

## **Sermon Podcast 2-9.MP3**

**0:06**

We're continuing on our series this morning where we are looking at great questions of faith. And so if you've got your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew chapter seven. We're gonna read verses seven through 11 in just a moment. These are the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount. We'll talk more about that in just a minute.

**0:23**

But just to set the stage, Jesus, early on in his ministry, is talking to just this random mishmash of humanity. It's not just the 12 disciples, but now it's an entire group of people that have gathered together to hear this sermon. And so, it's good for us to begin by reading these words of Jesus together. And so, if you got your Bibles, great. If not, the words are on the screen, and I'll begin by reading Matthew chapter seven verses seven through 11.

**0:50**

Jesus said, ask, and it will be given to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. Everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds. Everyone who knocks will have the door open.

**1:05**

Don't you see? Supposing your son asks you for bread, which of you is going to give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, which of you is going to give him a serpent? Well, then, if you know how to give good gifts to your children, evil as you are, then how much more will your heavenly how will your father in heaven give good things to those who ask of him? See, guys, my house is a house full of games.

**1:37**

It is a house where we are constantly playing different sorts of games. Right? Board games, card games, electronic games. You know, we play, Uno. Any Uno people in the house?

**1:46**

Harry Potter Uno in particular. That is a game that we play, and I regularly lose that in my family. So we play games like that. We also play games like my girl, Miriam just got a Nintendo Switch for Christmas. And and on the Switch, she asked for all, like, the Dreamlight Valley games and the games I don't care about.

2:02

But my heart, like, exploded in my chest when she asked for Mario Kart. And when I we listen, they'll say, daddy, can we play Mario Kart? And I'm like, I'm about to show you who's boss, y'all. Because I grew up on Mario Kart. Right?

2:14

And so we play games like that. And all of those games are fun, but still, my favorite game that we play collectively as a family, and we play it regularly, but most often on road trips, is we play Mad Libs. Do you guys remember Mad Libs? Any Mad Libs people? It was around when I was a kid, and so I was a little bit surprised to find out that it still is.

2:34

And for those of you that don't know what Mad Libs is, it's a game where, you fill in the blank. You fill in a noun. You fill in a verb. You fill in an adjective in order to take a story that would seemingly be pretty simple and make it funny and oftentimes ridiculous. So I took one out of the kid's car, out of the car this morning, and the Mad Lib was about a farmer, and it said, a farmer planted his grandmother in the toilet.

2:58

And the kids just laugh and laugh, and they think that's really funny. Right? I love Mad Libs because yes, it is funny, but there's a deeper reason why I love playing Mad Libs with my kids. And here's what it is, that it teaches us about the power of language. It teaches us about the power of language.

3:14

As a matter of fact, it does even more than that. It teaches my kids, and it teaches even me, that words have the capacity to create worlds. That words used properly have the capacity and ability to create a world that we can inhabit. It's true of Mad Libs.

It's true in our lives.

**3:34**

I want you to think about the way that you think and talk about yourself, for example. It shapes you into a certain sort of person. Right? Words create worlds. Words matter.

**3:45**

And the power of language can create in us different sorts of feelings about who we are. But I also wanna suggest to us something even bigger this morning, that words create worlds. That's true in Mad Libs. It's true in life. But also, the way we use words helps us to think about God.

**4:05**

And what I want us to do a deep dive on this morning, thinking about the questions that Jesus asks us is this. That the words that we use to describe God, they actually have real life impact. The words that we use to describe God have real life consequences, not only for the way that we think about God, but what we'll come to in just a minute is the the way we think about God, the words we use to describe God, actually have consequences for the way that we deal with and treat other people. Think about how you describe God this morning. If you grew up in church, you've learned all of the words that we use to describe God in proper theological context, right?

**4:50**

If you grew up in the Presbyterian church, and you read the Westminster Catechism, you know, for example, that the way we other than, he is set apart, he is different than us. We we use words like just to describe God, that God is perfect in all of his ways, like we sang. And because God is perfect, we believe that God is a just God who demands things are right and good in his world. And we look forward to the day when God will bring that justice into the world. He's holy and he's just.

**5:26**

If you come not from a Presbyterian tradition, but you come from a philosophical tradition, the Greeks taught us that God is omnipotent, that God knows all things. Right? When I was a kid, I

always found that pretty scary, that God knew absolutely everything, That God is omniscient knowing all things and he's all powerful and Greeks give us words to describe God. And if you grew up in church, if you grew up in certain strains of church, maybe you heard words to describe God like angry. Maybe you used words to describe God like vengeful.

