

WHAT DOOR ARE YOU KNOCKING ON?

Matthew 7:7-11

Intro

The following passage is a portion of scripture that so many people, both inside and outside of the faith, look at and say, 'yeah, I really haven't experienced God like that.' The reason why that sentiment is held by so many? Because they didn't receive what they wanted.

Just let that sit there.

What we are about to hear comes to us from Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount. It is here that we receive a huge chunk of teaching from Jesus all in one place. And it is a lot: the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount make up over 10% of the entire Gospel of Matthew. These teachings, which are to help people understand how God wants us to live with Him and similarly how we are to live with one another, come at us in a fast and furious way and remind us in a definitive way that Jesus is not just 'a nice guy', but the one whom we are able to recognize as the one who will be savior of all.

With that last descriptor of the savior of all in place, I would like to ask the following questions (which obviously arise out of the verses we are to hear). What do you ask for from God? What do you search for? Upon what figurative doors do you knock? The scripture reads this way.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

John 10:1-18

Intro

Our scene of our second passage is set in a way that Jesus is not just speaking to the people who want to believe: he's also talking to those who already disagree with him. With that context in place, these examples show that Jesus, that God wants to have a deep, dynamic, and personal relationship with us. If you hear that sentiment and feel tension rising in yourself because that isn't how you know God, let me assure you, it's not too late for a fresh start. It never is. What door are you knocking on? The scripture reads this way.

John 10:1-18

¹⁰Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they

do not know the voice of strangers.’⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

7 So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.’⁸ All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

11 ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’¹² The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.¹³ The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.’

‘What Door Are You Knocking On?’

Alright, so over the last few weeks I’ve been encouraging you to pick up and read the daily devotional ‘Rediscover Jesus’ this Lenten season, which begins this Wednesday. I had no idea how many books might be taken...so we started with 50. By the end of worship two weeks ago, 40 of those were claimed...so we ordered another 40. By the end of worship last Sunday, we only had 6 left. That’s 84 copies of a daily devotional book in a congregation that worships approximately 100 people per Sunday.

Think about those numbers for a moment: does it feel like there is a desire to connect with Jesus? To connect with Jesus in a deeper way?

I do. I don’t know how else to read those tea leaves.

So we’re going to talk about that desire to connect over the next few weeks and we’re going to use the book that many of us are going to be reading to delve into how we might connect with Jesus, maybe, really for the first time.

Which is why it feels like we should start with the questions that I asked prior to the reading from Matthew: what do you ask for from God? What do you search for? Upon what figurative doors do you knock?

Because what we hear from Jesus is that God is waiting to open the door. So if that’s the case, and you feel like your connection to God is just...‘eehh’...then maybe we’ve been knocking on the wrong door! And if we find ourselves in that place, then we find ourselves in ridiculously good company, because that was the reality that so many of the individuals whom we put in the ‘super hero of the faith’ category found themselves in. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, James and John (in a sailboat): no matter where you look what you are able to see are people who, at a variety of points in their lives are thinking, ‘God? Where did you go? Are You here at all?’

When you have been in that mindset, what sort of door are you knocking on? Are you acknowledging the sort of commitment that God has promised over and over and over again?

Or are you allowing your life to shape what you see, hear, and experience? Like when you walk through your life looking down at your feet: your eyes are open, but what you're able to see is going to be remarkably limited.

Here's the truth (which is a truth that all of those super heroes of the faith were ultimately able to open their lives too): God wants to have a real and personal relationship with you. Not just the, 'I go to church and occasionally do churchy things' sort of relationship, but an actual, trusting and committed connection that allows us to hear the voice of God, empowering us to show and share the love of God...no matter what.

God wants that with you! Now if you're thinking that you're too old of a dog for this new of a trick, let me assure you: it is never too late for a fresh start. You just have to open yourself up to it.

This past Wednesday I woke up at 5:58 AM, just a few minutes prior to the alarm going off. As I lay there looking at the first efforts of shadows dancing across the ceiling, a prayer kicked into my head: 'God, be with me today.'

At which point, I immediately chided myself because I do have faith that God is with me every day. So I apologized to God and prayed, 'No, that isn't it. I'm sorry God: I know that you are with me. Open my eyes and ears so that I might be able to see and hear how You are with me today.'

I watched the ceiling for another 10 seconds and then I got up to help get the teenager of the house moving.

The morning routine then started clicking off in its expected fashion.

Until Austin and I started to get his coat on before heading to the front steps to wait for the bus. It was then that Austin started singing.

Now, at this point, anyone who knows Austin knows that he can break out into song at any moment. From Imagine Dragons, to Beyonce, to Phantom of the Opera, to Queen, to a worship tune we sang in church, to a kids show he was watching on TV two days prior, he'll just start singing.

But it was what he was singing that caused me to literally stop. At 6:42, he's standing there letting me get his coat on and he breaks out into, 'God's not dead, He's surely alive. He's living on the inside, roaring like a lion. God's not dead, He's surely alive.', which is a song by the Newsboys, a contemporary Christian pop group.

Now I can't be certain what all he had been listening to the day previous, but I haven't heard him listen to that song...in a long time. And there he was singing it, and he only sang it once...you know, after I offered the prayer that I did 44 minutes earlier.

So I smiled and thought, 'Okay...', and proceeded to head into the next steps of the routine.

I'm a guy: I like my routines.

44 minutes later, at 7:26, Jen shows me something about how we need to speak out fully, to one another, and to God, trusting in each other and in God.

Look, I know that there are moments when I can be dim, but as I started reading what my wife showed me, I could not help but offer up a prayerful response, 'Okay, prayer request offered: prayer response received!'

Maybe God has responded to my prayers in this way before. My guess is He has...but I was probably preoccupied with looking at my shoe tops, wondering why God wasn't listening to me (knocking on the wrong door? Maybe.).

Regardless, I took note of God's response this time, and it very much spurred me on through the rest of the day to be open to how God might be whispering, to knock on the God led doors, to embrace and be embraced by the relationship that the Creator of all has been looking to have with me from before the beginning of time.

And why was I thinking about this sort of stuff? Because of the book that I hope you will read with me that is able to remind, or as the case may be declare in a new way, truths that can so easily get buried in the flow of routine, the tidal current of grief and sadness, and the weight of a sin-filled world.

Look: life. is. hard. It always has been and until we are in the closer presence of God it always will be.

And it can still be blessed if we are willing to seek out the God-led doors and knock. God will open the door. It's not too late. It's never too late.

Do you want to have a connection with God that changes your life? It's not too late to start knocking.

After Sermon Prayer

Holy Lord, we knock and yet it feels like You're not there. But what are we hoping for? What are we longing for? What are we desiring? Lord, help us to desire a connection with You...even if we don't know what that means yet, help us to begin earnestly seeking it out, no longer just giving lip service, but seeking out that part of our life where You have been all along. Lord, we say that You hear our prayers: help us to know that it is never too late to realize that really do, and not only that You always will, but that You respond as well. Lord, open our eyes, ears, hearts, minds, our very being to the relationship that You have longed to have with us from the very beginning. It's never too late and it's always the right time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.