

## A CHURCH THAT PRAYS TOGETHER (25 May 2020)

In our church prayer meeting last Friday, pastor spoke from Matthew 7:7–8 where Jesus said, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”*

Question: Does that mean God will give me anything and everything I ask for? There are those who think and teach so: Health and wealth is yours, just ask, seek, and knock away, and you will get what you want; it is a blank cheque—fill in what you will, no questions asked.

But this is a gross misinterpretation and misapplication of the text. For in another place, the Lord said, *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”* (Jas 4:3). When we ask with sinful and carnal desires or ask for things that are not spiritually or morally good for us, the Lord will not give for sure. Further, the context of Matthew 7 makes it clear that the promise is premised upon the goodness of our Father in heaven, *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (v11). Our heavenly Father will only give to us the things that are good for us. When we ask for more health and wealth, the Lord may not give because He knows our hearts and He knows our future. God knows all and Father knows best.

Martin Luther said, “When we pray, we have the advantage [of the promise] that what we ask for will be granted, although not according to our wish. If it weren’t for the promise I wouldn’t pray. God does well, moreover, that he doesn’t give us everything as we wish, for otherwise we’d want to have everything on our own terms. That our Lord God is the same in life and death I have often experienced. If our prayer is earnest it will be heard, even if not as and when we wish. This must be so or our faith is vain.”

In one of his table talks, Luther used his pet dog to illustrate what it means to be earnest in prayer. “When Luther’s puppy happened to be at the table, looked for a morsel from his master, and watched with open mouth and motionless eyes, he [Martin Luther] said, ‘Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat! All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat. Otherwise he has no thought, wish, or hope....’ We must pray with such focus—focus on our good God and His good will and what good He can give and do for us when we pray to Him sincerely and fervently. *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (Jas 5:16b). *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”* (1 John 5:4).

So, let us keep on praying to our good Creator and Provider, even our Father in heaven. Our Lord calls on us to pray and not faint (Luke 18:1). *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”* (Gal 6:9).

We praise the Lord for the blessed prayer meetings we have had thus far. We were encouraged by those who joined us from afar—from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, and even UAE. Do join us at our prayer meeting on Friday night. A church that prays together stays together.

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