

Christian Kindness

Matthew 7:7-12

King of Kings! (Gospel of Matthew Series)


Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, September 22, 2013, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

“Kindness makes a person attractive. If you would win the world, melt it, do not hammer it.”

ALEXANDER MACLAREN

1. WELCOME VISITORS
2. ELDERS & MINISTRY DIRECTORS – MEET FOR 15 MINUTES IMMEDIATELY AFTER SERVICE ON THE CHURCH STEPS FOR LEADERSHIP PHOTOS.
3. LAST WEEK TO SIGN UP FOR COUNSELING CONFERENCE. \$150 FOR THREE SATURDAYS. \$275 FOR COUPLES. 20% DISCOUNT. \$120 FOR INDIVIDUALS AND \$220 FOR COUPLES.
4. LADIES, SIGN UP FOR THE LADIES’ RETREAT. COST IS \$30 FOR LADIES, AND \$15 FOR DAUGHTERS. \$7 FOR THE CRAFT.
5. DEACON CANDIDATES CLASS THIS FRIDAY FROM 7-8:15PM – BE THERE IF YOU HAVE NOT YET TAKEN THE CLASS IF YOU’VE BEEN ASKED TO BE A DEACON CANDIDATE.

 Open your Bible to **Matthew 7:7-12**. We are continuing in a series through the Sermon on the Mount entitled: “King of kings.” This morning we are looking a message entitled: “Christian Kindness.”

Christians often Unkind

Have you ever noticed that Christians can sometimes be the most unkind, judgmental people on the earth? Jesus teaches us that one of the marks of being in His kingdom is you begin to reflect the sweet kindness of God in your life. Oh how He loves those who are hard to love and treats with kindness the undeserving.

The Contrast

There is a great contrast in Matthew 7 between the proud person (vs. 1-6) who is judgmental and has a know-it-all critical spirit, and the humble person (vs. 7-12) who experiences the kindness of God and reflects it to others.

The kingdom citizen is God’s child and receives his good gifts, but it doesn’t stop there! The true kingdom citizen is seen because he/she reflects that kindness to others.

Remember Jesus said Christians are the only **salt** and **light** in the world? Well here He is proving that. Here is how you know my people – those who are bankrupt in spirit – they know their need and pray – and they receive the kindness of God. They are not self-sufficient like a judgmental person. “My people” have a **contrite**, not a **critical** spirit. That’s the idea.

Melting Hearts with Kindness

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has given the standards related to self, to morality, to worship, and to money and possessions. Here He concludes giving the standards related to human relationships begun in verses 1–6.¹ Alexander MacLaren said it well: “Kindness makes a person attractive. If you would win the world, melt it, do not hammer it.”

The essence of what Jesus teaches in Matthew 7:7-12 is that our relationship with our heavenly Father always affects and impacts our human relationships. The more we know our kind and loving heavenly Father, the more we will love our fellow brothers and sisters.

Let’s read what our Lord says in Matthew 7.

Reading of Holy Scripture

Matthew 7:7–12, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 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? 11 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! 12 “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Outline

We are going to see today that:

1. God’s people **RECEIVE** the kindness of God (7-11)
2. God’s people should **REFLECT** the kindness of God (12).

I. God’s people **receive** the kindness of God (7:7-11).

Matthew 7:7–8, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

God is So Kind to be a Good Listener

“Ask, seek, and knock” and God will hear you! God’s nature is that He is kind to undeserving creatures. He invites to ask and seek and knock, and He promises to hear us! How many of us can stop talking in a conversation long enough to listen? It’s hard to listen! God is a good listener!

Calvin said, “Nothing is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard.”² **Luther** said, “He knows that we are timid and shy, that we feel unworthy and unfit to present our needs to God... We think that God is so great and we are so tiny that we do not dare to pray... That is why Christ wants to lure us away from such timid thoughts, to remove our doubts, and to have us go ahead confidently and boldly.”³

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (pp. 440–441). Chicago: Moody Press.

² Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 351.

³ Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount* (1521: translated by Jaroslave Pelikan: in vol. 21 of Luther’s works, Concordia, 1956), 234.

Brothers and sisters you have been “accepted in the Beloved One” (**Eph. 1:3**). You may come “... then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (**Heb. 4:16**).

The Humble Know Their Need

There is a humility that is manifested by the one who asks, seeks and knocks in **Matthew 7:7**, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” God only hears humble people who are willing to admit their need to him and ask, and keep asking, seek, and keep seeking, and knock and keep knocking.

The Desperate Receive God’s Kindness

This desperation and urgency for God is suggested by the present imperative tenses of **ask**, **seek**, and **knock**. The idea is that of continuance and constancy: “Keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking.” We also see a progression of intensity in the three verbs, from simple asking to the more aggressive seeking to the still more aggressive knocking. Yet none of the figures is complicated or obscure. The youngest child knows what it is to ask, seek, and knock.⁴ Let me illustrate it in two ways.

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

1. Where is the Train in Spain?

I remember when we first arrived in Spain the rentals were very few because the whole country shuts down in August. We finally found a rental agency that would work with us. They said to meet them at the rental apartment “by the train.” They said, You can’t miss it! Well we missed it. This was a valley town with only about 6 streets, in between the mountains. But we were desperate to find the train.

