

The Sermon on the Mount
The Guarantee of Answered Prayer (Part 2)
Matthew 7:7-11
October 6, 2013

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

Well, I want you to turn again this morning with me to Matthew 7. We find ourselves in the middle of what I think is the most encouraging passage in the entire Sermon on the Mount. And today I trust will be that to you; that's my prayer.

Several years ago I read this account of an adoption. A man named Gerald wrote these words, My wife and I waited fifteen years for a child that never came by the natural way. However, we were approached one day with the lead of a child not yet born. I remember standing in front of the judge on the day of our adoption. He pointed his finger and asked of me, "Is anyone coercing you to adopt this little boy?" After we had assured him that we were doing so out of love for our son, the judge made this statement, "From today on he is your son. He may disappoint you, even grieve you, but he is your son. Everything you own one day will be his and he will bear your name." Then he looked to the clerk and gave this command, "Order a change in this child's birth certificate and may it reflect that these are the parents of this child."

Perhaps you were adopted or perhaps you have adopted children of your own. If either of those circumstances is true of you, you understand one spiritual reality to a degree and at a level that most of the rest of us will not. And that is the reality that God has adopted us who believe in Jesus Christ. He truly, really is our Father. That's the lesson that our Lord wants us to learn today - the passage that we come to in the Sermon on the Mount.

Let me read again for you the paragraph in Matthew 7 that begins in verse 7. You follow along. Our Lord says,

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Now, just to remind you of the context, we're studying a section that begins in chapter 7 verse 1, runs down through verse 12. It's about our relationships with others. And the paragraph that I

just read for you fits into that context because our Lord is telling us that we must pray, we must ask God, for the wisdom and the strength that we need in all of our relationships - wisdom and strength to carry out the commands of verses 1 to 6 that we've already studied and to carry out the command of verse 12 that, Lord willing, we'll come to next Sunday. We must continually ask God to give us the wisdom that we need for righteous relationships.

Now, how exactly does our Lord motivate us to do that? Well, in this paragraph our Lord provides us with two great incentives to pray. The first incentive is found in verses 7 and 8. We studied it last week. It's Jesus' guarantee of answered prayer. In these verses Jesus uses several different words, three different words specifically, in order to illustrate or describe the reality of a Christian praying. The first word is the simple word "ask." Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you...." Ask and keep on asking. In other words, develop a habit of asking God for whatever you need. Specifically, here, ask Him for the wisdom to deal with your relationships, and Jesus says it will be given to you. The Father will give you what you need. The second word He uses to describe praying is the word "seek." "...seek and you will find...." I think the idea here, as we looked at it last week, is even when we don't know what to ask we can come to God seeking - seeking His wisdom, seeking His help, even to craft what it is we should pray for. And Jesus says the Father will give us exactly what we need. He will allow that to be found. The third picture that He uses to express the reality of praying is the word "knock." "...knock, and it will be opened to you...." We looked at the parable of the reluctant neighbor who - although he wouldn't get up and answer the door for his friend because he was his friend, he wouldn't give him what he needed because he knew him and befriended him - he, however, would because of the persistent knocking of the neighbor. Like the reluctant neighbor in the parable, God will always respond to our knocking - open the door and meet our need. But unlike the reluctant neighbor, God doesn't do so reluctantly or grudgingly, because He's our Father. Now, Jesus summarizes His guarantee of answered prayer in verse 8. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Jesus assures us that the Father will respond to the request of every single one of his genuine followers and He'll do so without exception.

Now that isn't the full story. As we learned last week, and if you weren't here last week I encourage you to go back and listen, because I filled these out a little more then; but let me just list them for you. As we look at the New Testament, Jesus is not teaching a 'name it and claim it' theology like you find on the religious television. He's not saying, "Listen. You just tell God what you want and then God will have to do that," as though He were some kind of your own personal genie in a bottle. Throughout the New Testament Jesus directly and through His own teaching, and indirectly through that of His apostles, lays down several very specific conditions that you and I must meet before God will answer our prayers. And again we looked at these last week, but just to remind you, we must have faith in God if we expect our prayers to be answered. We must ask for the right reasons, not to consume something in our flesh, but for the right

reasons. We must ask according to the revealed will of God. In other words, we must make sure our requests are in keeping with what God has revealed in His Word. We must have a spirit of forgiveness toward others. We must ask in Jesus' name. That doesn't mean we tag that on to the end of our prayers. It means we pray in keeping with the advance of Jesus' kingdom and Jesus' priorities and what matters to Him in our lives. We must live in obedience to Christ. And we must pray in line with God's sovereign will as Jesus said, "Not my will be done, but Yours, Father." We must pray with that attitude, with that spirit.

