

*A Heavenly Father Who Cares – Matthew 7:7-11*

My dad always wanted to give me good things in life. He gave me the most ridiculous remote control car. He financed the silly purchase of my first car. He supported me when I left Milwaukee to pursue the ministry. My dad wasn't perfect, but Dad knows how to give good things to his sons.

It's not a mistake. God didn't think up fathers sometime during the course of history. No, before God ever created the world he ordained that there would be a parental relationship that would reflect his relationship with his own chosen ones. He created mankind in such a way that our love for our children would be a worldly display of God's relationship with the believer. We are God's children. He is our Father. God gave the world a father so that my dad's imperfect love for me would give me a tiny peak into how my heavenly Father loves me in Jesus Christ.

In our text this morning, Jesus is telling us this one main thing: ***Our Heavenly Father desires to prosper us, because we are his children.*** From a Father to a son, God desires good things for us in this life! **Read** Matthew 7:7-11.

This text tells us four things about God's good desire for us.

1. ***Our Father desires that we pursue the "good things" in life***

In verse 7, Jesus tells us to *ask for it, seek it, knock for it*. The *it* (as we see in verse 11) stands for "good things". God is *commanding* that we seek after the good things in life and pursue them. But let's be honest, if we asked 50 different people to tell us what would be good for them, we'd get 50 different answers. So we need to be careful not to read this promise here and take our idea of good and combine that with the Bible's command to pursue those things.

Since we're reading this in the Bible, we need to ask the question, *What does the Bible mean, what does the New Testament mean by "good things"?* God certainly is not promising big savings accounts, new Ferraris, and the purchase of a new yacht. So what does "good" mean in the Bible? We learn in Mark 10 that God alone is good. So in the Bible, goodness starts with God.

God is the essence and standard for what is good. What is *good for us* is to be like God, and for us to follow God and obey God. Whatever helps us *do that* and *be that*, that is what is good for us. "Good things" in my life will be the things and the circumstances that bring about God's plan and purposes for me. More explicitly, we learn in Romans 8 that God's *ultimate* plan for me is Christ-likeness. He already counts me forgiven and righteous, and now he is using my circumstances, my trials, his Word, and my church to change me more and more into the image of his Son. So anything that makes *that happen more* in my life is good. Here Jesus says, "*Go after those things. Pursue those things.*"

But, I don't think Jesus is just talking in a super-spiritual sense. If you just take the plain meaning of what he says here, good things would probably be both things that are good for our soul but also things that are good for our body and our emotions. God did not create a beautiful creation so that we would despise it. He created it so that we would *enjoy* it, and that in our enjoyment of it we would love and honor him more.

**Illustration:** lady crying because she had a Christianity that just prohibited everything

There were probably two big heart problems going on: (1) it sounds like she was trying to earn her standing with God by staying away from all the bad things. We can *never* please God through our works and efforts. We are right with God only by clinging to Jesus Christ, to his completed work on the cross, by faith. (2) Also, it sounded like she was serving a god who wanted to suck out all her enjoyment in life, a god whose main concern was that she never had fun a single day in her life, because her Christianity was defined by all the things she wasn't supposed to do.

That is not our God. The biblical God has given us the ability to desire, delight, love, fancy, want, *he* has given us those capabilities. Being a Christian is not silencing all of those natural cravings. Rather it's about directing them and controlling them (by the sin-breaking power of the Holy Spirit) so that their object is what God intended for them to be. And we'll explain this more now in our second point.

## 2. *Our Father desires that we seek our enjoyment from him*

Being a Christian isn't about not delighting; it's about delighting in the right things. God has created you to enjoy life in him, and he wants you to pursue that kind of life. So seek after these things. Ask for them. God's desire is that you want to enjoy life *in him the way he intended*.

When we're told to ask and pursue, it's not just a vague pursuit. Jesus is not telling us to ask our bosses or to seek our joy in the mountains or to knock on our neighbor's door to try to find joy in life; he's telling us to ask God, to seek it in God, to pursue it at God's footstool.

God hasn't just told me to go out and enjoy life however whenever and wherever. He created me with a natural desire and then he created certain outlets for that to be carried out. In other words, although God's desire is for us to enjoy life, that is not a license. His desire is for me to enjoy life like he intended it. This is the path of greatest joy for the human.

If God is the conductor of all of life (meaning he thought it up, designed it, made the blueprints, and carried them out to the smallest detail) then he knows best. Why do we think God's way is the path of less joy? Why do we think the world knows best and that God's way, the Christian way, the way of obedience, is the way of joyless-ness? No! The Creator knows best. There is more delight and joy to be had in God than in all the created realm apart from him.