We **asked!** We asked everyone. My in-laws were so impressed. I would ask (congregation, help me pronounce this): “Donde esta el tren?” And of course they would answer, and they did not speak like my Spanish class in America. They spoke fast! They waived their hands in a certain direction, and though I heard an “izquierda” (left) and a derecho (straight), I had no real idea where the train was.

So we **sought**. We looked. We kept asking and kept looking. We kept stopping and asking. And soon we found the train station.

We had to “**knock**” kind of, as it were and we brought the address to the train teller. They pointed us to the door of the apartment and we knocked. We knocked some more. And guess what? The door was opened to us!

How relieved we were when we finally found the place! We moved in and lived there for several years!! God gives the invitation to the humble to ask, seek and knock for the heavenly city, and He promises to answer. How kind God is!! Or how about the second illustration I promised you? I want to look at a biblical illustration of the kindness of God and the desperation of man. It is that of Jacob.

2. Jacob Wrestling w/God

Remember the desperation that Jacob had when he wrestled with God (**Genesis 32:22–32**)? Look at **Genesis 32:26** where God says, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” God had come down in the form of the Angel of the Lord. Jacob was fleeing from his brother Esau. Jacob’s prayer earlier that day was (found in **Gen. 32:9-10**), “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives,

⁴ MacArthur, 444.

and I will make you prosper,' ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant."

Jacob was desperate. He urgently called upon God, and God came to Him in the form of the Angel of the Lord. He would not let the Lord go until the Lord blessed him.

God Helps Those Who Cannot Help Themselves

For those who conclude that all they need is Christ and they cry out to God for "the Holy Spirit," for regeneration and salvation, God will answer them. If you want to come to Christ today, feel your need of Him. Call on Him! Ask, seek, knock! God's kindness is so magnificent that He always answers that prayer from a humble heart. I've heard misguided people says, "God helps those who help themselves." Nothing could be further from the truth. **1 Peter 5:5-6**, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." *Truly God helps those who CANNOT help themselves!*

God's Kindness is All the Humble

We read that God's kindness extends to "everyone." What does that mean? Certainly **everyone** refers to those who belong or are being drawn to the heavenly Father. Those who are not God's children cannot come to Him as their Father. The two overriding relationships focused on in the book of Matthew are those of God's kingdom and God's family. The kingdom concept deals with rule, and the family concept deals with relationship.⁵

Matthew 7:8, "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Of course, "no one seeks after God" without sovereign grace (**Romans 3:11**). Yet God's disposition is one of constant kindness and generosity.

Everyone who Humbly Asks Receives an Answer

So everyone who asks humbly of the Lord gets an answer. So you want to know, what about those who "humbly ask" for a Lamborghini? Obviously this implies a brokenness and urgency for God more than stuff. This is a person who later Jesus is going to say is one who enters into the narrow gate stripped of everything. So God answers that person. God answers all who humbly ask Him.

If God says No, He Always Answers with Something Better

Yet sometimes God does not answer with exactly what we were asking for. If this is the case He always answers with something better. Look at Matthew 7:9-11, "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? 11 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!" Let me tell you a story to illustrate it.

Ralph Castine Sr.'s Healing

When I was first saved, I asked for God to heal my best friend's father, Ralph Castine Sr. I prayed he would get better so that I could give him the Gospel. I remember how devastated I was when I heard he died. What would I say to my best friend Ralph Jr. if he asked where his dad's soul was: heaven or hell? I was crushed. I went to the funeral, and God did not answer my prayer how I wanted Him to. At the funeral I was introduced to Ralph's uncle who traveled with

⁵ Ibid., 443.

Christian Athletes in Action. He had been visiting Ralph Sr. weekly for a year, evangelizing him. He told me several months before Ralph Sr. died, he put his total trust in the Lord and was transformed. You see God gave me something better!

God is Kind to Give us Access and Fellowship

He gives us access to His presence in prayer! He gives us access to His power and wisdom in His Word! But even beyond our being in His Word, He wants us to be in fellowship with Him as our Father. Along with His perfect and infallible Word, we need His Spirit to interpret and illumine, to encourage and to strengthen. He does not want us to have all the answers in our hip pocket. The Bible is a limitless store of divine truth, which a lifetime of the most faithful and diligent study will not exhaust. But apart from God Himself we cannot even start to fathom its depths or mine its riches.

John MacArthur said, “In His Word God gives enough truth for us to be responsible, but enough mystery for us to be dependent. He gives us His Word not only to direct our lives but to draw our lives to Him.”⁶

God is Kind to the Lost in Drawing Them to Salvation

Though this promise is directed to His dear children, there is a hint that there is hope even for the lost person in these verses. The lost can’t ask for just “anything.” But they can ask for salvation. They can ask for the Holy Spirit to bring them to life.

God kindly invites rebel human beings to approach Him and ask for salvation. We know this because of the parallel passage in **Luke 19:13** where Jesus says, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

This is especially apparent and precious because of the words that follow this promise in Matthew 7:13–14, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Jesus says: Come Unto Me!

