

The Messiah Has Come
Week 29
Matthew 7:7-12
“To Rely On God”

Introduction

I AM the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. **John 15:5**

When we first read these verses (**Matthew 7:7-12**) in the Sermon on The Mount, they almost seem out of place. After all, we have just finished reading about judging others and not casting our pearls before swine, and then, seemingly out of nowhere, The Savior begins once more to talk about prayer. A casual reading of this would lead one to believe that this portion of the sermon would actually be better placed somewhere closer to the verses on prayer and fasting in **Matthew Chapter Six (namely 6:5-18)**. So did The LORD make a mistake in his sermon? Or possibly did Matthew write it down wrong so many years later? The answer to both of these questions is a resounding “No”, for the placement of this particular passage is both strategic and necessary.

You see, as we go along in this sermon, we can get a sense of being overwhelmed by the standards that God sets for the subjects of His kingdom. In fact, we may get to the point that we throw up our hands and cry, “*I just cannot be this good!*” And you would be correct, if you are trying to obey every command of this sermon in your own strength. We absolutely cannot, for lack of a better way of saying it, *be this good*, for all of us are flawed and sinful individuals. So, how exactly are we supposed to follow the commands of this sermon? And we must do so, for Jesus Himself has said: ***“If you love me, you will keep My commands.”*** (**John 14:15**)

When we truly comprehend many of the commands of Christ, it can be a bit overwhelming. Can I get a witness? As a matter of fact, there are approximately one hundred different commands that Christ has given for us to follow in the *New Testament*. Are you feeling overwhelmed yet? I thought so. So how on earth are we, as flawed as we are, ever going to be able to even come close to living up to the standards that are required of us? Answer: We must rely on The Spirit for help. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

After all these years of ministry, I have come to the conclusion that there are three main “types”, if you will, of people within the church (at least every one I have ever been a part of). There are what I like to call the “*peripheral believers*”, who just hang out around the edges of Christendom. They don’t attend church all that regularly. They don’t really serve in any capacity, and they seem to have no real hunger for The Word. And yet, they claim to have a relationship with Christ. I personally believe that these people are not Christians at all, merely slightly religious. These people never seem to be all that concerned with being obedient to Scripture. Oh, they try to be good enough to feel good about themselves, but they certainly do not feel broken over their sin.

And then there is the other extreme, the “*Pharisees*” (legalists). These are the ones who have convinced themselves that they are pretty good. In fact, they believe, much like the Pharisees of old, that they have it all together and are nearly perfect in their own ability to please God on their own. Now, if you ask them if they are sinners, they will claim to be imperfect, but in truth, they are merely displaying their own false humility. For deep down, they feel superior to everyone around them.

And finally, there are those who are in the middle, the “*paupers*”, if you will, who are in need of assistance. These, in my opinion, are the true Believers. They have a hunger for The Word of God. They most definitely are in love with Christ, and they truly desire to obey His commands. But they also realize that they do not have the slightest ability to do so. And sometimes, they even get discouraged, because they cannot do the good that inwardly they want to do (see **Romans 7**). It is to these people that I primarily wish to speak to this morning, for they are the true church. They are striving to be better with every passing day. And it is to these people that Christ is directing His attention in **Matthew 7:7-12**.

So if you are feeling a bit overwhelmed by His Sermon on The Mount, then turn to the only place that you can for guidance. God loves those who love His Son, and He longs to give you everything that

you need in order to live in a way that pleases The Son. So, do not forget that you can call on your Father for everything that you need. Learn to rely on Him for your spiritual *Strength*, your physical *Survival*, and your obedient *Service* to others. Please allow me to explain.

