain things for which I asked, and that He shut certain doors in my face."⁴

I love a quote by Tim Keller, "God will either give us what we ask, or give us what we would have asked, if we knew everything He knows."⁵

So hear the invitation of the King this morning, my friend. The kingdom belongs to those who *ask*.

Make It Personal: Three basic questions to consider...

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones

⁵ Tim Keller, *Prayer*, p. 228.

1. *What do I need?* Our greatest and most basic need is for God Himself. We, evil as we are, need for Him to save us. Have you ever acknowledged to God that you have this need? Have you ever, as one who is poor in spirit, mourned over this need? Have you ever asked God to meet this need? Have you asked Him to save you?

If you will, He will. He loves to give good gifts, and there is no greater gift than this. He sent His own Son into the world, Jesus the Christ, to save sinners. Jesus did what you cannot do. He lived a perfect life, and then on the cross to pay sin's penalty.

My friend, you can pay sin's penalty yourself, OR... You can *ask* God to save you right now. And He will! He will give you a new heart, and a faith in His Son, and forgiveness, and eternal life. For His kingdom belongs to those who *ask*.

2. *Do I continually ask the Father for what I need?* Friends, the asking doesn't stop once we receive His gift of salvation. Jesus has taught us that need all kinds of things. Like an appetite that hungers after righteousness, and the ability to love those who take advantage of us, and a heart that trusts Him instead of being anxious.

What do you need today? Ask! Are I continually asking the Father for what I need?

3. *Do I believe His promises?* Oh, what amazing promises He has given us! And none more amazing than this, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Closing Song: #326 "Softly and Tenderly" (verses 1, 2, 4)

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning's message from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was entitled, "*The Kingdom Belongs to Those Who Ask*." Take time as a group to re-read Matthew 7:7-11. What's the context of this passage, and why is it important to keep the context in mind?

2. In verse 7 Jesus gives us three commands and three amazing promises. What are they? According to verse 8, what will happen to us if we obey these commands?

3. Jesus tells us to *ask*, but He doesn't tell us here what we're to ask for. Is this a "blank check" offer? How should the location of this promise (at the end of Jesus' sermon on the mount) affect how we use this promise?

4. What's the point of Jesus' questions in verses 9-10?

5. Generally speaking, what's true of parents according to verse 11? According to the same verse, what is true of our Heavenly Father?

6. Take time as a group putting Jesus' words into practice by *asking*. Let's do this first with silent, personal prayers, as we each ask our Father for what we need. Next, have several people express short prayers and ask our Father for what we need as a church.