

Matthew 7:7-11
Your Father Loves You

Main idea: Childlike faith causes us to pray to God as our Father. We will look to Him to supply all our needs.

We talked last week about how VBS isn't just for kids, but for all of us.¹

- Being Father's Day today, I want to build on that idea.²
- God doesn't want us to have faith from afar, but to know Him and relate to Him personally.³

So we're going to do something that would make some of your fathers very nervous to do in church.

- We're going to play with cards! [rules]⁴
- How did that game make you feel?
 - As you got close to 100, how did it feel? Maybe a little anxious?
 - Whenever you saw an Ace, how did it feel? Maybe like you failed, and you didn't know if you'd get it?
 - Probably some of you wanted to give up, or not even start, because it seemed pointless.
- Many people feel the same way about prayer.
 - Sometimes we pray and we're anxious because we're not sure it's working, or if we're doing it right.⁵
 - Or maybe sometimes we just want to give up, or we don't know how to start because we're not sure if it will even do any good.⁶

This morning, we're going to be talking about prayer.

- Along with Bible reading, regular times of prayer are crucial to having a healthy relationship with God.⁷
- This is something that we all kind of intuitively know, and yet prayer is so often neglected to the point that we feel guilty about it.
- But it doesn't have to be that way!
 - As God's child, prayer isn't something we must do in order to earn anything from our Father, it's something we're invited to do as we rest in His love for us.⁸
 - So here's what I want you to know this morning: childlike faith in God causes us to pray to Him as our Father as we look to Him to supply all our needs.

Matthew 7:7-11

We're going to take a moment to play a slightly more reflective game. [rules]⁹

- That's how we often treat prayer.
 - You could have walked up to the pulpit and placed your prayer request on it.
 - But we often make certain assumptions about prayer.
 - We think it's a kind of game.
- So we devise elaborate methods in order to get God to hear us and accept our prayers.
 - We think we'll be heard for our many words, or our impressive words.¹⁰
 - And it causes some of you to not even try!
- But God doesn't want us to just try to get heard from far off.
 - God invites us to come near to Him.¹¹
 - And prayer isn't about getting the right words, but having the right heart, having been transformed into a child of God.¹²
 - So He invites us to draw near to Him in prayer. (v. 7)

How many of you have ever played Hide and Seek?

- What's the goal of the hider in Hide and Seek? What's the goal of the seeker?
 - But what if the hider is hiding too good?
 - Sometimes we don't always find what we seek in life, do we?
- But when talking about prayer, Jesus said, "seek, and you WILL find."
 - I think many of us think God hides things from us, and we have to seek for them in just the right way, or else we'll miss out.
 - But Jesus says, "No, ask whatever you wish in my name, and it will be done for you by my Father who is in heaven."

How many of you have ever knocked on someone's door?

- What's the goal of the person who knocks?
- They want the door opened for them!
 - But what if no one is home?
 - Sometimes doors in our lives stay closed, don't they?
- But when talking about prayer, Jesus said, "knock, and it WILL be opened to you."
 - God is always home.¹³
 - And He doesn't ignore us when we knock.¹⁴

Both of these (seeking and knocking) illustrate and invite us to pray.

- Jesus said that when you ask, it WILL be given to you.
 - This is amazing!
 - Does that mean that you'll get everything you want?
 - Not necessarily, but definitely in the sense that all of your longings will be satisfied in Jesus.
- [Psalm 107:9] [John 6:35]

Jesus then appeals to our own sense of compassion. (v. 9-10)

- Why would someone ask for bread or a fish?
 - Because they're hungry, right?
 - You know, some people ask out of laziness or selfishness.
 - James talks about how it's possible to not receive because you ask with wrong motives.¹⁵
 - But the point that Jesus is emphasizing here is that you have not because you ask not.
- So why would someone give them a stone or a serpent instead?
 - We wouldn't!
 - Only someone even worse than an evil person would do that.
 - And God is not evil.¹⁶

What's something else you would never consider giving to a child when they ask for something they want?

- If they asked for a toy, what would you NOT give them?
- If they asked for a hug, what would you NOT give them?
- We're all sinners, and even we know what NOT to give children.
 - God is good, and He knows so much better how to give good gifts to those who ask Him.
 - And God invites us, even almost begs us to pray, asking Him for the good things we want.
 - And we can then trust Him to give us EXACTLY what we need.¹⁷

Who is it that you talk to when you have a problem that you need help with?

- Why do you go to talk to them?¹⁸
- For all these reasons, and so many more, we can go to God in prayer.

And the most important thing we can ever ask God for is forgiveness. [1 John 1:9]

Our greatest need is for Jesus to forgive us.

- And the awesome thing is that God simply tells us to confess our sins to Him! To pray!
- There's nothing we must do in order to receive forgiveness from God.
- Jesus has done it all by dying for our sins on the cross.
- And yet, so many times, we miss that this is our greatest need.
- It's like Jesus is hiding in plain sight, with a neon sign that says, "I'm here! Find me!" And yet, we pass him by because we think we want something else more.

I love the promises given to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah. [Jeremiah 29:12-13]

Seek the Lord.

- Seek Jesus, and You will find Him.
- And when you find Jesus, you find forgiveness, and hope, and eternal life through a relationship with the God who made you and calls you His child, for that is what you are.

Endnotes

1. God calls all of us to have a childlike faith. Matthew 18:3
2. Since God is our Father, we are His children. 1 John 3:1
3. John 17:3
4. Every time you see a 10 or a face card, give yourself 10 points. But if you see an Ace, subtract 50 points. Whoever gets 100 points first wins.
5. After all, there is a wrong to pray (selfishly). James 4:3
6. And yet, God hears and answers every prayer. 1 John 5:14-15
7. And that makes sense, because in order to have a conversation with someone, you need to both listen to them, and talk to them. 1 Thessalonians 5:17
8. Luke 11:13
9. Take a moment right now to write down a prayer request. Your mission is to get your prayer request onto the pulpit. You can throw it. Or you can try to shoot it with a rubber band. Or you can fold it into a paper airplane and try to fly it.
10. Matthew 6:7-8
11. James 4:8
12. Luke 18:10-14
13. Psalm 90:1, John 14:23
14. God loves those who knock! After all, Jesus is also knocking on the door of our hearts. Revelation 3:20
15. James 4:3
16. Psalm 145:9, 1 John 1:5
17. Philippians 4:19
18. We know they love us. We know they will listen. We hope they can help us.