**6:01**

Or God is one who is full of wrath. And and and if that's true, right, it's gonna have implications for how we live and how we think about God. The words we use have the power to create realities for us. And what I want us to think about this morning is that all of those words that we've talked about, right, is does God have wrath inside of him? Yes.

**6:24**

Is God holy? Absolutely. Is he fundamentally other than us? Yes. Is he good, and is he just?

**6:32**

Is he righteous? Absolutely. All of those words are appropriate. But if it is true that words create worlds, then we need to think deeply about what is the essence of God. What if we could get down to the bedrock of who God is?

**6:51**

How would we describe that God? Because if we can get that right, then I am convinced that we will be in a position to live and live well. And yes, there are hundreds of thousands of books that have been written describing God, who he is, and how he interacts with us. But what I want to remind us of this morning is something that you should have learned in Christianity one zero one. It's something that we should have learned in Christianity one zero one.

**7:18**

But I'm honest with you this morning in saying that far too often, what I'm about to tell you is something that we overlook and something that we don't pay full attention to. That in following Jesus, knowing that he is the greatest teacher who ever lived. In following Jesus, the one that we believe is the God who took

on flesh and came among us. He was in very nature God, but did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. If we if we take our faith seriously that all of these things are true, then here's what we will know.

7:52

If we seek to use words to describe God, then we will first and foremost not look to theological statements of doctrine. We will not look to other secular ways of describing God. But as we seek to describe God, we will look at Jesus. We will look at what Jesus says about God. Because if we pay attention to what Jesus says about the nature of who God is, what I want you to see this morning is that it has the ability to impact not only your relationships vertically, but your relationships horizontally.

8:27

And so let's take a deep dive this morning into the question that Jesus asks us in this Sermon on the Mount. I told you just a minute ago, Sermon on the Mount, Matthews chapter five, six, and seven. Matthew five, six, and seven. Listen. If you are here this morning and you are not a follower of Jesus, if you're here this morning or maybe you're watching online and you are not a follower of Jesus, what I want you to do is carve out fifteen or twenty minutes, that's about how long it will take, and I want you to read Matthew five, six, and seven.

8:54

It's the Sermon on the Mount. It is a collection. It is the sermon of Jesus, as I said, delivered to this, like, mishmash of humanity. A wild collection of people from all over the, upper section of Israel. And if we go to the Sermon on the Mount, what you will find is the greatest teaching that has ever been taught.

9:13

And if you want to know about who we are called to be, if you want to know about who Jesus invites us to be as human beings, if you wanna know about who God is, then the best thing you can do is go and read the Sermon on the Mount. Because if you do, and you go and you read the Sermon on the Mount, you'll learn, for example, about how to relate to other people. But when we get to chapter seven, Jesus makes this turn, and he's talking

about how do we live in relationship with God, who is holy? How do we live in relationship with God, who is the creator of all things? And he gets to this section on prayer, and he says, as we read just a few moments ago, anyone who seeks will find.

**9:56**

Knock, and the door will be opened to you. Prayer is one of those things where we are called, according to Jesus, to lay out the desires of our heart before God. Ask for what you want. Ask for the things that you desire. That is entirely appropriate, and it is entirely good.

**10:16**

Now, he does not say you're gonna get everything you want, because sometimes, I don't know if you know this, we ask for the wrong things. Jesus says, Ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened for you. And then he makes this pivot point where I want us to spend our attention this morning, because what Jesus says next is this, which of you, if your son or daughter asks you for a fish, would give them a snake?

**10:47**

Which of you, if your child asked you for a piece of bread, would give them a stone? And you evil, right? He uses that word evil to describe us. Make no pretense about it. Jesus says we are broken people.

**11:04**

We are not perfect. At the heart of the human condition is a brokenness, and he says, but even still, you want to give good gifts to your children. And if that is true of you, who are broken And this is the most important part. Jesus says next, how much more does your heavenly father want to give good gifts to those of you who ask? God is holy.

**11:33**

God is just. God is righteous. God is omniscient and omnipotent in all of the words that you could ever possibly describe God with. But if we take Jesus seriously, not just in this Sermon on the Mount, but in other teachings, here's what we will know. That

Jesus describes God as a good father.

