

Sometimes people are afraid of what God might do to them....

- What if God were to ask us to do something we don't want to do?
- What if He told us to go where we don't want to go?
- What if He calls us to a task we have absolutely no ambition to fulfil?.....

We're coming now, towards the end of the sermon on the mount, and next week will very nearly wind it up... And today, we get to hear more of what Jesus has to say to his disciples about prayer. And in prayer, Jesus wants us to ask and keep on asking, with confidence, because God will **always** give us **good** gifts. – you don't have to be afraid that the answers to your prayers will be bad – everything God gives, is good.

Often, God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we **want** them answered, because we either want them answered too quickly, or we're asking for the wrong thing. God will **only** give to us, what is good for us.

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. God, is not distant – God is not illusive. Ask, seek, knock. Receive, find, opened...

Now, that doesn't mean that God will give us **whatever** we ask for. It **doesn't** mean that as long as I'm persistent enough

– or provided I'm fervent enough in my prayers, that I'll get, whatever I set my heart on.

The key to understanding this passage, I believe are the words "good gifts".

God wants us to ask Him for '**good** gifts' – not for whatever takes our fancy.

But you know what? ... We often **won't** ask Him for His 'good gifts'. We ask Him for all sorts of stuff that's **not** good for us... We ask Him for all sorts of things, that are of **no** Kingdom value... Where as the stuff that really matters???... Well sometimes, we won't ask for **these** things, because of 'fear'... And the lesson, is "**Don't** be afraid"...

Today, I'm going to list 4 good gifts, that God wants you to have – He wants us to ask for these things... but we often **won't** ask, because of fear.

Number 1 that heads this list – is the greatest gift, that any of us can receive, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the fear that often holds us back..., is the fear of being 'born again'.

There are many people in the world, who would be happy to get 'a bit of religion', but they don't want to become, one of those 'born again' Christians – where their new-found faith just seems to take over their lives. And if that's you, I've got news for you, "There is no such thing as a Christian who is **not** born again". Gettin' a 'bit of religion', don't cut it. Jesus said, ^{John 3:3} ..., "**I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.**"

There is a radical transformation to be made, if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. To be born again, is to give up the old you, and to grasp hold of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, with every bit of your being.

There are some, possibly even here today, who have been messin' around the edges of the church (possibly for years) – they know the Holy Spirit is urging them to surrender completely to Christ, but they have not. – there is a fear of being born again – there is a fear, of giving yourself completely over to Jesus Christ.

Do not be afraid. God doesn't give bad gifts. If this is you, He's calling you out of darkness, and into light. He's calling you out of sin, and into holiness. He's calling you out of this world, and into His Kingdom. He's calling you out of death, and into life. Stop resisting God. – there's no reason to be afraid.

To be born again, is a **good** gift of God – the best gift.

A second gift that scares people, is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Luke recorded these same words of Jesus, he said this:

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" He personifies “good gifts” with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, is God, living on the inside... That'll change you – having God inside of you – that'll change ya,.... But it is a wonderful change.

Have you ever noticed the way houses change, depending on who lives in them? Some tenants can destroy a house in a matter of weeks. It gets filled with filth and grime. Rubbish attracts cockroaches and vermin, and their pets fill it with fleas and lice....

But even if you leave a house empty, it's not long until the garden dies, the yard gets over-grown... the gutters leak, cobwebs form, and the rats and mice move in....

But a good tenant, cleans the house. They maintain those little things that need doing, to keep it in good order...

And your life is much like a house. If you let the evil one in, your life will end up a mess, and it'll happen in double-quick time. And if you try and keep the Holy Spirit out, your Christian life will fall into a shambles – pretty quick... But when the Lord is resident in your heart – when you invite Holy Spirit in, and make Him welcome, He puts His house in order...

Sadly though, some people are scared of the Holy Spirit. They've experienced division within a church, and the Holy Spirit's been blamed.... Let me say, "That's not fair." God doesn't give bad gifts. And the Holy Spirit – God Himself – is a wonderful gift. The Holy Spirit doesn't divide a church – human sinfulness and Satan's meddling divides a church....