Relying for Strength (vs. 7-8)

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **Matthew 7:7-8**

If you take this passage away from the context of the sermon, which many really bad preachers try and do, you will get a whole different interpretation of the text. For if you simply read this passage and not the rest, it would seem that we are to continuously annoy God with our requests until He tires of it and reluctantly gives us what we want. Picture a three year old toddler in Walmart repeatedly asking for a toy until his weary mother gives in just to get some peace and quiet, not to mention to be spared from public embarrassment and humiliation. This is the approach that the so-called “name it and claim it” purveyors of the prosperity gospel are wont to preach.

But in all honesty, this is not even close to what The Savior is talking about here. Can I just be frankly honest? We are commanded to test the spirits to see whether they be from God or not (**1 John 4:1**). So here is a litmus test for doctrine: If the doctrine being taught is appealing to your own fleshly desires, then it's not of God. Godliness is not designed to produce selfishness. So to use this passage to convince people that God wants you to have a relentless temper tantrum, as it were, in order to get your way, that is a false teaching. So be smart, and just say no. Stay away from the wolves dressed like sheep, for they are not leading you to the narrow way. That's why they have so many followers.

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. **2 Timothy 4:3**

So what exactly is Jesus talking about, and why is it that we are supposed to repeatedly ask for it (*ask, seek, knock*)? When we read The Sermon on The Mount, we should begin to understand just what God's standard for holiness really is. And once we see that standard, we should begin to realize just how inadequate we truly are. After all, this is no sermon for our “*itching ears*”, but rather, it is a sermon to examine and expose our inner selves, the true nature of our hearts. And upon the honest evaluation of what we find, we realize that we are lacking in every aspect.

Jesus is telling us that in order to have the strength (ability) to live the loftiest of standards, we must rely on a strength that is far superior to our own. Ask, seek, and knock is simply a very poetic and visual way of reminding us that we must be in constant communication with our heavenly Father, if we are to aspire to live by His standards. Once again, Jesus is reminding us:

...apart from Me, you can do nothing.

So, the message, when taken in context, becomes perfectly clear: If we are to be *able* to live in the standards set forth for the kingdom of heaven, then we must be *enabled* to do so by God Himself. In short, He will *enable* us, so that we will be *able* to obey Him. And that, my friends, will not be accomplished by a one time prayer upon the day of your conversion. It will require a close daily relationship with a Holy God, in a continuous attitude of prayer and a habitual disciplined feasting upon His Word. Or as Christ would say, “*Asking, seeking, and knocking*” upon the door of heaven's throne room, so that we can obtain the strength we need to follow with every passing day.

The “peripherals” do not desire this, and the “Pharisees” do not think they need this, but the “paupers”, the spiritually needy ones who read this sermon, will feel inadequate. They know more than anyone just how much they need a daily dose of strength from heaven's storehouse. God will give you what you need, if you will simply ask Him to do so. He wants you to rely on Him for your spiritual strength and nourishment.

Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God — Who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly — and it will be given to him. **James 1:5**

Relying for Survival (vs. 9-11)

Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him. **Matthew 7:9-11**

Not only has Christ promised us that our heavenly Father will meet our spiritual needs, but He will also meet our daily physical needs as well. And the conditions He gave for this to be fulfilled are simple. We are to first seek the kingdom of heaven. We are to invest in the kingdom of heaven. And then God will take care of everything else. When we are living with our sole focus upon pleasing Christ, then we need not worry about anything, for what we need shall always be provided. This promise is as certain as life itself!

I love how The LORD uses the analogy of a good father (parent) in order to make His point clear. After all, what kind of parent would intentionally mislead or even potentially harm their own child by giving them a stone for bread or a snake instead of a fish. Only the cruelest of people would even think of such a thing. Although we do live in a society today, where more and more people seem to be under no compulsion to care for their own children. I believe that judgement day will go especially hard for these individuals, who were so self-consumed that they let their children do without on a daily basis. The Scriptures carry a clear warning for such a person:

But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. **1 Timothy 5:8**

So to those who grew up in an unloving household, I would say to you, God is nothing like what you have experienced. He cares for you and will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory (**Philippians 4:19**). That is conditional, of course, upon you seeking first the kingdom and His righteousness. God will always bless those who love Him and have the privilege to call upon Him as “our Father” (**Matthew 6:9**).