Now when we meet those conditions, not perfectly, but these are the direction and expression of our lives, Jesus assures us that the Father will hear and that He will give us what we need. "For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." So the first incentive for us to pray is Jesus' guarantee of answered prayer. But that raises the question, "Why?" Why does God respond to us like that? Well, in the second half of this paragraph that we just read, our Lord explains. In verses 9 through 11, we have the second incentive to pray. And it's Jesus' argument for answered prayer. To convince us that what He has taught us in verses 7 and 8 is true, Jesus presents us with an argument, and to do that He illustrates from everyday life. He borrows an illustration from everyday family life. He encourages us to stop and think a moment about an earthly father's response to his children. Jesus says, "I want you to think about how human fathers respond to their children's requests." In verse 9, He says human fathers don't typically give us something worthless. Look at verse 9. "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?" The word "loaf" here refers to the round, flat cakes of bread that were the staple in the diet of people in first century Israel. So this son's request is not extravagant. He's asking for one of the necessities of life. Jesus says, "Which of you, if your son comes to you and asks you for one of the basic needs of life, a loaf of bread, would give him, instead of that necessity, a stone?" Now this is an interesting picture. If you lived in Israel you'd understand it, because their typical round, flat loaves of bread there in the first century actually resembled the stones that still litter the countryside in Israel. In fact, you remember in the temptation of Christ, Satan comes to Him at the end of 40 days. Matthew 4:3, Satan says to Christ, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." They look like bread. You're getting hungry. Why not just make them bread?

Now the form of Jesus' question here in verse 9 in the Greek text implies a negative answer. "He won't give him a stone will he?" Jesus is not saying that there are no fathers who will treat their children like this. After all, we live in a sinful world, and there are fallen people, and perhaps you had a father that wasn't a father to you at all. Jesus' point is not that this is true without exception. His point is that most human fathers respond to the needs and requests of their children. In fact, I want you to think for a moment about your own father. Even if he was an unbeliever, even if he sinned against you in various ways, it is likely that he provided for your basic needs. It's likely that he responded to your requests. When you asked your father for food

or necessary clothing, it's unlikely that he either just ignored your request altogether or that in response to that legitimate request he gave you something that was absolutely worthless, that didn't meet the need. Earthly fathers don't typically respond to their children's request for legitimate needs by giving them something that is completely worthless.

In verse 10 Jesus says human fathers don't typically give us what is harmful. "'Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?'" Next to bread, there in Galilee where Jesus was preaching this sermon, the most common food was the fish that were caught there in the lake. In fact, you remember later in Jesus' ministry there's a crowd gathered and there's no food, but there's a little boy there with his lunch that his mom had prepared. And in that lunch was what? Bread and fish. So Jesus pictures a son approaching his father with a simple request for the basic necessities of life. A fish. Jesus says, "Listen. If your son comes with a request for a fish, what kind of father is going instead to give him a snake? What kind of father is going to pull a bait and switch and, instead of that basic necessity of life, is going to him something that harms him?" By the way, a few months later when Jesus uses these same words on a different occasion, He adds a third example. Luke 11:12. "'Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?'" Earthly fathers don't typically respond to their children's requests by giving them something that is not only worthless but actually will harm them.

You get the overarching point. Most fathers respond to their children's legitimate request by trying to meet those needs. Now in verse 11 Jesus applies this very simple human illustration, and He encourages us in verse 11 to compare our earthly father's response with our heavenly Father's response. Notice verse 11. "'If you then being evil....'" Stop there for a moment. Now before we unpack this verse in its context, we need to stop and we need to consider the profound and foundational doctrinal truths that are in that brief statement. In the first five words of verse 11, Jesus makes three profound theological assertions. Let's look at them together.