You see, the Holy Spirit brings power and order to your life. The Holy Spirit, brings power and order, to the church. And

Satan hates it, and so he does all that he can to try and disrupt what God is doing in people's lives.

And the tragedy is, that sometimes, when a movement of the Spirit, comes to a church, sometimes people get so caught up in their own personal experience, that they only think of themselves, and they stop living in love with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

As a parent, one of the greatest disappointments that I could imagine, is to give a wonderful gift to my child, only to see them selfishly, hoard it for themselves, and hurt other people with it. If that happens, I'll take that gift away. When Jesus taught His disciples about the good gifts of God, He brought it right back to their relationship with others.. V¹² ... in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Gifts from God, are good gifts. And the gift of the Holy Spirit, is a wonderful gift. And as you receive that gift, in everything you do, do to others, what you would have them do to you... And see what kind of a home-maker the Holy Spirit is....

Which brings us to the third gift – it's what I'm going to call the gift of transformation. If Jesus is resident in your life, He's going to do more than change the curtains... Get ready for the changes....

Some people are afraid of the changes that God will make in their life. They fear that, if they give up drunkenness, they won't fit in with their mates. If they stop swearing, people

won't take any notice of what they say. If they stop fighting and lose their tough exterior, people won't respect them...

Well, God wants to transform us, and that transformation is a good thing.

Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit ... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control.....

And we should be praying for these things – we should be praying for transformation.. Pray, that the Holy Spirit would turn your:

- hatred to love
- sadness to joy
- your anxieties to peace
- your cruelty to kindness
- your evil to goodness
- your unreliability to faithfulness
- your harshness to gentleness
- and your quick temper to self-control

These changes, are good changes. Don't be scared of what God will change in you.

And finally, the 4th gift, God wants us to ask for, are spiritual gifts.

Do you all know what spiritual gifts are?

Well, I'll tell you what they are not. Spiritual gifts are not, natural skills, talents, or abilities. God wants us to use those

for His glory as well, but they're not spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts, are a God-given ability to do something you couldn't otherwise do.

Here are a few examples:

- gift of healing – where people are miraculously healed when you pray for them
- the gift of preaching – where God takes someone who is probably a terrible public speaker, and fills them with a passion and power, to share the gospel
- the gift of evangelism – where listeners are constantly challenged and cut to the heart, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ
- the gift of speaking in other languages – where some people all of a sudden, begin to speak in a language, that they've never been taught, and other people can understand them
- the gift of discernment – where God gives people the ability to 'just know' if something is of God, or of human origin, or of the devil
- There's the gift of giving – where God gives someone the ability to earn money, and give it away to support missions, or ministries, or to feed the poor
- And the gift of mercy – where God fills someone with a love and compassion for those who are often hard to love....

That's just a few examples. But God gives all Christians spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 14 says, "**Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts....**" – Ask for spiritual gifts, and keep on asking... And then use them.

Some of us are really keen for spiritual gifts, and some of us are dead scared of them – what if God gives me an up-front gift, and I'm not an up-front person??? Or, what will people think of me, if I start healing people????

Well, I want to tell you that if you're fearful of these things, that probably makes you just the **right** person to receive spiritual gifts, and I say that because you don't want to draw attention to yourself. Spiritual gifts should always point people to Jesus Christ. They're not to draw attention to ourselves.

For example, I have a spiritual gift of teaching. I'm using it right now. Now, if you all go home today, saying, "Wow, isn't Michael wonderful", I've failed. But if you all go home today, saying, "Isn't the Lord wonderful", and feeling confident to pray and ask God for gifts, then God has been good, and has done His work through me.

God doesn't want **you** to do His work. He wants you to experience **Him** doing **His** work, **through** you.

So, don't be afraid of what Gifts God might give you. There are all sorts of fears, but ultimately, it's a fear of what we might become, or a fear of what God wants to actually do with us.... Get past those fears and trust Him, because God will only give you good gifts. Even if you feel a bit apprehensive about it, God won't give you anything that's not good for you... So pray with confidence, asking Him for His good gifts:

- For the gift of Jesus Christ, that you would be born again

- That He would fill you with His Holy Spirit – and take up residence in your life
- That He would transform your character
- That He would give you spiritual gifts and do His wonderful works through you.

Questions?