That's why we have in God's Word: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" (John 6) And, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23) "You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16)

See, our Father desires that we pursue the good things in life. He wants us to enjoy life in him. As someone to whom God has given a *new* heart and who has received the righteousness and forgiveness of Jesus as their own, there is *more joy* in living a life in God and according to his Word than there is in a million lives outside of Christ, pursuing worldly pleasures.

### 3. *Our Father desires that we believe in his Fatherly goodness*

Dads want good things for their children. It's easy to picture in your brain a son sitting on the porch, getting ready to head away to college. Dad walks out and puts his arm around him and tells him, "Son, do good things. Be somebody. Change the world."

God gave fathers this desire (to give good things to their children) so that we could observe this phenomenon and say, "If dads are all like that, how much more my heavenly Father who dwells in moral perfection, who is perfectly flawless and without defect." Jesus says, "If you, being evil, know how to be good to your kids, how much more your perfect, beautiful, loving heavenly Father?!"

So all of this is calling us to believe in God. R. C. Sproul says it's much easier to believe *in God* than it is to *believe God*. In other words, it's pretty easy to say, "Oh yeah, I think God exists." It's much more difficult to believe *in God* and to say, "I'm hurting here God. This trial hurts and is killing me. But I believe that you are good and that you are only bringing about good in my life, even though I can't feel it or see it right now." That's what's going on in this text. God is calling us to believe in his goodness like that.

**Illustration:** my grandma couldn't walk by herself. My brother and I were always asking her to hold on to us and *trust us*.

In telling her to trust us we were calling her to believe two things. (1) that we had the power and strength to prevent her from falling. (2) The other component of trust (which is often overlooked) is that we had the desire for her physical wellbeing. We had a desire that she *wouldn't* fall. That, coupled with our ability, ensured her safety. "Trust us Grandma!"

We know that God has the power and the ability to grant us things, to take good care of us. But in this passage, Jesus is calling us to do more than just believe that God has the ability. He's calling us to believe that God also has the desire to take good care of us. The Son of God wants us to know that, from experience, the Father takes good care of his children. We are the children of God. So as a Christian, trust that God wants good things for you and is doing good things with you.

Trust that he loves you, cares for you, and has your best interest in mind in life even when it doesn't feel like it. God is not being hateful toward us. These things are for our good! (Romans 8:28) Even in the midst of discipline, we can still say, "My Father loves me. This situation is because of love!"

### 4. *Our Father delights to give these good things to us*

If God wants us to pursue joy in this life, if he wants us to pursue it in him and in his way, if he is kind towards us and loves us a father to a son, then this last point just naturally flows out it. Those things that he wants us to pursue, these our Heavenly Father delights to give us. It's not everything, but it's good things. Things that accord with his will. Things that will promote our godliness. Things that will make us more like Jesus and prepare us for eternity. Things that will help us enjoy life for the glory of his name. These are the good things in this life. These God loves to give us.

Understand that there is certainly a priority in what God gives us. We might be seeking material comfort and he might give us a lesson in trusting completely in him instead. That is the good thing at that moment and God will give it to us. He gives us what we need, when we need it. Some things we won't receive finally until we reach eternity. For the time being, possibly we are receiving another good thing in its stead. But "every good gift, every perfect is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:17)

Everything we have, every good thing or circumstance that we go through, it's all a gift from our Heavenly Father, who not only lavishes these things upon us but who actually **delights** to do so. If he withholds one thing and gives us another, it's good.

### **Conclusion**

**Illustration:** my brother and his commitment/willingness to give his new daughter everything.

I'm sure you've all marveled at the grace of God that two brand new parents are prepared to give their lives for this image-bearer of God entrusted to their care. Where do we think that came from? It happens because God set-up the world so that human being would be born to parents, and so that those two parents and their relationship to their new child would serve as a shadow. Only, the thing casting the shadow is God's love and relationship with all those who have repented and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and righteousness. Because *those* human beings become God's adopted children. That's the object, and the *shadow* that that object creates is an earthly father or mother loving and being absolutely committed to the good of their child the second he or she exits the womb.

How terrible it would be for us to trust more in the shadow than in the actual substance. Our Heavenly Father has already demonstrated his willingness to give us every good thing when he gave us his Only Son in order to *make us*, in order to *adopt us*, as his new sons and daughters! Believe it Christian! Even if he disciplines us today, we know, trust, and believe that every thing he brings to us and gives to us and brings about in our lives, it is for our good because our Father is good.

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