

Giver of Good Gifts Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:16-18

God is a generous Father who loves to give good gifts. Every good thing comes from Him, and the most valuable gift He offers to us is Himself.

Big idea: Give thanks for all that God gives, or grumble about what He withholds.

My favorite childhood toys – Big Jim rescue rig; Evel Knievel stunt cycle; slot cars

- as a child, toy catalogues were timed for delivery 3-4 months before Christmas
- Stoke child's greed; give ample time for manipulation
- Time for parent to give in, order, received delivery and wrap
- I remember laying on floor, studying the catalogue; calculating; circling
- NEVER received EVERYTHING I wanted.
- Why not? My parents didn't love me?
 - That's why they gave me socks and underwear for Christmas
- They loved me, and they loved to give good gifts to me
- But they had larger concerns than filling my toy box

Analogy of gifts at Christmas relates to our understanding of God's personality

- He is a loving, generous Father, who loves to give good gifts.
- When we don't receive everything we want, and when we receive something we absolutely don't want, it can be hard to trust Him.
- We tend to doubt His character – Is He good? Is He able? Does He care?
- Jesus affirmed: The Father is good, He is able and He does care.

Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

- **Why don't we get what we want when we want it?**
 - Note that child in the analogy is asking for basic necessities of life. Bread and fish
 - Child not asking for best toys of 1st century
 - The father gives what the child needs – bread and fish
 - The father does not give what harms the child – stones and snakes
 - Cp. Mt 6:31-32
 - Encouragement to explore the depths of God's generosity
 - A good father is a generous father
 - "God's care is of course far more than even the best human parent can give, but it is never less."
R.T. France, *Matthew*, 281
 - "How much more..."; argument from lesser to greater
 - I love Christmas even more now than as a child because I am the giver. If I were to receive nothing at Christmas, I would not be disappointed
 - "How much more!"

So what do we know about our heavenly Father?

1. Our Father loves to give good gifts – James 1:17

- Every good thing originates with God
 - Father [not Creator] of lights – sun and moon; good, necessary gifts, but they cast shifting shadows. God does not.
 - Existence. Life. Your body. Your mind. Your opportunities. Your family. Your friends. Your salvation. Freedom to worship. Ability to work.
 - 1 Cor 4:7 - What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
- No bad thing originates with God – James 1:16-17
 - Don't be deceived. Don't blame sin on God.
 - Garden – “The woman You gave me...” God created setting for failure
 - Moral world – consequences that are inevitable
 - Kids disobeyed, disciplined. “Mommy, you're mean.” “You like happy mommy? Obey.” She is not mean; loves to say “yes” and give.
 - God doesn't delight in discipline, but His discipline is good
 - Broken world. We suffer along with rest of humanity
- **Why don't we receive what we have requested?**
- We ask for what is not good for us
 - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*, 458. “I thank God that He is not prepared to do anything that I may chance to ask Him...looking back, I say that I am profoundly grateful to God that He did not grant me certain things for which I asked, and that He shut certain doors in my face.”
- We ask with wrong motives – James 4:3
 - James 1:5-8
 - God cares more about your character than your comfort
 - Our happiness is not God's ultimate goal, but holiness
- Extravagant gifts come in plain wrapping – Psalm 23:1-3
 - according to the latest "Cost of Raising A Child" report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average cost of raising a child born in 2013 up until age 18 for a middle-income family in the U.S. is approximately \$304,480
 - This number doesn't include college education!
 - Good day to call and say thanks to mom and dad.
 - Parents: good day to hand your child a bill
 - Parents don't think about this ahead of time; don't complain in process

2. Our Father loves to be asked – Matthew 7:7-11

- **Why don't we get all that we want?**
- We don't ask – James 4:2b
- We don't keep asking
 - Mt 7:11 – present tense imperatives
 - Luke 11:5-8
- How many times as a parent have you seen your child reaching for something, unable to grasp it? Think: I wish he would just ask me for help.
- Ex – When my son was young, took him to airport to watch planes fly in. Watched an Air Force General flew in on a jet. Ben: “can we climb in?” Me: “probably not. Why don't you ask?!” General said “absolutely” and gave us a full tour.
- George Mueller. Crossing Atlantic to Quebec. Captain needed to slow the ship due to fog but Mueller would miss his speaking engagement. Mueller prayed with captain. Mueller to captain: “No need for you to pray. First, because you don't believe it will work. Second, because the fog has already lifted.” Specific requests; specific answers. Not afraid to ask.

3. Our Father knows what is best – Matthew 6:25-34

- ***Why don't we receive what we have requested?***
- We learn to trust through waiting, even for bread
 - **Deuteronomy 8:2–3.** “You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”
 - Trust in God’s character is a spiritual muscle that must be exercised. Can’t I just read a book?!
- We ask for what is not best for others
 - Mt 26:39. Jesus’ request was denied – cup to pass from Me
 - John 14:13-14

4. Our Father never withholds the best

- Puritan writer. “Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went; but he did know with whom he went.”
- I know WHOM I have believed
- Luke 11:13. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”
- Sound familiar? Sermon on the Plain. Stump speech.
- God loves to give Himself
- All of the best gifts He gives are the ones that draw us to Himself
 1. Forgiveness of sins
 2. Regeneration – James 1:17-18
 3. Resurrection –
 4. Romans 8:32. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- Elder brother in “prodigal son”
 - Saw his father as a master
 - Saw his father as stingy
 - Saw himself as a servant rather than a son
 - Father went out to him as well
 - Luke 15:31
 - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. If you should ask me to state on one phrase what I regard as the greatest defect in most Christians lives I would say that it is our failure to know God as our Father....
- Parents gave me plenty of material gifts.
 - Socks wore out. Should they have not given socks? I needed them
 - Toys broke; I only remember a few of them
 - I remember – time together. I remember meals, clearing the dishes with my sister so that we could play games. Throwing baseball. Family trips.

Application

1. Thank God for His gifts
2. Persist in asking, seeking and knocking
3. Give
 - We will be more fulfilled in giving than in taking
 - Proverbs 11:24 (The Message). The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller

We want to be like God, Our Father