

⁷ 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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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 good things to those who ask Him!

Text: Mt. 7:7-11 A 10/4/26 Gen. 32:22-30 1 Jn. 3:18-24 Ps. 118 Resp. Rdg.: Ps. 138
Hymns: 456, 459, 755, 783

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK!

- 1. The Lord wants and even commands us to**
- 2. God promises that everyone who asks receives**
- 3. God gives us good answers to our prayers**

Dear friends in Christ,

In our text, Jesus encourages us not to give up in our praying. He tells us to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking until our prayers are answered. Have you ever had to wait a long time before receiving the answer to a prayer? If you have, then you know how hard it can be to keep on coming back to the Lord with the same request, over and over again. Our Lord understands this. That's why He gives us this great encouragement in His Word. First of all, Jesus tells us that He wants us to keep on praying to Him until He answers us. In fact, He commands us to. Secondly, Jesus promises that everyone who asks receives. Finally, Jesus assures us that He always gives us good answers to our prayers.

1

One of the things that discourages us in praying is a feeling of uselessness: "What's the use? I've prayed for this thing so many times and for so long, and my situation hasn't really changed." It can seem as though we're the only ones concerned about our need, and God isn't even listening. We're tempted to give up.

When we feel this way, we need to turn to words from Scripture such as we have in our text. Jesus says, "*Ask, ... seek, ... knock.*" He's telling us that He wants us to keep on coming to Him and not give up. Jesus is telling us literally, "*Keep on asking, ... keep on seeking, ... keep on knocking!*" Jesus not only invites you and me to be persistent in prayer, He commands us to. We have our Savior's gracious encouragement to 'hang in there' until He answers our prayers.

In the eighteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus tells a parable to show that we "*always ought to pray and not lose heart*" (v. 1). The parable is about a widow who kept pleading her case before a judge until he took care of it. Jesus makes the point, "*And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily*" (vv. 7-8a). God tells us in His Word, "*Be*

anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philip. 4:6).

2

All right, Jesus tells me to keep praying. But the only thing that would make it worth the sometimes agonizing wait would be to know for certain that my prayer will be answered. I know the Lord answered the prayers of people like Moses and Paul and Abraham, but what about me? How do we know that God will answer our prayers? Jesus knows that you and I can struggle with these doubts. That’s why He says, “*Everyone who asks receives*” (my emphasis). A drowning man who is flailing about and is thrown a life preserver clings to it with all his might and is saved. “*Everyone who asks receives*” is one of Scripture’s many ‘life preservers.’ When we’re flailing about in doubt and fear and panic, we can hold onto God’s promise that “*Everyone who asks receives*” with all of our might. Jesus leaves no room for doubt. “*Everyone*” means you and me!

There are times when we feel so very unworthy for the Lord to answer our prayers. Sometimes we pray about things that we’ve failed to resolve in the past. There are times when we find ourselves praying for help to do one thing, and yet we turn around and do the opposite. As Paul says, “*the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice*” (Ro. 7:19). Why should the Lord answer us?!

Jesus says, “*Everyone who asks receives.*” Why would that include sinners like you and me? Because Jesus died for sinners like you and me, that’s why! We sing in one of our hymns, “Jesus sinners doth receive” (TLH #324, my emphasis). Our Lord tells us in His Word, “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (I am a sinner. Jesus died for sinners. Therefore Jesus died for me!) “*Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand*” – from Romans chapter five (vv. 8b, 1-2a). It’s by God’s grace, God’s undeserved love, that He hears and answers our prayers. You and I are always unworthy to have our prayers answered by God. We can never hope to be worthy enough. Thank God that His promise, “*everyone who asks receives*” doesn’t depend on our own worthiness, but on God’s grace.

Jesus died on the cross to pay for all of our sins. He lived a perfect life in our place; we whose lives are anything but perfect. Our sins are washed away and we are covered with Jesus’ perfect righteousness. God tells us in Jeremiah 31:34, “*I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*” We read in Hebrews 4:14, 16, “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest..., Jesus the Son of God.... ... Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we have God’s promise that He answers our prayers. Our text is part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, which He addressed first of all to His disciples. In Matthew five at the beginning of the Sermon, we read, “*seeing the multitudes, [Jesus] went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him....*” Jesus was preaching to His disciples: believers. He spoke so that the

multitudes could also hear in order to invite them to believe and share in the blessings of faith.

Jesus told the disciples that as believers, God would answer their prayers. So when He says, *“Everyone who asks receives,”* Jesus is speaking to believers. By the grace of God, you and I believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. Because we believe in Jesus, God will answer our prayers. Martin Luther explained the address to the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father who art in heaven,” in this way: “God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.” Luther concludes his comments on The Lord’s Prayer by saying, “I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven, and heard; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray, and promised that He will hear us. Amen, amen, that is, Yes, yes, so shall it be.”

3

Jesus says, *“What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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 good things to those who ask Him!”* If we sinful human beings know how to give good things to our children, how much more does our Heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to us?

When we have to wait a long time for the Lord to answer a prayer, isn’t it nice to know that whatever the Lord finally gives us will be good? We don’t have to be afraid to leave everything in God’s hands when we pray, because He only gives us good answers to our prayers. When the Lord says something is good, you and I can be sure that it’s the best thing for us! God gives us just the right answer to our prayers.

The Lord doesn’t always give us what we ask for. He knows that some of the things we ask for aren’t good for us. A caring parent won’t let his child play in the street because he knows his child will probably get hurt. If the child is going to fight and complain about his parent’s will, he only makes things hard for himself. The parent’s will was still right and good for him. We might not like the way the Lord answers our prayer. If we fight and complain, we only make things hard for ourselves. Our Heavenly Father’s answer is still right and good for us.

Think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He begged His Father three times that if there were any other way to save us than through His suffering and death, that the Father do it another way. Jesus prayed so hard that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground. The Father’s will was right and good. Where would we be if Jesus hadn’t died on the cross for our sins? Jesus accepted His Father’s answer to His prayer: *“nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done”* (Lk. 22:39 ff.).

God only gives us good things when we pray. He often gives us what we ask for. Basically, we wear the clothes, we eat the food, and we have the kind of stuff we like.

When God doesn't give us what we ask for, it's because He knows that what He gives us is better. How can we be happy when the Lord doesn't give us what we ask for? By asking Him to enable us to accept His will. That doesn't mean just saying, "Well, I guess the Lord's will was done..." and letting it eat away at us, and becoming bitter over it. It means wrestling with God in prayer until He helps us to accept His will in our hearts and be happy and content with it.

Dear Christian friends, persevere in prayer! The Lord wants us to. He commands us to. *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* Jesus promises us, *"Everyone who asks receives,"* so each of us can say, "I know God will answer me!" We know that when we pray, God gives us good answers: *"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 good things to those who ask Him!"* Amen.