**11:58**

The way that we are called to think about God. The way that we are called to interact with the creator of all things. Yes, it is with reverence and awe. But at the core of how we are called to relate to God is to see him as a father. One of my favorite stories of Jesus comes from the gospel of Luke in chapter 15.

**12:21**

It's the story of the prodigal son. If you grew up in church, you know this story, but most of actually, I'm gonna take that back. I am increasingly amazed at how many people grew up in church and know nothing about the Bible. It's true. And if that's you, that's okay.

**12:35**

I wanna invite you to read this book because what you will find is for example, in Luke chapter 15, God is described by Jesus as this father who who has two children. One of them is obedient and follows all the rules, and the other one is negligent and says to his father, dad, I wish you were dead. Give me my inheritance so I can go and I can live my life. And in that story in Luke chapter 15, I want you to go and read it for yourself this afternoon. The prodigal son, the one who said, I wish you were dead.

**13:06**

He runs off. He wastes all of his money and spends all of his resources. And all the while, God, described as the father do you know what he's doing? He's waiting for his son to come home. He he's waiting every day at the gates of his place.

**13:27**

Waiting, maybe one day my son will come home. And in Luke chapter 15, what do we find but in this beautiful short story of Jesus that one day when the prodigal, when the son who said I wish you were dead, finally comes home, The father runs out to meet him with arms wide open. Go and kill the fatted calf, he says. Go and get the party ready because my son was lost and now he's found. He was dead and now he's alive.

**13:58**

And there's so much for us to plumb the depths of this story, but what I want us to just think about for just a minute is how God is described. You heard what Chris said when we were singing. You can't earn the love of God. That there's nothing that you can do to make God love you any more or any less. We are all like the sun who have gone away and come back home.

**14:21**

And the beautiful story of the gospel says that God at his core is a good father who is waiting to welcome us with open arms. You, though you are wicked and you wanna give your kid good gifts. Words, y'all. Words have the ability to create worlds. And it is one thing to use that kind of fatherly image in the abstract, but Jesus invites us to go into the depth of your own life.

**14:52**

Jesus invites you to think about your own experience as a child, or even more, your own experience as a father. Think about you as a father, Jesus says. Think about you as a mother. I mean, y'all, I got three little girls. I talk about them regularly.

**15:08**

Right? Miriam's eleven, going into that preteen mode. Can I tell you something? I need y'all to pray for me right now, because this is a new thing. My beard's starting to grow out more, and you know what it is?

**15:23**

It's gray. It's her fault that this is happening. I think about my daughters who I love so much. And do they disappoint me? Sure they do.

**15:37**

But I still love them. I think about my daughters who come home and maybe one of them didn't make the team that she tried out for. And is my heart broken for her? Of course, it is. I think about my experience as a father who sees his kids laying in bed at night, and all I want more than anything else in the world is for them to live well, full, good, and beautiful lives.

**16:09**

Jesus invites us to think about our own experience as we think



about the goodness of the father. One of my favorite writers is a guy named Richard Rohr. And Richard Rohr has written a number of books, but one called Falling Upwards that explores the journeys that we experience in our life and how we come to see God as a good father. I love this quote. Here's what he has to say, that God does not love us if we change.

**16:35**

God loves us so we can change. Right? I don't love my daughters so that they can change. I don't love my daughters if they change. I don't love my daughters if they do the right thing every time.

**16:51**

I don't love my daughters if they make A's and if they make the team and if they come home and have succeeded in all the proper ways. I don't love my daughters if they change. Think about this. I love them no matter what. And if we take that love seriously, it has the capacity to change us deep down inside.

**17:17**

My dad grew up in a home where his father never told him, not once in his life, I love you. That does something to you. And so when I came up as a little boy, literally every single time my dad walked out the door, going to work, closing my door before I go to bed, even when I'm 16 years old and he is the most embarrassing human being on the planet. Do you know what he told me? Hey, I love you.

**17:50**

Those words shape us. See, God doesn't love us if we change. God loves us so that we can change and become the sorts of people. Do you know who God is? Jesus says.

**18:06**

God is the heavenly father who wants to give you good gifts. And and some of us are sitting here this morning, and you're like, Will, this is so abstract. This is so kinda outside of the day to day rhythms of my life. But again, I want you to remember that the abstract way we think about things has the potential to change our lives, because what? Words create worlds.

**18:30**

Words create worlds of possibility. And if you want to live right, you gotta think right. In theological circles, we use words like orthodoxy. Right? You wanna go out of here this morning and seem super impressive to all of your friends, I want you to use the word orthodoxy.

