



Text: John 14:13-14¹

Scripture Reading: Jn 14:13-14; John 15:7; Mk 11:22-24; Lk 11:9-10

Title: Whatever?!

Series: Talking With Our Father, Part 7

Date: April 19, 2009

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

John records this promise made to us by Jesus...

“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:13-14

Our text this morning is one of the most incredible, powerful, glorious and under-utilized promises of the Word of God. I think the reason it is so under-used is that it simply seems to be too good to be true. We are so conscious of false promises, of things offered with hidden strings attached, of the escape clause – “if something seems too good to be true, it usually is” is a truism that many of us have learned to live by, and rightly so. There are people who will use every trick in the book to hood wink us into buying that “swamp land in Florida.”

But all we need to do is step back and look at who made the promise to realize that this promise is too good to be false. This is a promise that comes from the lips of the Son of God and when He makes a promise, it’s got to be good!

Mark reports Jesus saying,

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:24

John also tells us that Jesus promised us that...

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” John 15:7

Luke simply tells us that Jesus said...

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you” Luke 11:9

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“Whatever,” “anything” – I will give it to you! Just ask, it’s yours! “Whatever” is a wide open word. You name it! Whatever you wish! It seems too big, but remember who is saying it!

This is Jesus, the creator of the universe.

This is Jesus, the Saviour of our souls.

This is Jesus, the risen and living Lord.

This is Jesus, who will return to subdue the earth.

We’ve all had guests in our homes and we’ve said to them, “can I get you anything else?” If they asked us for a blanket for the bed or another helping of potatoes, that’s well within our power to give them and we do so gladly, don’t we? Now if they turned to us and asked us for a job, or money to pay bills we’d probably be a bit stuck.

We’ve all had friends and family who’ve been sick or broken hearted over a loss and we’ve said to them, “if there’s anything I can do, just call.” If they asked us to look after the kids or make some meals, or sit with them, we’d gladly do it. It’s within our power to do so. But if they asked us to heal their loved one, or forgive their sin – we’d be out of our depth.

But there is nothing we can’t ask Jesus for! He has authority and power to do anything. As Paul put it, **God...**

“is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20

There is no “whatever” that is beyond Jesus’ power and authority. But please understand that Jesus’ promise is not an invitation to selfish, self-centered grasping for “whatever” pipe dreams and wishes dance across our minds.

Dr. Howard Hendricks, a popular Bible teacher from Dallas, Texas, tells of a time when he was young man before he was married. He was aware that certain mothers had set their sights on him on behalf of their daughters. One mother even said to him one day, “Howard, I just want you to know that I’m praying that you’ll be my son-in-law.” Dr. Hendricks always stops at that point in the story and says, very solemnly, “Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer?”

Howard Hendricks was thankful that Jesus’ promise of “whatever” wasn’t a wide-open invitation to frivolous, self-serving demands. You might have had an experience similar to Dr Hendricks. Someone might have told you that they were “praying” for you, but in reality they were “preying” upon you in prayer! Please be assured that God doesn’t listen to those prayers. And you might have brought requests to God which in hindsight you’re glad God never answered according to your will.



In the Bible there's a sad example of the danger of getting whatever we ask for. King Herod, a contemporary of Jesus and John the Baptist, was holding a feast and he wanted to impress his dinner guests with his generosity and wealth. A young girl, the daughter of his consort Herodias, greatly pleased Herod and his guests with her provocative, scandalous dancing and so Herod said to her...

“Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.’ And he vowed to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.’” Mark 6:22-23

The girl consulted with her mother and came back to Herod with the request that the head of John the Baptist be brought to her on a platter. John the Baptist was being held in Herod's prison for speaking the truth about Herod's immoral relationship with Herodias, who was in fact his brother's wife. Herodias saw an opportunity for payback in Herod's open-ended promise and so she asked for John's head on a platter. The Bible tells us that...

“the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.” Mark 6:26-28

Herod was bullied into complying with the request because he didn't want to appear weak before his guests. Please know this: ***Our God cannot be bullied.*** He cannot be forced by our lack of wisdom or insight into giving us “whatever” we ask for. He is not afraid to say “no” to our “whatever” when we ask for things that are not according to his will and purpose.

