

## Matthew 7:9-11 God Gives Good Gifts

We talked last week about asking and seeking and knocking and that it's the very act of giving our lives over more and more to God that causes us to be quick to hear the Holy Spirit's direction, and to obey what He has to say. Jeremiah 29:11 **11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.** He doesn't have plans to harm us. We can expect God to provide good things for us! We can trust Him to be a good Father.

### Or what person is there among you

Jesus demonstrates both the Goodness of God, and His provision by picturing God as our Heavenly Father and provider. Luke 11:13 says **13<sup>11</sup> Now which one of you fathers.** Jesus' appeal directly to fathers brings this picture of God's provision home. It makes us think specifically of how we, as fathers love and provide for our children.

### when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone?

Now, when we think of a loaf of bread, we think of a large, rectangular, usually sliced thing that weighs about 1-2 pounds, but in Jesus' day most of the people ate barley loaves, which were more like a large round dinner roll. That's why in John 6:9, we see **"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish;** That was the boy's lunch, and maybe a dinner on the way back home—they were small loaves, which is why the boy had 5 of them for himself.

So the point is that the loaves tended to look a lot like the stones that were everywhere in Israel. And the people knew exactly what He was talking about. In Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4:2 we read **2 And after He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."** Has anyone been so hungry that they started to see things and almost taste things? It's no accident that the tempter had him looking at stones that looked a whole lot like bread while he was tempting Jesus to turn the stones to bread. The resemblance would likely have triggered even more hunger in Jesus' mind, and added more force to the temptation. But, why was it a temptation in the first place? Jesus was near death—about 40 days is as long as you can go without any food, and yet he was nowhere near a bakery. That means that He was entirely in God's hands, and had to trust God for His very life. And trusting God was the point. The reason that this was a temptation, was because it was an invitation to provide for himself, using his power apart from trust in God. And that's why it would have been sin. And, so Jesus' reply in verse 4 **4 But He answered and said, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.'"** Speaks of Jesus' trust in God to sustain him. Since Jesus knew that God created everything by the word of His mouth, He knew that He could trust God to provide for Him in this hour of need. Jesus is saying that what God has is better than plain old human bread. Doing God's will was His provision (John 4:31-4). The true benefit is choosing God's path, and the best that He has for us. The Bread of Life is the best bread!

### Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

These specific examples that Jesus gives of children asking for food were the basic staples in the Palestinian diet—bread and fish. Can you imagine what would happen if, instead of a fish, someone gave a snake to their child to eat? They would certainly be scared half to death, and they would probably be bitten by the snake. What a rotten trick! We can't imagine a father doing this, much less God. Sometimes because their earthly fathers were imperfect, fall short, or were even abusive, some people have a difficult time relating to God as father. But that's not who God is, and feeling guilty and accused is not what God wants for us. It's what the enemy wants for us! If the enemy can keep us feeling guilty and ashamed all of the time, then he diminishes our effectiveness for the Kingdom of God. God is a loving father, and when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it's to help us understand that we should sorrow for the evil effects of our own sin on ourselves and on those around us, and repent (2 Cor 7:10).

**<sup>11</sup> So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,**

Jesus sets up a comparison between fallible, imperfect human fathers and our Heavenly Father. He's saying "Even you, as bad as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children". God will not mock our prayers, giving us stones for bread or snakes for fish. He will not give us what will harm us, and for that reason he will often answer our prayers differently from what we ask Him for. We do not know what is best for us. He does. He is a good Father, and longs to give good gifts to his children.

**how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

How much more is an argument from the lesser to the greater, based on the greater Goodness of God, our Heavenly Father than our earthly fathers, and based on the greater love that He has for us. Since God loves us with an infinite love, we know that He is willing to give us good things out of that love for us. And God is able to Provide. Because God created everything that we see and everything that we cannot see out of nothing, then we know that as Philippians 4:19 **19 [And my] God will supply all [y]our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.** His riches are inexhaustible. And so, we know that God is willing and able to give good gifts. And no-one gives Good gifts like God does. James 1:17 **17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.** God always gives good and perfect gifts, and since HE never changes, we can trust Him to keep giving good gifts. The God who gave you life in your mother's womb, and breathed life into you when you were born, gave His Son to you, and gave new life to you. Even for such as us, God was willing to send His Son, because He wanted fellowship with us. Romans 5:7-8 **7 For one will hardly die for a righteous person; though perhaps for the good person someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** And because of this we can be confident in God's love for us, and His provision for us. Romans 8:32 says **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?** What will He withhold from you that you need? Nothing. Psalm 84:11 **For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; He withholds no good thing from those who walk with integrity.** God is, and will always be your provider and protector, if you will trust Him to be. Romans 8:38 **38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** God give us good things, but the best thing that He gives us is Himself. Luke 11:13 gives us insight into God's best gift, saying **13 So if you, despite 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?"** In effect, Luke relates how Jesus wraps up all God's Good and Perfect gifts in one wonderful package: the Holy Spirit. All other gifts are contained within that one great gift of Himself. And so, as we ask, seek and knock, we can expect that the Holy Spirit will bring us into closer and closer relationship with God. And this seeking with the perseverance of the saints, results in a more rock-solid hope, certified and sealed by the Holy Spirit's witness within us! There's nothing in life that is more valuable!! And like a good father, God responds to prayer in the way that is best for us and in the timing that is best for us, so that we build persistence and perseverance. And God's gift of the Holy Spirit will move in our hearts to mold us, and shape us, and our requests, even interceding on our behalf (Rom 8:26). And know that with the Power of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us, God will give us just exactly what we need, just exactly when we need it. And most of all, He will give us more of Himself, fulfilling our greatest need.