Theological assertion #1: All humans are inherently evil. Jesus says, "...if you then being evil...." Jesus uses in the Greek text the plural pronoun for "you" as He looked out on that large crowd that had gathered for this sermon. Of course there were His disciples, there were the hangers on; there were the curious. There was a large crowd of people there, and Jesus looked out on that large crowd gathered to listen to this sermon and He says a remarkable thing. He says, "All of you are evil." Notice, Jesus does not say, "You do evil things." That's how most unbelievers think of themselves. Most unbelievers think, "You know, I am basically a good guy and I just, unfortunately, occasionally do bad things." That's not Jesus' diagnosis at all. No, Jesus says you are evil. In fact, He says, "...you, being evil...." It is a state of being.

You know, we often respond to those horrific sins that make the front page of our newspapers and when we see those sins our response, our sort of natural response, is to ask this question: "How could anyone do that?" That's absolutely the wrong question. The right question is, "Why

doesn't that happen more often?" And the answer to that question is God's common grace. It's because God in His common grace restrains human evil. Think about how He does that, just a couple of ways. God restrains evil by having families with parents who discipline their children. Imagine what your children would be if you never restrain their evil. But God, in His common grace, has created families where evil is restrained in the lives of those little children as they grow up, and it doesn't, in most cases, come to as full an expression as it might. God uses government to restrain evil - even bad government. When I was in L.A., the L.A. riots broke out and I got just a little taste of what it's like to have no government in control, when anarchy of a sort broke loose. God uses government to control and restrain the evil. Government punishes evil doers and rewards those who do well. And that is for our good. God even uses peer pressure - people's selfish, innate desire to be thought well of - to control human sin. A lot of times people won't do what they want to do because they don't want someone else to see and to criticize, to know.

So God in His common grace restrains evil, but here's what Jesus is saying in this verse. He's saying every one of us here this morning - like everyone on that hillside on that day - is inherently, characteristically, fundamentally evil. By nature that's who we are. In fact, let me put it a different way. No one ever becomes a Christian until he first fully embraces Jesus' diagnosis here: I am inherently evil. If you have never come to that conclusion in the depths of your soul, then I can promise you that you're not a Christian, because that's where it begins. The first beatitude is to be a beggar in spirit. Say, "God, I have nothing." It's like the tax collector falling on his face in the temple saying, "God, be merciful to me the sinner." That's where true salvation begins, is when we know we need to be rescued, we need to be saved. So no one ever becomes a Christian until he first fully embraces this diagnosis: I am fundamentally evil. And then what happens? God makes us new. We become a new creation in Jesus Christ. We become a new person. Now, we still have a part of us that's unredeemed. The Bible calls it the flesh. Its beachhead is in our bodies. And that flesh is still fundamentally, inherently evil. But who we are, who we really are in Christ, is a new creation, a new person. That's why we have this struggle. The real person that we are loves God's law, wants to obey God's law, wants to please Christ. But we still have the flesh, and it is inherently evil. Jesus says, "...you,...being evil..." Now notice, although Jesus acknowledges that all human beings are inherently sinful, He also points out that none of us are as bad as we could be. Because His whole point here is that human beings, although inherently self-centered rather than God-centered, still care for their children. So, all humans are inherently evil.

There's a second theological assertion in those first five words in verse 11 and that is, Jesus is not innately evil. Notice again what Jesus says. "If you then, being evil..." Now if you and I had been delivering this sermon on the hillside that day, what would we have said? We wouldn't have had the chutzpah to say, "If you, being evil." We would have said, "If we, being evil." But Jesus doesn't say that. He intentionally excludes Himself from the diagnosis of inherent evil.

Now, that is perfectly consistent with how Jesus always viewed Himself. John 8:46. Listen to this. “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” Anybody else here want to come on the stage and make that assertion? John 14:30. Jesus says, “...the ruler of the world...” meaning Satan, “...has nothing in Me.” John 15:10. “...I have kept My Father’s commandments.” Any other volunteers to make that statement? Jesus was claiming moral perfection. And oh, by the way, His followers got it. The apostle Paul, speaking of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:21, says, “He...knew no sin...” The writer of Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Think about Peter. Peter accompanied Christ from the time He began His ministry, and he actually lived day and night with Him as one of His apostles for at least a couple of years of Jesus’ ministry. And what did Peter say about Jesus? 1 Peter 2:22. “[He] committed no sin...” Shall we run the people up here on stage who live with you and know you best and see if any of them will make that assertion? Jesus was unique. He alone was not innately evil.

