

FRIDAY 20 May 2022 "ASK!" (Matt. 7:7-11)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

I wonder if you have one of those remarkable gadgets affectionately called "Alexa" in your home? My wife and I don't but we've heard you can ask 'Alexa' almost any question about the weather or sports results or news and 'she' can find the answer! The same is true with the endless amount of information available on the internet as you can 'google' almost any question and immediately receive multiple links which will provide you answers. Do any of you remember the days of Encyclopedias?

Do you suppose Jesus had these remarkable technological achievements in His mind when He one day said to a crowd of people: ***"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."*** (Matt. 7:7,8) I imagine Jesus paused right there, leaving His listeners in a quandary. It sounded like utopia! Any question would find answers, any request granted, any closed door opened, oh my! *But that's not real life and everyone knows it... so what did Jesus mean?*

Jesus continued: ***"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?"*** (Matt. 7:9-11)

Everyone on the hillside that day could now relate! They'd all been children and knew what it was like to ask their parents for things they needed or wanted, and then like now, they all had experienced parents supplying what their children needed. But they also, like you and me, had probably experienced parents unwilling to give their children what they asked for, either because they didn't have it, or they knew it would not be helpful to their child if they gave it.

But Jesus' words described a deceitful, even abusive relationship between a hard hearted, angry father and children he abused. What kind of father would give his hungry son requesting bread, a stone instead? Or what evil father would give his son a venomous snake when he asked for fish? *These word pictures caused the people to think deeply... who did they turn to for help when they had needs as adults? Who did they trust? Who had hurt them in the past by taking advantage of them in a time of need?*

Of course, they also asked themselves the deeper question that you and I should be asking. *What about God? Can God be trusted?* When you ask God for something can you trust that God knows your need and He also knows what would be most helpful to you? Does God have access to the resources needed to meet our needs, and the needs of everyone... 8 billion people on planet earth? *And what about the heart of God?*

Is God's heart compassionate, tender, loving or does God have a manipulative heart, a sadistic heart, an angry heart, a deceitful heart? What do you think my friends? What has been your experience with God?

A wise man once said, *"What you think about God is the most important thought you will ever have, and it will have the greatest impact on your life of all the thoughts you could think."* Now ponder that for a moment.

Regardless of where you live in the world, and no matter the family you grew up in, did you know *your relationship with your human father has profoundly shaped your understanding of God?* If you had an angry father when you were a child, you probably envision God as being hard to please, an often-angry God. If you had an absentee father as a child, you probably envision God as being far away, out of touch with you and your world. If you grew up with a trustworthy, available, loving father, then yes, you guessed it, you probably find it easy to imagine God as being loving and interested in you and always trustworthy.

So all of us men, all around the world, should consider carefully the image of God you are shaping in the lives of the children you influence! Do you understand my friends that what is called the **'father wound'** is among the deepest, most difficult wounds to overcome in life? As you reflect on your growing up years and your relationship with your human father, do you have any unresolved, unhealed 'father wounds'? Have you invited Jesus to heal those wounds in you, my friends? *Can you receive unconditional love from your heavenly Father despite the human 'father wounds' you may have experienced?*

Here's the important question: *regardless of the type of human father you had as a child or even the relationship you have today with your dad, and regardless of whether your human dad is alive or dead, can you come to know God as He really is? And can you grow close in your relationship with God as your perfect, 'heavenly Father'?* Did you notice that Jesus once again used the phrase **'your Father in heaven'** when He said, **"...how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!"** I believe the people were again stunned at this concept that Jesus expressed... that Almighty, Holy, Creator God could be experienced as a perfect heavenly Father! And that from His throne room in heaven, Father God would have such interest in humanity, such total awareness of all that is going on here on earth, that any person could have a loving, trustworthy Father-son, Father-daughter relationship with God! That simply seemed preposterous, but *Jesus over and over again portrayed this as not only possible, but it was God's desperate desire.* So much so, that Jesus came to earth from heaven, **to make that relationship possible and explain to us HOW that relationship can be entered into and nurtured!**

So, let me ask you my 'Walking with Jesus' friends, do you have this loving, trusting relationship with God which enables you to experience God as your heavenly Father? Do you speak with Him often? Do you sense God is speaking to you and can you discern what He is saying to you?

Are you content and confident in your '**heavenly Father's**' unconditional love for you? Are you doing what Jesus offered? *Are you asking your '**heavenly Father**' for things and are you content with what He provides believing HE knows is best for you?* Are you seeking God's answers and receiving them? Are you knocking on doors and finding God is opening them for you?

But in truth we need to consider some other questions, don't we? Can we trust God, our '**heavenly Father**' with EVERY question or are there some things God will remain silent about because He doesn't want to talk about those things? Are there things you and I might really want, maybe even need, but God says "NO" and withholds them from us, without any explanation? Are there doors before us which God will not only NOT open, but God may close in our face if they at first appear to be open? *These and other questions are rooted in what you know to be the CHARACTER of God, aren't they?* One of the reasons Jesus, God the Son, came to earth was so we could see God up close and personal, and really understand God! Paul wrote this to the Colossian Christians... ***"The Son [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God...in Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..."*** (Col. 1:15; 2:9)

But we need to be honest... we've all experienced asking God for something and not receiving any answer. What happened? Why didn't God answer? Once again, I find the parenting and especially the grandparenting role so very helpful. From our adult parent or grandparent role, we see life with so much more maturity and understanding than as a child, don't we?

In fact, the grandparent stage of life brings with it so much more life experience and maturity than the young parent stage, doesn't it? A big part of parenting and grandparenting is fielding the questions and expectations of our kids... at all stages of their growing up, do you remember? *Good parenting, God honoring parenting, happens when we process the questions, the requests, even the demands of our kids and grandkids, from the perspective of what will help them become the most God honoring person they could be.* Also, our response to our kids is always in view of their future, isn't it? How will our response to their desire today, their request today, their question today help develop their character, help prepare them for the challenges of life we know will be coming their way tomorrow? *How can our response help them grow in knowing God, trusting God, finding God's answers for themselves as they walk into their future?*

Now, my friends, does that perspective help us understand what Jesus was saying that day to those people as Matthew recorded it in Matthew 7? And does it help us wrestle with how we respond to God's response to us when we ask, or seek or knock, requesting God's help? If you like keeping a journal where you can write down important life thoughts, I suggest you take your journal right now, *find a quiet spot and reflect on what you've learned in life about what Jesus said to those people that day? And how have you worked to help your kids and grandkids understand how this works with God, their '**heavenly Father**'?* And here's a song to help you reflect on this powerful aspect of living in a trust relationship with Jesus...