



Our Father

Sermon on [Matthew 7:7-11](#)

Pastor Julie McCain, July 27, 2014

Please pray with me: Speak, O Lord, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word and plant the light of your grace deep in our hearts.

Recently I was listening to a TED talk about something called our optimism bias. Now for those of you who don't know, TED talks are brief speeches on innovative topics.

According to this talk, 80% of us have something call an, which means that we

- tend to overestimate the likelihood that good things will happen
- and underestimate the likelihood that bad things will happen to us.

1. It means that if you tell newlyweds that the divorce rate in America is 40%, on average, they estimate that their own likelihood of divorce is 0%

2. At the same time when someone who thought that their likelihood of getting cancer was 10% was informed that that statistical likelihood is actually 30%, the second time around, they only changed their answer slightly, and thought that their chance of getting cancer was 11%.

→ This optimism bias inherently makes us a bit unrealistic, but according to researchers, it's still a good thing—those with this bias tend to feel more satisfied when they succeed, less downtrodden when they don't, and they tend to work harder toward their goals as well.

In today's text, Jesus says this: "ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."

And there is dissonance here:

- it sounds like Jesus has an optimism bias,
- like he doesn't really understand the reality of our lives.

The reason I say that is because most of us have probably either experienced for ourselves, or watched someone we love go through the experience of asking for something we didn't receive, searching for something we didn't find, or knocking at a door that simply wouldn't open.

Now we can *try* to explain away that reality:

- Sometimes it is true that God is answering us in a different way that we can't see at the moment.
- Sometimes as the old adage goes, God might be closing a door but opening a window.
- And sometimes he might even be answering us but saying no to the things we want.

But I also want to honor the reality of the closed doors in our lives because the fact is that when you knocking on a door that won't open, it's often not obvious what God is up to or why you are there at all.

And that's why Jesus continues by telling us a story:

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead?

Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?

→ The answers are so obvious that we don't even have to vocalize them.

This spring an ad came out in which a company created a fake job, posted it online, and then recorded the interviews for that job.

The interviewees were told things like this: the job was director of operations.

The requirements: work standing up all the time, constantly on your feet, constantly exerting yourself, a high level of stamina was needed.

135 to unlimited hours per week were required, there were no chances to rest, and no breaks available.

At this point the interviewees start saying things like: that sounds cruel, and this is crazy!

Degrees in medicine, finances, and the culinary arts were helpful, they continued,

There would be no vacations, and staying up all night would often be required.

By this point the interviewees were not very interested in the position.

Then they added: the position won't pay anything. And then the big reveal happened: billions of people already hold this position: moms.

So here's my question what is it that makes parents take on a task that no one in their right might would accept if the demands of it were put into a job description? What makes parents willing to do these things?

-love

→ Parents don't do these all these things because they are deserved, they do them out of love

Children on the other hand, have no choice in the arrangement—they start out completely dependent on their parents for everything.

And when we pray: Our Father, we are admitting both of those things:

- that God cares for us and lavishes us with good gifts not because we deserve it, but because he loves us,
- and that we are completely dependent on him.

Luther says this about addressing God as our Father:

With the words Our Father, God wants to attract us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving Father.

But the problem is that we've got baggage.
We've got baggage like hurts and brokenness that make it hard to trust God.
We've got baggage because the people around us are sinful and broken, and so are we.

That's why it's helpful to remember that unlike our earthly relationships, our heavenly Father never fails us, never gives up on us, never stops caring for us.

I'm reminded of the story of the prodigal son, or the modern day equivalent would be Finding Nemo.

Finding Nemo is the story of two clown fish—Marvin is an overprotective Father who desperately wants to keep his son Nemo away from danger. But at Nemo's first day of school, he wanders off into the open ocean and is captured by a scuba diver.

The entire rest of the story is the journey of the Father, Marvin, trying to find Nemo. Over and over he encounters seemingly impossible situations and many reasons to turn back and give up: for starters, his sidekick, Dory, has short-term memory loss and constantly forgets why they are there and what they are doing.

- This unlikely pair first encounter a pack of sharks who want to eat them.
- Next they find themselves in a field of jellyfish who sting, and almost kill Dory,

→and all along, all that these tiny fish have to guide them through the open Ocean is the hope that a mysterious name written on the side of a pair scuba goggles will somehow lead them to Nemo.

→Through it all, though, nothing can stop Marvin from finding his son, Nemo. Against all odds, and after overcoming many more obstacles, the movie ends when Marvin finally finds Nemo, some thousand miles from where they started.

Nothing can stop our Father from finding us, either.
Nothing can stop our Father from loving us and caring for us.

For the times when we wait, when we wonder, when we wrestle, we can rest on the fact that God is our Father, and that his love for us simply does not end.

Personally, when I am waiting and wondering, I come down to the baptismal font, I put a bit of water on my head, and I remember that not only is God my Father, but I am his child and nothing will ever get in the way of that kind of love. Amen.