

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

Prayer • Message 3

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Father, we want to be people who trust You. We look to You for all we need.
- Make us a people marked by steady, faithful, everyday prayer.
- Help us learn to ask, seek and knock with confidence in Your character.

Worship Psalm:

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

Psalm 46:10-11 (ESV)

Scripture Reading:

“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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 7:7-12 (NIV)

My name is Mark, one of the pastors.

We’re continuing our series *Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom*.

- 2 Summers ago: Matthew 5.
- Last summer: Matthew 6.
- This summer we conclude the series looking at Matthew 7.
- These three chapters make up what is most commonly known as *The Sermon on the Mount*.

Today, we'll look at what Jesus teaches us about PRAYER.

3 words:

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

(Matthew 7:7-8. C/R: Psalm 27:8; Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

These might be 3 of the most important words you'll hear all week.

It'd be good to have some context. Backstory.

Whenever you're reading the Bible, it's good to know how what you're reading fits into the story.

ENTER INTO THE STORY WITH ME:

Imagine for a moment you didn't have the New Testament.

The people in the New Testament didn't have the New Testament.

This was all happening live.

Most of the people at that time were illiterate.

It's unlikely that anyone had even parts of the Old Testament in written form.

Acts 4:13 calls Peter and John UNEDUCATED and UNTRAINED – ORDINARY men.

NO SOCIAL MEDIA: BUT WORD HAD PROBABLY GOTTEN AROUND

- About a girl named Mary who got pregnant without having sex, but by the Holy Spirit.
- I believe that's true... but, to my knowledge, that's only happened once. We have the rest of the story, but the people on the scene did not. That must have been confusing.
- They likely heard that King Herod tried to kill Jesus, so the family had to escape to Egypt.
- That wouldn't have been that odd as most of the good kings in the Old Testament had to run for their lives.
- Surely they heard about this wild man named John.
 - Lived in the desert
 - Ate off the land
 - Made his own clothes
 - He preached with what some commentators call "fire"

Along the way, Jesus walked down the road and asked specific people to follow him.

Imagine I walked through here...

- Hey Andrew, get your brother, Peter.
- Meet me out in the parking lot we're going on a mission.
- Hey Phillip, give your friend Nathanael a call, he is faithful and has a pure heart through and through.
- James and John... come with me and tell your dad, Zebedee, he's on his own to fix the fishing nets.

They're all meeting outside, getting to know each other...

- James and John said, *We were out all night and didn't catch a thing, how 'bout you guys?*
- Matthew is Jewish, but he's a tax collector for the Romans, so he holds back, hoping nobody finds out. He's basically IRS.
- Peter was impulsive, ever said something without thinking and wished you hadn't?
- My name is Jude, but you can call me Thaddaeus.
- There's Phillip and Thomas; they had to see the data. How much is that going to cost? Nah, that's not going to work.
- There's that one guy you always worry about. Something seems to be off. That's Judas.

Just some ordinary, everyday guys.

Right before Jesus' teaching:

Matthew 4:23-25 (NIV)

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

- Amazement
- Curiosity
- Confusion, doubt, fear
- But something was pulling on them, **so they came close.**

MAYBE LIKE YOU HERE TODAY

Sermon on the Mount is a formal title.

I think of it more like *Teaching on the Hillside* or *New Hire Orientation*.

I imagine Jesus saying:

- Let me break this down for you.
- This is what people of the kingdom are like.
- This is what it looks like to be a follower of Christ.
- Fundamentals of the faith.

AS JESUS BEGINS TEACHING (HIGHLIGHTS OF MATTHEW 5-7)

- **BROKEN SPIRIT:** It's not about those who think they have it all together, but those who realize their need for God.
- **THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL:** How it will advance when mercy and peace flood our hearts.
- **MURDER:** Even though the pressure was going to be intense, we shouldn't murder or even have anger toward each other.
- **ADULTERY:** That not only should we be faithful to our wedding vows, but that even the things we look at will destroy us.
- **LOVING OUR ENEMIES:** The disciples had no idea the enemies they would make.
- **MONEY:** Treasures far greater and we shouldn't be attached to what we have.
- **DO NOT WORRY** – people who learn to entrust *themselves* to God.
- **DO NOT JUDGE** – people who learn to entrust *others* to God.

In our passage today, Jesus teaches the disciples about prayer...

- If you're going to live this way.
- Distinct from the world.
- You're going to need me.
- You're going to have to stay close to me.