But there’s a third theological assertion in verse 11, and it’s that Jesus is God. You see, Jesus was claiming not only to be without sin, He was also claiming an attribute of deity. We know that because of how He explained this to the rich young ruler in Mark 10. You remember, the rich young ruler comes to Him, and the rich young ruler refers to Him as “Good Teacher.” Well, at this point this young man doesn’t believe that Jesus is anything more than a nice man. He doesn’t believe He’s God. And so Jesus corrects him. He says in Mark 10:18, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.” Jesus was saying, “Listen. Until you’re ready to recognize that I am God, then don’t call me good, because God only is morally good.” So here in Matthew 7, when Jesus says that in contrast to the rest of humanity, which is evil, He is inherently good, He is claiming to be, by His own words, nothing less than God. So you can see there is incredibly rich theology compressed into these five words. All humans are inherently evil. Jesus is not inherently evil. Jesus is God.

Now, let’s go back and look at Jesus’ statement in its context. Look again at verse 11. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...” Jesus says even though you are inherently evil, you still respond to your children’s legitimate requests by giving them what they need. Now of course there are times when we don’t do that, and when we don’t do that, there are a couple of reasons. One reason might be, frankly, just a lack of genuine love. There are parents who are just mean, deceitful, and cruel and who, because of their own twisted souls, seem to take genuine delight in ridiculing their children, frustrating their children, even treating them cruelly and heartlessly. That happens. Other times it’s because of a lack of knowledge or wisdom. Sometimes earthly fathers want to do good to our children, we just don’t know what’s best. And so we give them something that we thought was good, that turns out, in fact, to be harmful, because of our own lack of knowledge or wisdom. Sometimes we give them something that isn’t what they need because of a lack of means. You know, I was the last of ten kids, and I know there were times when my dad desperately wanted us to have certain things that there was just no way for it to happen because it couldn’t be afforded. Our Father, our heavenly Father,

never lacks genuine love. He never lacks the wisdom and knowledge that would cause Him to give us something that's harmful, and He never lacks the means to provide whatever we need. And so this is where Jesus goes. Notice verse 11. "...how much more will your Father Who is in heaven..." Stop there a moment and think about that. Notice the contrast Jesus is making between human fathers and our heavenly Father. Jesus is not here teaching the universal fatherhood of God over all human beings. In fact, in John 8 Jesus said most human beings have the devil for their father. So how does God become our Father?

This is an amazing truth. I want you to stick with me here. How does God become our Father? The reason God is your Father is because of what started in eternity past. In eternity past, God decided to adopt you personally - individually. Turn to Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1:4. As Paul rehearses the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ, he begins here. Verse 4. God chose us in Christ; God selected us in Christ; God elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world. In other words, before He made anything else, God made this decision; He chose us. And notice verse 4 goes on to say, "In love having..." Literally, "In love having predestined us...." That is, having predetermined our destiny. That's predestined. He predetermined our destiny. And what destiny? The adoption as sons. So in eternity past God chose you, believer, in Christ. He said, "I'm going to adopt that person. I have predetermined that person's destiny. I'm going to adopt them." Why would He do that? Verse 6 explains. It's "...to the praise of the glory of His grace...." It's not because of you. It's not because of something He saw in you. It's not because He thought you would believe. It's because He is by nature a God of grace. It's all in Him. That's why He chose you.

Now we were chosen to be adopted in eternity past, but you were actually adopted by God at the moment of your salvation. Turn over to Romans 8. In verse 9 Paul is describing the nature of a true Christian, and he says, "...you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." He says, "Listen. When you became a Christian, you got the Spirit, and if you don't have the Spirit, then you never became a Christian. They go together." So at the moment of salvation, the Spirit began to indwell you. And that Spirit, verse 16, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God..." In other words, the Spirit, at the moment of salvation, sealed your adoption; He accomplished your adoption. That is one of a number of things that happened the moment you believed. Not only were you justified, but you were also adopted at that very moment.