**18:46**

It's a Latin word that means right belief. Right belief is so crucially important to living the Christian faith well.

Understanding the nature of who God is is absolutely essential to living well. Because on the one hand, you have orthodoxy, and on the other hand, you have orthopraxy, proper practice. And here's what I want you to understand this morning, that proper practice is essential.

**19:17**

Jesus invites you to have love and joy and goodness and hope right here in the present moment. You don't have to wait to experience the kingdom of God. It can be yours right here in the present moment. That's the call of the gospel. Right practice is essential.

**19:35**

But if you want that joy, if you want that goodness that God promises us, listen to me. If you want the orthopraxis, it begins with orthodoxy. If I can translate, maybe make it make it a little more less pretentious, here's what I would say, that proper thinking leads to proper living. Proper thinking leads to proper living. And if you do not understand the nature of who God is, listen to me, you will never live into the fullness of who God has created you to be.

**20:11**

Later on in his book, Richard Rohr says that Christianity has created some of the world's worst people, and also some of the world's best people. And I am convinced that that is the case because we don't understand who God is. Proper thinking leads to proper living. One of the great saints of the church, one of the people who shaped the Jesus way more than anybody else is this guy named Paul. Wrote 13 letters in the New Testament, the

majority of what you read when you open up your Bible and flip to the last third of it.

#### **20:46**

And in one of his greatest letters to the church at Rome, here's what Paul has to say in Romans 12. Don't let yourself be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. But listen to this, instead, be transformed by the renewal of your minds, so that you may work out what God's will is. What is good, acceptable, and complete. When you come to faith in Jesus Christ, the first call on your life is to be renewed in your mind.

#### **21:20**

Because proper thinking will lead to proper living. And understanding who God is will ultimately lead you to live well. Who is God? And Jesus says he is a good, good father. You guys, there is no better example of how this works out and plays out in our lives than thinking about Paul himself.

#### **21:42**

Who who, if you don't know the story of Paul, he was a Pharisee, one of the most, zealous Jew Jewish sects of the time, of the age. His entire goal was to follow the Torah every single step of the way, to be the most religious, to be the most perfect, to be the most upright person, to earn the love of God, so to speak. Because Paul, in his Jewishness, in his Phariseeness, he saw God as a task master. How would you describe God as somebody who wants me to follow all the rules? And he had given his life to doing just that sort of thing.

#### **22:18**

And if you go and you read the New Testament, what you will find is that prior to meeting Jesus, Paul was angry. And Paul was hateful. And Paul spent all of his time persecuting the church because he couldn't believe in a God who was that good and that loving. But then what we find in this beautiful story in Acts chapter nine is that Paul meets Jesus. And it is fascinating to me that when you meet Jesus, if we understand it properly, something shifts in our life.

#### **22:49**

When we meet Jesus, it can transform the essence and the reality of who we are. Because over the minute when Paul meets Jesus, he goes from someone who is angry and vengeful, because that's who God was, to seeing something profound that Jesus loves me. That God loves me, and he gave himself for me. And Paul's life was radically flipped upside down. And understanding properly who God is, his life turns into one that is filled with joy.

**23:23**

Yes, it still has its bleak moments, but it is one that is filled with hope and goodness and grace. At the heart of Paul's understanding was who God is. At the heart of Paul's new understanding was who we are. In Galatians three, here's what he has to say, we are children of God. We haven't done anything to earn it.

**23:48**

We haven't done anything to deserve it, but we are children of a good father through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. See, if you understand who God is, it has the capacity to fundamentally change your life. I wanna make a claim over us this morning, that you become like the thing that you worship. You become like the thing that you worship. And let me be very clear to you this morning that every single one of us worships something.

**24:21**

The question is not if you worship, the question is what do you worship? We all worship something. And what I want you to understand this morning is that you will become like that which you worship. In Psalm one fifteen, Paul or the the psalmist is writing a letter. It's a song.

**24:41**

It's a prayer. And he says, god, not to us, but to your name, there's glory. And in the rest of Psalm 115, he lays out that all the other nations are just practicing idolatry. Everywhere they look, God, we wanna give you glory, but people are creating idols. And those idols, they can't hear.

**25:03**

And increasingly, the people that worship them can't either. And those idols that they create, they can't see. And the problem, God, is that they can't see anymore either. Those idols are creating something in them that isn't good and it isn't right because people become like the thing that they worship. And Psalm 115 ends on this note as the message translation that we need to pay deep attention to this morning.