And to those who were raised in a good loving family, may I add to this by saying that God is a far better Father than you have ever known. Listen to the words of The LORD: **“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will you Father in heaven give good things to those who seek Him.”** So it really doesn’t matter how good, or how bad, your earthly parents were according to this world’s standards. **Your heavenly Father is far superior.** His love is perfect, and He truly wants what is best for you in every single situation. Never forget Who He is and how He loves you!

To those of you who are parents out there, have you ever had a sick child, and you prayed that you could take its place? For a parent who loves his child would far rather be able to take up its infirmities upon him/her selves would they not? We’ve all been there. So I have a question for you this morning. Exactly where do you think that loving instinct comes from? I can answer that. It comes from God, for that is His very nature. You were created in His image. So when you have such compassion for your child that you would rather die than see it suffer, you are displaying God’s own divine nature.

Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him as stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and The LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. **Isaiah 53:4-6**

Hear me this morning, oh child of God. You do not ever have to worry about our Father seeing to your needs. You may always rely upon Him for whatever you need to survive. Because our Good Father so loved _____ *that He gave* (**John 3:16**). It is His very nature to do whatever is needed for the good of His Children, and you may count on that.

Relying for Service (vs. 12)

Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is The Law and The Prophets. **Matthew 7:12**

The proof that this passage should remain in context with the rest is in this verse, for it ties it all back to the previous section in regards to judging. As Believers, we are to do everything out of love and concern for our fellow man. To the lost, we are to share the message of hope. To the saved, we are to care enough for them to help to keep them from straying off the narrow path. In all our dealings with people, we are to obey what has been commonly called "*the golden rule*" to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

This verse begins with the word "therefore" tying it back to the verses before it. And when read in context, it reminds us that as we rely on God for His provisions in all things, we too are to show the same concern for others, just as we want God to shower His blessing upon us. We desperately need to be forgiven. So we forgive. We need to have our physical needs met. So we meet the physical needs of others. We need to be encouraged, so we in turn encourage others, and the list goes on.

Jesus has reminded us over and over again that the *Old Testament* law can be summed up in two short sentences: Love The LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love our neighbors as ourselves. This is the love that is required from every citizen of the kingdom of heaven. And only by abiding in Christ and relying upon His daily provision will we be enabled to not only serve Him in this world, but also to serve those around us. We must never forget our own desperate need for God, and that those around us also desperately need His love and forgiveness. In short, the more time you spend with Jesus, the more you learn to love as Jesus loves. And His selfless agape love is what this world needs from His church in these dark and difficult days.

As we have repeatedly seen, The Sermon on The Mount is about the condition of our hearts. And the moral of its message is simple: Are you pure in heart as God is pure in heart? And if so, do you love as God loves? The only way we can ever get within range of this standard of purity is to go to God daily for His help. We need His provision for *strength, survival, and service*, so we must continually be asking, seeking and knocking. For only in this, can we become what God desires for us.

Many have tried to use the golden rule as a basis for their salvation. They mistakenly believe that all it takes to be considered right with God is to treat others as you would have them treat you. This is yet another example of "*works or merit based salvation*". You cannot be saved by anything that you do. You can only find salvation by placing your faith in Christ and His finished work upon the cross. He is our only hope and our only source of rescue. And once we have experienced His love, mercy, and grace, we are compelled to go and show this same kindness to others. Again, the Sermon on The Mount is about the condition of our hearts. So ask yourself this question this morning: Has your heart truly been remade in Christ Jesus?

God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you. **Psalms 51:10-13**

If any would sincerely desire to do the will of God in all things, they simply need to "**ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.**" For when we abide in Christ, we shall have all that we will ever need.

Truth!!!