Prayer is a conversation with Our Father in heaven. Prayer is not a machine into which we drop “prayer tokens” so that we can “get stuff” from God. Prayer is the verbal currency of our relationship with our Father. Whenever we come to God to coerce from him whatever we want thinking that we have the right to force his hand because we're following some theological prayer formula, whenever we do that we're violating our relationship with our Father in heaven. We're treating him just like the prodigal son treated his father when he said to him...

“Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.” Mark 15:15

Give me what is mine! Years ago an Asian friend of mine pointed out something to me that I had missed with my western eyes and ears. What this son was really saying to his father was, “I wish you were dead so that I could have what is coming to me!”

When we come to God with a coercive, demanding, arrogant, self-centered attitude, we are dishonoring our Father in heaven, just as much as the prodigal



son dishonored his father. Jesus' promise to give us to us "whatever" and "anything" we ask is given to us in the context of a relationship with our Father in heaven that is warm, respectful, close and sincere. This morning I want to sketch out for us four facets of our relationship with our Father that provides a framework into which we place Jesus' promise to answer prayer. It's only in this framework that Jesus' promise can be fully appreciated and understood.

The first facet of our relationship with God is found in John 15:7 where Jesus tells us:

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." John 15:7

Jesus' promise to answer prayer is made to those who live in His truth

There are two important truths in John 15:7 that we need to grasp.

First of all, we need **to live in the One who is the truth**. To "abide" in Christ means to rest in Him, to trust in Him, to have a living, connected relationship with Him. In John 15 we find that Jesus has been teaching his disciples about fruitfulness in their spiritual lives. He's been using the analogy of a grape vine with them. Just like the branches of a vine draw their strength from the vine when they are attached to it, Jesus has been teaching his disciples that they need to be attached to him so that they can draw their strength from him. A cutting from a vine will not thrive for long without being attached to root stock to provide it with nutrients. When we put our faith in Christ we become attached to him as the root and source of our lives.

Without this faith relationship with Christ, we have no guarantee that our prayers will be answered. But once we are connected to the Vine, then the promise becomes effective for us.

Are you connected to Jesus, today? Are you trusting in Him day by day for whatever you need?

Secondly, we need **to live in the truth of Jesus**. Jesus' words, his teaching, need to be part of our lives. As we learn the Word of God, as our lives are shaped by Jesus' life, as our desires are increasingly conformed to Jesus' desires, our prayers are more likely to reflect the will of God. When we pray the promises of the Word, we can be sure that we are praying in accordance with God's will and we can be sure that God will answer. We can rest, remain, trust, abide in, the promises of God.

While we're following the revealed will of God, we can be confident that we're on the right track. Some years ago I read a story about blind skiers. These brave people are unable to see the mountain slope and so they depend upon a guide to



verbally or physically direct them as they speed down the hill. In prayer, we're like blind skiers. As long as we are connected with our Guide, Jesus Christ, as long as we follow our Instructor, listening to his instructions on where and how to turn, we'll make it down the mountain safely.

If you want Jesus to answer your prayer, **live in his truth.**

The second facet of our relationship is found in John 14:13-14. Jesus promises us...

“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:13-14

Jesus' promise to answer prayer is made to those who ask in his name

What does it mean, to ask in Jesus' name?

First of all, it means that **we appeal to His character** for our need. A few weeks ago we talked about **“giving God reasons”** for answering our prayer. We talked about framing our prayers by declaring to God how our requests fit what we know of his character and his will from what he has told us about himself and his purposes in the Bible.

Above all things, “name” in the Bible stands for all that a person is. We read at the beginning of the service that God has given Christ “the name that is above every name.” (Php 2:10) Someone has estimated that there are 143 names in the Bible that are attributed to Jesus. These describe his character and his work and Jesus invites us to pray to him in ways that are in keeping with the things which his names declare about who is and what he has done. Among other things, Jesus is:

- **The Lion of the tribe of Judah** – Do you need someone to fight a battle for you? Then ask the Lion to defend you.
- **Man of Sorrows** – Do you need someone to come alongside you in your grief and pain to share your burden? Then ask the One whom God appointed to bear our sorrows to carry your pain.
- **The great Shepherd** – Do you need someone to show you the way through life? Then ask the One who is the Way to be your life guide.
- **The Bread of Life** – Are you hungry for more in life? Then ask the Bread to fill you.