“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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

- ASK – Ask for it.
- SEEK – Looking for, investigate, search, an active pursuit. It has with it the idea of anticipation, curiosity, expectation.
- KNOCK – Knock on the door.

Some nuances between these words, but not really a hard line. If you were a football quarterback, you might throw the ball, pitch, toss, fling, hurl, let it fly, give it some hang time.

- Jesus is simply saying, *Come to me.*

There are examples of all different kinds of prayer in the Bible...

- As Abraham traveled, he stopped and built altars and called on the name of the Lord.
- Isaac was often found meditating out in the field.
- Psalm 55, David prayed evening, morning and noon.
- Psalm 86, David was in distress and called on God all day long.
- David – Seeks God again (not assuming prior guidance applies) 2 Samuel 5:19, 23.
 - Like in the military, the commander back at base would know more than the soldiers on the field, so the soldiers on the field would have to stay in constant communication.
- Daniel was able to endure great hardship because it was his habit to get down on his knees and pray three times a day.
- Luke 2:36-37, elderly woman (widow) stayed at the temple praying day and night.
- Philippians 4:6 – *in all things pray*, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – *pray without ceasing*.

My definition of prayer, at least for this message, is an *on-going-whatever-you're-going-through-conversation with God.*

- Set times
- Times in need
- Along the journey in ordinary moments

My mentor and friend in campus ministry often painted to make extra money. One summer I painted with him, and he taught me how to pray. He prayed all the time. When he woke up. Before he painted a section. Before lunch. Then again when we began painting after lunch. I don't think this way about prayer now, but at the time it was awkward and annoying. Do we really have to pray this much? But he modeled what Jesus told his disciples. ASK-SEEK-KNOCK. People of the kingdom are people who pray.

Ask and keep asking. Not begging, because he's hiding or is indifferent, but become a person who asks.

Ever wonder what to do when you don't feel like praying?

Tell God you don't feel like praying and that you wish you did and that you need his help.

What if God's grace really is bigger than your sin?

SOME QUESTIONS FOR US...

- What are you seeking from the Father?
- What burdens have you been carrying alone?
- What does someone else need that you could ask God for?
- This passage is a call to ASK, SEEK and KNOCK.

3 more words:

RECEIVE, FIND, ENTER

(Matthew 7:7-12. C/R: John 16:24; Ephesians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:9)

These words might be 3 of the most important words you'll hear all week.

REPEAT: Ask, Seek, Knock – Receive, Find, Enter

"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; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

I used to see the ask, seek, knock part and feel like I should be praying more, but something hit me different this time.

Receive – to be given something.

Find – see, learn, discover, uncover – like a hidden treasure.

Enter – permission, a welcome because the door is open.

Ever have someone knock at your door?

- God doesn't look at his Ring Doorbell App
- When we knock on the door, God says, *Come in*
- *I've been waiting for you*

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

Matthew 7:9-11 (NIV)

- Bread, stone – might be that they look alike.
- Fish, Snake in the Garden, Fiery serpents, Dragon, Sea monster, Venomous snake, Cobra, Viper.
- The point is you wouldn't do that. And God wouldn't either.

Tell the story about Brookwood. God said, *You'll be here one day.*

In chapter 1 of Deuteronomy, God reminds the people how good he's been to them:
I carried you like a father carries a son.

People of the kingdom ASK, SEEK, KNOCK. They RECEIVE, FIND, and ENTER.
Because they are learning to trust the heart of the father.

God is still asking me, *Will you let me be your Father?*

ONE FINAL OBSERVATION

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 7:12 (NIV)

Ever have someone difficult in your life?

- When we get the extravagant generosity and care of God, we realize that the people all around us are longing for the same thing.
- AND this is what God has been after the whole time.
- You can read the Old Testament, *or* you can read the cliff notes.
- God is teaching his disciples this is what he’s wanted all along.

The first camera in a race was installed on a horse track in 1936. In 1972 Munich Olympics, the swimmers who won Gold and Silver medals in the individual medley finished only 0.002 apart.

It’s a photo finish.

That’s the way it is with Love God / Love People. They’re meant to be so close it’s hard to tell them apart.

CLOSE WITH THIS IDEA: THERE’S A GAP FOR ALL OF US

- Between what we need (think we need) and what God seems to be doing.
- Between our prayers and answers to our prayers.
- There’s a gap, and this is where faith lives.
- What will you do in the gap?
- Will we see the gap is a gift that leads you to the heart of God?

It seems fitting to close in prayer.