

Reading: Matthew 7:7-12

⁷ 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ 'Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ 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! ¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Preaching notes:

We have in recent months become familiar to having essential messages being given to us in memorable triplets: "stay home, protect the NHS, save lives". Each instruction is essential in its own right and makes sense as an instruction on its own yet is also closely related to each other (conditional yet also separate). Ask, seek, knock, can also be seen in the same way, in terms of our relationship with God and our prayer life, each one is an essential individual action, yet each is also seen as related. As also with: "way, truth and life" (John 14).

Scripture has a lot to say about our hearts, have you ever considered why? For example: "seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all of your heart and all of your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Jeremiah repeats this theme with: "when you search for me, you will find me if you seek me with all of your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Our hearts are the wellspring of our desires, the saying: "I have my heart set on..." portrays for us immediately the strength of feeling about that particular thing. The expressions: "his heart is not in it" or "she put her heart and soul into it" indicate without doubt that the heart is the key aspect of desire and perspective. These three imperatives (ask, seek and knock) are rooted in a pre-existing faith in God, for example: "without faith it is impossible to please God, He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). So, to say, "if I could only just see God then I would believe" is an illogical statement, "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).

Asking and having confidence that God, as a good Father, will give what we ask for depends on our faith, it is all about relationship and could not be otherwise. Without a relationship with God as our Father and trusting and following in Jesus as Son and Redeemer, then to whom are we praying and trusting in? Without a relationship with God that makes us sons and daughters then what is the relevance to stones, snakes and bread and fish (Matt. 7 verses 9-11). The reference to being "evil" or as some versions say "sinful", we must remember that this is stated as a comparison to God versus fallen humanity, isn't that why we are in need a Saviour?

We are all in need of God's grace, we set our hearts on a right relationship with Jesus and in the power of His Holy Spirit rid ourselves of sinful and selfish desires. God says: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

We continually ask, seek and knock, as a community of believers, as a church, trusting in faith that revival and growth in new believers will be our fruit.

Amen