Here are just a few more of the descriptive titles and names that Jesus bears...

- **Ancient of Days,**
- **Chief cornerstone**
- **Our Hope**



- **Faithful and True**
- **Friend of sinners**
- **Immanuel, “God with us”**
- **Prince of Peace**

And there are so many more!

Secondly, to ask in his name means that **we call on His authority** to ask for what we need.

The “whatever” we need is part of the glorious inheritance that Christ gave us when we became children of God. John tells us that Jesus gives to everyone who believes in him...

“the right to become children of God....” John 1:12

And because we are children of God, we have an inheritance right within the family of God. The Apostle Paul tells us that...

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ....” Romans 8:16-17

Our inheritance is one that Christ purchased for us at the cost of His life. We have been made heirs with him. We have been given a gift in the name of Christ – he made it all possible. So when we come to God and ask for a need to be fulfilled in Jesus’ name, we’re making a withdrawal, so to speak, from the account that Christ established for us in his name. This account can never be depleted, so we can make as many withdrawals as we wish. Christ has given us the privilege of using his name in making our requests of our Father.

Thirdly, to ask in his name means that **we seek His honour** in making our requests.

In answering our requests the Father is “glorified in the Son” whenever prayer made in Jesus’ name is answered. Rico Tice is the author the Christianity Explored Bible study that I lead. In one of his teaching videos, he shares some insights on prayer that I’ve found helpful. As he frames his petitions to God, Rico asks the following questions of his requests:

- **Will it honor God and accomplish His purposes?**
- **Will it benefit God’s Kingdom?**
- **Will it benefit others?**
- **Will it help me to know God better and be more godly?**



Using the “name” of Christ in prayer is not some verbal formula that we attach to our prayers to make them “work.” That’s magic; that not prayer. When we rattle off some thing or other and throw “in Jesus name, Amen” on the end so that we’ll get what we ask for, we’re guilty of trying to coerce or bullying our Father into doing whatever we ask.

I got caught in this kind of “formula” prayer by a pastor who was doing some discipleship study with me. At our first meeting he asked me to pray. I prayed something and said, quickly, “in Jesus’ name, Amen” at the end. The pastor asked me, “What did you say?” I could barely remember, so he repeated it for me. I had rattled off “in Jesus’ name” without any real understanding of the words I had spoken. I was using Jesus’ name as if it were some kind of religious punctuation.

“In Jesus’ name” is not punctuation we attach to our prayer; it’s the attitude that forms our prayer. Our requests should be ones that will bring glory to Him as he answers them. When He provides us with a job we need, He gets the glory. When He provides us with the money we need, He gets the glory. When He gives us the health we need, He gets the glory. When He provides us with “whatever” we need, He gets the glory.

We need to **live in His truth**: Living daily by faith in the Jesus who is the Truth and living in obedience to His Word.

We need to **ask in His name**: Ask in agreement with His character, calling on His authority and seeking His glory.

The third facet of our relationship is found in Mark 11, verses 22 and 24. Jesus tells us...

“Have faith in God ... Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:22, 24

Jesus’ promise to answer prayer is made to those who believe in his ability

Do we realize that we’re praying to God? By God, I mean the Creator of the universe, the One who holds the worlds together; the One who spoke and it was so; the One who forms the rain and the snow and thunder. We’re talking about the all powerful, all knowing, ever present God of grace and mercy who had demonstrated his love for us in the cross of Jesus Christ.

It shocks us sometimes when our God answers in ways that make our minds spin and our heart’s race. This isn’t a new problem.

In Acts 12 we read the story of the imprisonment of Peter for preaching the Gospel message of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Bible tells us that the



church gathered and earnestly prayed (Acts 12:5) for him. An angel came and miraculously delivered Peter from prison in the night. Peter went to the place where the believers in Jesus were praying and knocked on the door, but when the servant girl heard Peter's voice she was stunned – she went back into the prayer meeting and told them that Peter was at the door, but she forgot to open it! The others told her she was out of her mind; they told her that she must be hearing his angel! Finally, after Peter kept knocking, they came to the door...

“and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed.” Acts 12:16

These believers, many of whom had been witnesses of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, most of whom had been there on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in a wonderful way, were stunned and amazed by God's gracious and powerful answer to their prayers.

