

Community Church of Issaquah

January 5, 2025

Ask, Seek, and Knock

Rev. Vincent Lachina

Often when I read or hear a passage of Scripture, I begin to envision myself in the role of a listener, or one who was present when those words were spoken. Do you ever do that? When Abraham Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address or when Billy Graham would preach a revival sermon or in the case of the verses from Matthew that were read for us today, hearing the words of Jesus about asking and receiving. There are times when I see myself raising my hand to ask a question while the speaker is attempting to inspire. Silly, I know, but there are just so many questions to raise about subjects I know so little about.

When Jesus told those hearing him to ask and they would receive, did he mean that whatever was asked for would be given? That seems like a very generous approach. But the truth is, you and I often ask for things that we do not receive. We often look for things that we do not find. And we knock on doors that do not open for us. So what was or is the message that Jesus was trying to convey to those who were looking for answers? To answer that question, I think we need to do some deeper digging.

Before I begin given my thoughts about the meaning of this particular passage and the message of it, let me share one unique thing I noticed right away the first time I read the words from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus uses three words as instruction for his followers – ask, seek and knock. What if

you take the first letter of each of those words. The A from ask, the S from seek and the K from knock. What do you have? Simply, the word 'ask, a, s, k.' For me, I don't believe it was accidental. There is a deeper meaning for each of us.

As the passage continues, Jesus deals only with the aspect of asking, not seeking or knocking. The example he gives is a comparison of our human nature of asking for even simple things with the expectation that what is received is what we have asked for. As Jesus says, if your child asks for bread, we will not respond to that request by giving that child a rock instead. Or if he asked for fish, a common food in the day of Christ, no parent would answer the request by handing the child a snake. Just as a parent would not fail to honor a child's request, neither would God fail to honor our requests.

But what about the things we ask of God. Is each request a simple matter. Jesus uses the most common food examples of his day – bread and fish. These were everyday items that everyone ate and were available to almost everyone. Every night, the wife or mother in a family would knead and prepare the dough for bread. That dough would be allowed to rise overnight and in the morning was taken to the village baker where it was placed in the oven and then returned to the family. This was every day except the sabbath. It was a common element of life in the days of Jesus.

The example that Jesus uses concerning asking had a such a broader and deeper meaning. Our requests of God's

intervention in our lives are not always simple. When we are in a health crisis or family struggles or anything that is not ordinarily a part of our daily life, asking God for help or rescue is certainly not as easy as asking for a slice of bread or a fish stick. But the message of this scripture is that when we go to God to present our request for help, God will listen and in time, answer. Ask and it will be given. That is the promise Jesus made on behalf of his Heavenly Father. The beautiful blessing is that God's answer to our asking is often so much bigger and better than we asked.

There is, however, a second part of Jesus's message and that requires action on the part of the asker or requester. When God is generous to us when we ask Him for anything, and we are recipients of his response. We are asked to replicate what God has done by our actions to others. This is where that Golden Rule of Jesus has been tucked into the Scriptures. It's a rule that all of us have heard preached to us not solely by ministers, but perhaps by parents, teachers, or more. I'm willing to venture a guess that if I asked you to repeat the Golden Rule for me, you could do it. Can you recite it for me now?

Yes, ***“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”***

Without a doubt, deeply engrained in that commandment is advice for us who are those receiving God's answers to our asks and seek to follow His teachings. Let me share my thoughts about a couple of core messages found in that one sentence. First, we are compelled to treat others we know and even strangers with the compassion and care

that we have received as Children of God. When God has lovingly answered our prayers and requests with love and caring, we are the recipients of His grace. How do we turn that around and be as kind and caring to others as God has been to us? Trust me, I know that's a hard one at times.

One of my minister friends rewrote that commandment and would jokingly say, "Do unto others before they have a chance to do unto you." I would laugh, but secretly I knew that I had done exactly that. I'd better head to confession. Certainly, one of the struggles many Christians experience is that superiority complex that as God's children, we are privileged and among the elect of God's love and outpouring of blessings. We are not.

Another lesson I have learned from reading and praying about this passage is that we do not always ask God for the simple things that would mend our broken world. The son in this story asked for the smallest things. May I have bread or fish so that I can eat? Of course, we would say yes. That's our reply to a child of our own. The food that was requested is easy to provide. But there are asks that are often not easy, yet we are told that if we ask, it will be given to us. There is nothing in my daily life right now that I have not asked for and am waiting for an answer to be given to me by God's Holy Spirit. As I wait, I work trying to live by the Golden Rule, even when the subject of my "ask" is at times a situation or individual that I find hard to treat like I want to be treated.

One final lesson for each of us – never hesitate to ask or seek or knock. God is there waiting. Whatever our request, God’s desire is to answer with the most loving and caring response. I’ll repeat what Jesus said:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Join me as we stand at the door of life, knocking and waiting for God to open that door.