**25:32**

That those who make those idols, they will be like them because you become like the thing that you worship. Think about it. Those who make idols, they're gonna be like them. And all those who trust in them will be as well. Friends, do you understand that?

**25:53**

You become like the thing that you worship. And we all worship something. If you were here this morning and you worship money, which if you check your bank account more than once a day, that's probably you, I want you to understand something. You will become greedy, and you will never feel like you have enough. We're gonna cut on the Super Bowl this evening, and we're gonna watch all the incredible commercials and the sexualization of our culture that has run rampant.

**26:26**

And if you are here this morning, and you worship beauty, which is a constant temptation in our world, let me tell you something. You're always going to feel ugly. You become like the thing that you worship. And if we believe that at the heart of God, God is angry, God is vengeful, God is wrathful, Do you know what will happen? We will become that way too.

**26:56**

In the last church where I worked, you guys, I'll never forget it. My job was to go and, interact with people in their twenties and thirties, and it was a beautiful, fun job. And I went and I met with a guy named Derek. And I talked to Derek, and I said, Derek, your grandmother has been at our church for thirty years, and you're not going anywhere right now. Derek, you need to come and be a part of First Baptist.

**27:16**

Come on, your family goes here. I'll never forget what he said. He looked at me and he said, Will, my grandmother is the meanest human being I've ever met in my life. And if she goes there, I don't want any part of it. And listen to me, you guys.

**27:36**

I'm serious. While I laughed, I went and I got to know his grandma. And you know what I found? She was, in fact, one of the meanest people that I had ever met. And so was the God that she said she worshiped.

**27:54**

Always judging, always holding people to a standard that none of us can meet. She became like the God that she worshiped. And the invitation for us is to hear Jesus say, which of you, if your kid asked you for bread, would give him a stone? Which of you, if your child asked you for a fish, would give them a snake? And if you, wicked though you are, wanna give good gifts, then how much more does your heavenly father wanna give to you?

**28:27**

Do you hear the question of Jesus? Because it's not just a question, it's an invitation to see the world in a fundamentally different light. To see God for the truth of who he is. Yes, he is holy. Yes.

**28:46**

He is just. He is perfect in all of his ways, as we sang just a few minutes ago. But even more than that, he is a good father who loves you. You. The question I want to ask you this morning is this, do you trust what Jesus says about God?

**29:04**

Do you trust what Jesus says about God? Y'all some of us are here this morning and it's time for us to turn in a different direction. Some of us are here this morning, and when we think about God, maybe not with the people we like, but we look at the broken world and we say God's gonna bring wrath on them and vengeance on them. Maybe it breaks God's heart to see the world the way it is. Maybe instead of wrath, God wants to bring

wholeness and fulfillment.

**29:33**

Some of us are here, and our view of God is distorted and wrong. And today is the day where you trust what Jesus says is true. And maybe maybe even more than that, some of us are here this morning, and what you need to know is that God isn't what you've been taught. That God isn't angry at you. That God doesn't hate you.

**29:58**

But God is the father who loves you so that you can become the person he intends for you to be. That God is the father who waits with his arms wide open to receive you home. Do you trust what Jesus says about God? Because if you do, it has the potential to change everything. Because words create worlds.

**30:27**

Words create worlds. And the world you are invited to inhabit is one that says plain and simple, God is good. God is the father who welcomes us home. So may that be true. Not only in your life, but may that be true for the whole of God's creation.

**30:48**

I want you to join me. Let's take a few moments and let's pray together. Lord, you are a good father. Some of us are here this morning, and we were raised with such a a contrary view. Some of us were here this morning, and, God, we heard so much about your anger, so much about your justice.

**31:09**

God, some of us are here and we heard so much about your wrath that, Lord, frankly, we are scared to approach you. We we are scared we're not worthy. But God, this morning, help us to trust in something better. God, help us to trust that what Jesus says is true, that you are a good father who wants to give us good gifts. God, may this shape not only how we treat each other, but may it shape most of all how we deal with you.

**31:39**

God, for those of us who are here today and we have believed in a lie for far too long, Lord, give us the ability to change our path

today, to trust in your goodness, to trust in your love so that we might live and we might live well. Because God, you are good. May we believe that deep down in the depths of our bones this morning. Be with us as we continue to worship and celebrate your faithfulness, your goodness, God. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray, amen.