A few chapters later, Jesus says in **Matthew 11:27-29**, “...no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Men are Evil, yet they have Some Kindness

All mankind is evil. Yet it is very common to see parents giving good gifts to their children. All people have some goodness or kindness in them. Theologians call this “common grace.” All people have a conscience that keeps them from committing sin.

An Illustration from Jesus

Matthew 7:9-11, “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? 11 If you then, who are evil, know

⁶ Ibid.

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!”

II. God’s people should **reflect** the kindness of God (7:12).

Matthew 7:12, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

The summary of the entire ethical code of the Old Testament is that we ought to show the kindness of God to others.

The Way We Treat Others Reveals our Relationship with God

Something happens when a person gets born again. The compassion of God courses through their heart! So the implication of verses 7–11 is made explicit in verse 12. The perfect love of the heavenly Father is reflected in His children when they treat others as they themselves wish to be treated. Those who are true Kingdom citizens reflect the King’s kindness!

Impossible for Unbelievers

There is no capacity within an unbeliever to love in the way that Jesus commands here. Unbelievers can do many ethical things, and every once in a while they might even approach the level of this highest of ethical standards. But they cannot sustain such selflessness, because they do not have the divine resource necessary for regular, habitual living on that plane.

The Compassion of God!

Susan Bashan tells the story of how she was going through the drive through and this young mother in a huge SUV cut her off and cursed at her to try to get in line. Instead of getting upset, the Lord gave her a spirit of peace, love, and compassion. She decided to pay for the woman’s meal at the window. She said, “let me pay for the woman’s meal in front of me.”

Susan says, “That young lady was me ten years ago. Eyes swollen from crying. Exhausted from raising the young children.” Instead of judging, God helped me to love her.

This is the kindness of true Christians.

However you want people to treat you sums up the sermon to this point, and **so treat them** is a summary of **the Law and the Prophets**. It is also a paraphrase of the second great commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39; cf. Lev. 19:18). Paul says: “he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8; cf. v. 10; Gal. 5:14).⁷

Many Have Said Not to Do Evil

The Jewish rabbi Hillel said, “What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else.” The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha teaches, “What thou thyself hatest, to no man do.” The Jewish scholars in Alexandria who translated the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) advised in a certain piece of correspondence, “As you wish that no evil befall you, but to be a partaker of all good

⁷ Ibid., 446.

things, so you should act on the same principle toward your subjects and offenders.” Confucius taught, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others?”⁸

No Sideline Christians

It’s not enough that we simply withhold evil. WE can’t just check out. It’s not enough to just NOT judge and NOT be critical. We have to be actively loving toward those around us. Jesus tells us true Christians are active! **Matthew 7:12**, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Paul says, “especially toward the household of faith”.

Get Involved

This is why it is so important to get involved. Sign up for a class or a Bible study and get to know people. Men, come to the Men’s prayer meeting. Get involved in blessing others.

The Church the Place to Grow and Change

The church is the “pillar and the ground of the truth.” We ought to be here not simply to be edified and mature and change in Christ. We ought to be here ready to help other Christians grow. Your presence is a kindness to the whole body. God touched me and spoke to me in powerful ways in the prayer meeting through the years. God uses evening worship.

Evening Worship or Greek Study Hall?

When I was in college I made a commitment that I would not miss a service. I would not be sidelined as a Christian, but involved. It saddened me that so many did not have the same conviction.

Conclusion: As we conclude, want to share with you a story about a very interesting well-educated Greek philosopher whose name is Dr. Alexander Popaderos. And Dr. Popaderos every summer on the island of Crete taught a class on ethics for two weeks. And this particular summer just as he was getting ready to close the class, the last few minutes of the class, he said, “Now are there any questions before we go?” And just as he was getting ready to say, “OK then you’re dismissed,” a little man in the back of the room, a rather timid looking man, sort of carefully raised his hand and said, “Dr. Popaderos,” “Yes” “I have a question” “Yes, what is it?” He said, “I’d like to know, what is the meaning of life?”

As you can imagine, people were ready to go home, and they were very irritated by this little fellow’s heavy question!

Dr. Popaderos very quickly quieted the group, he said to the class, “You know, if you don’t mind I’d like to answer that question.” He reached into his back pocket, and took out his wallet. He took out of the wallet a little mirror about the size of a fifty-cent piece, honed down on the edges, kind of sparkling. And then he told this tale, he said, “When I was a child, I began to realize that I could have so much fun with that mirror. I would simply catch the glint of the Sun, and shine that mirror into an otherwise darkened place. As I grew older I began to learn that this is no child’s toy. This is really a metaphor for my life. Now I am not the light—I am not the source of the light. I am simply a broken mirror fragment. But if I allow the sun to shine on my

⁸ Ibid., 447.

mirror fragment, it is amazing what light I can bring into darkness.” Then he said, “Ladies and Gentlemen, that is the meaning of life.”

Each of us is a mirror fragment. We are not the Light. We are not the source of the Light. We are simply a broken mirror fragment. But when we permit the SON to hit our mirror fragment, and then bounce off into the life of a darkened heart, there can be change, there can be illumination.