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Matthew 7:7-11 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. 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 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 good gifts to those who ask him!

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always **pray** and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Luke 22: 42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Matthew 27:45-46 45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Psalms 22:1-2, 23-24 - 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent. 23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! 24 For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

Romans 8:31-32, 38-39 31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? . . . 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

INTRO - In my last church there was a man who had cluster headaches. He told me that these headaches were considered worse than migranes. They would come on 2 or 3 times a year, and he would have to go into a dark room with no noise, and wait, sometimes up to a week, for the headaches and the excruciating pain to leave. It was not only painful, it was depressing. This was a man who was healthy and active except for this one physical ailment. I prayed with him, and prayed. While I was there the headaches never left. Where was God's answer? Surely he didn't want these headaches for this man. Why didn't he answer the prayers for healing?

How about you? Do you seem to have some unanswered prayers? Have you ever wondered if God had forgotten you? When you pray, do you at times wonder if God is even listening? Or, instead of an answer to your prayers, does it seem there is only silence?

I. God tells us much about prayer. In fact, we could study a whole series of sermons on this topic. But, there are some clear verses in God's Word that can help us begin to understand God's teaching on His answers to prayers.

A. First, God calls us to pray, and promises to answer. Look at the bulletin insert. In Matthew 7 Jesus says, *"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. 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 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 good gifts to those who ask him!"*

1. God tells us that he will answer our requests, open when we knock, he will reveal what we seek for. He'll answer our prayers.
2. He promises that when we ask, He will give good things.
3. That doesn't mean that He gives us what we want. Like a parent answering their child's requests, the Lord gives us what is good for us. But, isn't that even better than getting what we want?

B. Secondly, when we feel like God is not answering, He calls us to be persistent in continuing to seek God's help. In Luke 18 Jesus tells a parable. The purpose of this parable is found in verse 1. *Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always **pray** and not give up.*

1. God is listening, even when we don't think so.
2. Jesus tells us, "Keep praying."

II. But, what happens if you keep praying and praying, and you still don't get the answer you are expecting. What if you pray, and the answer seems to be other than even what God would want?

A. We have a number of examples of people in the Bible who prayed but did not get the answer they wanted.

1. The Apostle Paul was one of those.
2. Listen to what happened to Paul, according to 2 Corinthians 12. *2 Corinthians 12:7-10 7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he*

said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. Paul prayed and prayed for deliverance from a physical ailment, but God did not deliver him. Instead, Paul learned and grew in the grace of God.

4. In fact, Paul learned in weakness to trust in God, and to be strong, not because of his strength, but because of God's strength.

5. Even an apostle did not always have his prayers answered in the way he hoped, but with the good that God knew he needed.

B. But, Paul's prayer is small compared to that of our Lord Jesus. We have a number of examples of even our Lord not having prayers answered, or being left in question.

1. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed for deliverance from His coming suffering and death.

A. In Luke 22 we hear, *42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

B. But, Jesus had to suffer and die to pay for our sins. Jesus knew He would suffer and die, and rise again. He told this to His disciples at least 4 or 5 times.

C. What our Lord himself prayed for did not happen.

2. But, perhaps the most obvious example of abandonment or silence in answer to prayer for Jesus comes when our Lord is on the cross.

A. Jesus, in the midst of His suffering asks why He is abandoned. In Matthew 27:45-46 we hear, *45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

B. Jesus is God Himself. He knows this was God's plan. Yet he felt abandoned, like His Father was silent. So, he quotes Psalm 22. You can see part of that Psalm included on the bulletin insert for this sermon.

C. When we feel abandoned, like God is not listening, we are not alone. We have good company in our Lord.

III. You see, God always has an answer to our needs, and that answer is . . . Jesus.

A. Romans 8:31 and 32 says, *31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? .*

1. No matter how bad life gets, no matter how silent God seems, He has given His Son, who lived and died and rose for us. God gives us forgiveness, and eternal life through faith in Jesus.

2. God is with us, even when we can't feel it. Even when we don't know it.

3. The love of God in Jesus' death for our sin and His rising for our eternal life is God's answer to all our needs, eternally!

B. Romans 8 continues in verse 38 and 39, *38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

CONCLUSION - Recently there was a game show, "Who wants to be a millionaire?" When we pray and

pray and don't get the answer we want, we can be like the host of that show who asks, "Is that your final answer?" That is how we treat God. "God, is that your final answer? Give me a different answer, Lord."

Do you have a seemingly unanswered prayer in your life right now? God's final answer is always His love in Jesus. In fact, do you know that God is answering you right now? God's answer is Jesus, and God is giving Jesus today in the bread and wine, in the body and blood. You may feel your prayers are unanswered, but God has given you His Son, and through Him eternal life. Is there any better answer?