

"Pearls, Prayer & People" Matthew 7:6-12
Sunday AM 8/28/19 – Jeff Lyle

Sometimes, the Son of God went rapid-fire in His teachings. Sometimes, Jesus released some seemingly random teachings on His audience. While it is challenging to connect the dots in these teachings, we find within them some valuable help for our day to day lives. In this message, Jesus goes back-to-back-to-back with three Kingdom nuggets. From these teachings we are empowered in the areas of how to invest our lives, how to persist in a lifestyle of committed prayer and how to interact with other human beings in the normal rhythms of life.

I. Jesus Taught Discernment in Kingdom Release (6)

"Do not give dogs {unappreciative consumption} what is holy, and do not throw your pearls {your resources are VALUABLE} before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you {ignorant disregard & contempt}."

Jesus teaches that we must not continually, indiscriminately offer what is sacred or of value to those who have no appreciation for it, because our gift will not only become wasted and be despised. We need Holy Spirit discernment to invest ourselves where there is greatest potential for return, and Jesus wants to be aware that there will arise times when we have to conclude that we should stop releasing to certain people. In context, He is speaking specifically about releasing the message of the Kingdom, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The difficult truth is that some people and opportunities must be recognized as being unworthy of our investments. The idea that Christians are to constantly continue to pour themselves into the same people as a sign of their love and faith is not necessarily true. While we should never allow this teaching from Jesus to produce arrogance, callousness or indifference in us, we also cannot fail to apply it when others belittle, mock or constantly reject our attempts to release Kingdom-pearls into their lives. When considering the practical ways that Christians are called to discern their "releases" into others, note that there are **4 Primary Kingdom Releases**: 1. We release our time 2. We release our money 3. We release our energies (gifts, talents, skills) 4. We release the Gospel.

II. Jesus Taught Persistency in Prayer (7-8)

A. Clear instructions about prayer - Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

1. Prayer involves specific requests - "Ask, and it will be given to you..."

Keep on speaking your need

2. Prayer involves deliberate investigation - "...seek, and you will find..."

Keep on looking for the answer

3. Prayer involves true expectation - "...knock, and it will be opened to you."

Keep on exploring each opportunity

B. Cultivate expectations in prayer - "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

1. Those who continually ask, eventually receive - "For everyone who asks receives..."

2. Those who faithfully seek, will inevitably find - "...and the one who seeks finds..."

3. Those who humbly anticipate, find joyous reception - "...and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

**WE ARE COMMANDED TO THE DUTY OF ASKING, SEEKING, AND KNOCKING
GOD IS COMMITTED TO THE DELIGHT OF GIVING, ANSWERING, AND OPENING THE DOOR**

C. Foundational considerations for prayer (9-10) - "Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"

Jesus places the loving, committed paternity of God the Father as the foundation for our confidence in prayer. In a not-so-flattering statement, He calls all human fathers "evil." This is a true statement of the human condition known as depravity. The corruption of sin goes all the way to the deepest parts of us and, compared to the immeasurable holiness of God the Father, human beings are all evil. Yet, even human beings have an instinct to be good to their children. Jesus gives earthly fathers the benefit of the doubt when He states that we would never intentionally give our children something harmful when they are asking us for something helpful. Even sinful fathers know how to give good gifts to their children. How much greater our expectation should be that our Heavenly Father will give us the things we need. Our persistent prayer commitments result in our desires being purified and becoming aligned with the will of the Father.

III. Jesus Taught Intentionality in Relationships (12)

"So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

We all live with relational expectations. Jesus captured this by the phrase, "whatever you wish that others would do to you..." There is an inner expectation that people should (and will) treat us the way that we desire to be treated. We all expect fairness, kindness and others to, at some level, prioritize us. This expectation is within us. Jesus then adds some relational instructions when He commands us to "do also to them." He commands us to treat others in the exact manner which we ourselves desire to be treated. This, of course, is commonly referred to as The Golden Rule. Jesus is the one who gave us this principle. The teaching is simple: treat other people the way in which you would want them to treat you. Then, alarmingly, Jesus makes the unilateral declaration that His teaching here is the summary of the Old Testament. In the Law and the Prophets, we find many commands, precepts and guidelines about how we interact with one another. Jesus is condensing all of those precepts into one relational foundation: treat one another as you desire to be treated.