Now your adoption is not yet complete. God has adopted you, but the full fruition of that adoption has not yet taken place. Look at Romans 8: 23. "...but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons...." You say, "Wait a minute. I thought we already were adopted." You are. This is the finalization of that, when you come of age and you get all the full rights of sonship. And

when does that happen? When you get a glorified body at the redemption of our body. Right now you're like an adopted child who is still underage. You are still every bit as much a child as an adult one, but you haven't stepped into all the rights and privileges that will one day be yours. But those will become yours when you are glorified.

Now there's one other important question to ask and that is, By what means did God make possible our adoption? You don't need to turn there, but Galatians 4: 4.

...God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, [in order that] He might redeem those who were under the Law, [in order that] we might receive the adoption as sons.

In other words, God had to send Christ in order to redeem us from the law and its curse and God's wrath against our sin in order that He might adopt us. So the only way God could adopt you is through the death of His Son.

Now, how do you receive the adoption? Turn to John 1, John 1: 11. Jesus came into His own creation, His own world, and those people "...who were His own did not receive Him," speaking primarily of the Jews, most of whom rejected Him. "But," verse 12, "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...." What does it mean to receive Christ? "...even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God." In other words, regeneration comes first. God gives you new life, and then out of that new life you respond to the gospel - you receive Christ or you believe in Christ - and in response to that you are adopted by God. The moment you repented and believed in Jesus Christ, God adopted you as His own child and He became your Father. It's amazing really, because think about it, He could have saved us without adopting us. He could have rescued us and we would have still been His creatures and we would have still been merely His slaves, but instead He also made us sons and daughters. John, the apostle, writes, "...how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God...."

Now, I want you to sweep the cobwebs away from your mind right now. Sit up and clarify this in your thinking. This is so important. Listen carefully. Think about this. God, the Creator of the universe, the Almighty Eternal One, has legally adopted you. God is your Father. That's not an illustration; that's a reality. Now, when we hear that, if we're honest with ourselves, I think we tend to think that there needs to be a bunch of legalese that follow that statement. You know, like on the pharmaceutical commercials on television: "The adoptive Father makes no guarantees explicit or implied. The adoption may be rescinded at the discretion of the adopting Parent for reasons including but not limited to..." and so forth. Listen, folks. There are no caveats. There is no fine print. Nothing can change this reality. And let me say this to you. Nothing is more important to your progress in the Christian life than for you to grasp this truth: God is really truly your Father. Martin Lloyd-Jones writes, "If you should ask me to state in one phrase what I

regard as the greatest defect in most Christian lives, I would say it is our failure to know God as our Father as we should know Him.”

Have you ever wondered why there are even fathers on this planet? Why are there earthly fathers? It is not merely to propagate the race. God could have arranged another plan. It's not merely a social construct. It's not man-made. And it's not merely a pragmatic way for God to bring structure to family life. He could have done that in any number of ways. The reason there are fathers on this planet is because God wanted to teach us something about Himself. He wanted to illustrate two truths. He wanted to illustrate the special relationship that has always existed between the first member of the Trinity and the second member of the Trinity. They can best be understood as Father and Son. Secondly, He wanted to illustrate the special relationship between Himself and those whom He redeemed. He is their Father and they are His children, His sons and daughters. Now, earthly fathers are evil and so at best the picture is only faint and it's a flawed reflection of the reality. And sometimes fathers sin so badly against their children that they hopelessly distort the picture. But that doesn't change the reality that fatherhood as a whole reflects something that is true in the nature and character of God. John Calvin writes, “Whence comes this?” He's talking about the fact that human fathers, even though they're evil, care for their children. He says, where does that come from? It is because God drops into their hearts a portion of His goodness. Calvin continues, “But if the little drops produce such an amount of beneficence, what ought we to expect from the inexhaustible ocean? Would God who thus opens the hearts of men shut His own?” It's unthinkable. Of course not. Human fathers are a faint reflection of the reality of who God is.