Believing in God's power to accomplish things in answer to prayer is much like the appeal of the father who came to Jesus with a son who was oppressed by an evil spirit. The father said to Jesus...

“‘If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” Mark 9:22-24

Most of our believing needs Jesus' help! Jesus is gracious to help us in our weakness because he knows that we don't know how to pray and that we don't understand the fullness of God's ability to help us in our need. We need His help to believe!

Just listen to these declarations of God's ability...

**‘Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.’
Jeremiah 32:17**

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Genesis 18:14

**“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
Matthew 19:26**

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” Luke 1:37

Songwriter Eugene L. Clark put this truth into song...

**“Nothing is impossible when you put your trust in God
Nothing is impossible when you're trusting in His Word**



**Hearken to the voice of God to thee, “Is there anything too hard for me?”
Then put your trust in God alone and rest upon His Word.
For anything, yes anything, for anything is possible with God.”**

Our God built the mountains, couldn't he tear them down if He wanted to?
Our God raised the dead, couldn't he heal the sick?
Our God filled the hills with gold, couldn't he provide the money you need?
Our God organized the universe for His glory, couldn't he bring order to your situation?

We've looked at three side of the frame of our relationship with God. Jesus' promise to answer prayer is made to those who...

**Live in His truth,
Ask in His name,
Believe in His ability.**

Finally, **the fourth side** of the frame that hold Jesus' promise is found in Luke 11, verses 9 and 10. Jesus said...

**“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”
Luke 11:9-10**

Jesus' promise to answer prayer is made to those who persevere until he answers

In the words “ask,” “seek,” and “knock,” are expressed by Jesus in a way in the Greek language that emphasizes that we are to keep on doing each of these things. The New Living Translation captures that sense with it's translation...

“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.” (NLT)

Why are we to “keep on” in prayer? Why are we to persevere and persist in prayer?

Perhaps we're asking without really caring about what we're requesting. The intensity and persistence helps to purge our prayers of frivolous requests.

Perhaps we're asking for selfish reasons. The delay enables God to show us the emptiness of our requests.

Perhaps we're unwilling to pay the price involved in the answer to our prayer. The delay makes us count the cost.



Perhaps we need to be humbled. The delay forces us to see how dependent on God we are for what we need. God does not jump when we snap our fingers.

In his teaching on prayer Luke 11 Jesus told his disciples a parable of a man who was able to get what he needed because of his persistence. He needed bread late one night and banged on the door of his friends house, banging and banging and calling out until he got what he needed. One Bible translation renders the passage by telling us that the man received what he needed from his friend...

“because of [his] shameless persistence.” (Luke 11:8 NLT)

In Luke 18 Jesus told his disciples a parable of a woman who was able to get justice from a reluctant judge because of her persistence. He told this story, we’re told, to teach his disciples that...

“they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1

Author Jerry Sittser sees persistence through the eyes of a parent. He wrote, “My kids have asked me for many things over the years – a CD player, bicycle, boat, car, house, exotic vacations ... You name it, they have asked it. I ignore them most of the time. I am as hardhearted as they come, a parent made of granite. My ears perk up, however, when they persist, because persistence usually means they are serious about something.” (as quoted in Yancey, Prayer, p. 151)

Reflecting on these Biblical stories of persistence in prayer, Philip Yancey wrote...

God views my persistence as a sign of genuine desire for change, the one prerequisite for spiritual growth. When I really want something, I strive and persist. Whether it’s climbing Colorado’s mountains, chasing the woodpeckers away from my roof or getting a high-speed Internet connection for my home, I’ll do whatever it takes. Do I show the same spirit in prayer?” (Prayer, p. 151)

Will we do “whatever it takes” so that Jesus will answer the “whatevers” and “anythings” we bring to Him?

Remember: ***Jesus’ promise to answer prayer is made to those who...***

***...live in His truth
...ask in His name
...believe in His ability
...persevere until He answers***

Christian poet Nancy Spiegelberg wrote...



**“Lord, I crawled across the barrenness to you with my empty cup.
Uncertain in asking any small drop of refreshment.
If only I had known you better
I’d have come running with a bucket.”**

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Song of Response: You Are My All In All**
- **Benediction:**