Now, notice what Jesus says in verse 11. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those ask Him.” You see, it's not by our persistence in prayer that we sort of gradually wear down God's reluctance and finally, finally, get what we need. No, that's not it at all. Jesus wants us to know that we have an adoptive Father who loves us as His children. In fact, think about this for a moment. God loves you as much as He loves His unique, one of a kind, only Son. And our Father, the One who's adopted us, is good, and He's generous, and He's kind, so of course He would answer the legitimate request of His children. God is good and He does good to all. But He especially gives what is good to those on whom He has set His love. Psalm 84:11. “...No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” I love Isaiah 49:15. “Can a woman forget her nursing child...?” Say, what? Not likely. But you know what, it has happened. “...And [may a woman] have no compassion on the son of her womb?” And again, it doesn't happen very often, but it happens. God says, “Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.” Romans 8:32. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all...” If God gave His one of a kind Son, His unique Son, for us, “...how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” Is He really going to give you His best and finest gift and then withhold the other things you need? James 1:17. “Every good thing given and every perfect

gift....” Listen. Every good gift in your life “...[comes] down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” There is nothing good in your life that hasn’t come to you from a good and gracious Father in heaven.

So, what are the good things that God will give to us if we ask? Verse 11. Well, here in the context we know it implies physical things that we need because at the end of chapter 6, you remember, Jesus said, “Listen. Your Father knows you need these things. He knows you need food and drink and clothing. And if you seek first His kingdom, He’s going to give you these things.” So we know it includes physical necessities of life. It also includes the spiritual necessities and blessings of life. Romans 8:32. “...He will freely give us all things...,” speaking of physical or spiritual issues there. Here in Matthew 7 we know it includes wisdom for our relationships because that’s the context. And in Luke 11 it even includes the Holy Spirit. Listen to Luke 11:13. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Here’s the greatest gift of all because with Him we get everything else - every other need met. Amazing.

So, what’s the general application of this paragraph that we’ve been studying together? It’s that we have a Father who has adopted us, who in eternity past set His love upon us and chose us for adoption, who has now adopted us at the moment of salvation; and that adoptive Father is exceedingly generous and He responds to all of our requests for our legitimate needs. Jesus guarantees us that God will give us anything that is spiritually good for us - absolutely anything - if we ask and keep on asking for it. Lloyd-Jones says, “We should thank God that asking and seeking and knocking do not just mean that if we ask for anything we like He’ll give it to us. Of course not. What it means is this: ask for any one of these things that is good for you, that is for the salvation of your soul, your ultimate perfection, anything that brings you nearer to God and enlarges your life is thoroughly good for you and He will give it to you.” You believe that? Let me ask you, what are the spiritual qualities that you wish you had but you know you lack? Why don’t you make a list of those and begin knocking and seeking and asking this week. Because I can promise you this: God your Father will give you those things in His time and His way.

What’s the primary application of this passage? Well, in the context of Matthew 7, Jesus is urging us to pray for wisdom to know how to respond to the people around us. When’s the last time you prayed for wisdom for your relationships? How often do you pray for God’s wisdom in dealing with your spouse? In relating to your children or to your parents? To your peers, your extended family, your fellow students, your co-workers, your neighbors? In fact, I want you to stop right now and I want you to think about the relationships in your life, as you sit here today, that you just don’t know exactly what to do. You don’t know how to respond. You’re at your wits end. Will you begin today to follow our Lord’s counsel, in fact His command? Will you begin daily, as a matter of habit of life, to pray for God’s wisdom for how to respond in those relationships? Our Lord says, “You know, if earthly fathers give good things to their children,

how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask?" Let's pray together.

Our Father, we are truly amazed by Your grace. To think that You would set Your love upon us for nothing in us, that in eternity past You would choose to adopt us, to make us Your sons and Your daughters - not in some faint illustration or picture but in reality. We are amazed, oh God, at such grace. Lord, help us to come to you knowing that You are not only our Father, but You are a good and generous and wise Father who will meet our needs. Father, forgive us for thinking so poorly of You. And I pray, Father, for those here this morning whose father is still the devil, who still do what he wants, who are enslaved to their sins and to his desires. Father, I pray that today they would see the contrast between the horrible father - hateful, vindictive father - who's destroying their lives versus You - a good and kind and gracious Father. And may they run to You, pleading Your forgiveness in Christ, asking You to adopt them as well. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.