

Training in Righteousness

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[0 : 00] pigs and dogs. So let me read it again. He says, Jesus says this, do not give holy things to dogs. Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they might walk all over them. They might turn around and tear you to pieces. Now, when we hear Jesus talk about dogs, we're not meant to think about, oh, cute, cute little puppy, love dogs. And when he talks about pigs, we're not meant to think about cute, friendly cartoon farm animals. What he's talking about here is wild, ferocious, fierce, wild animals, dogs that live on the street, pigs that are wild and dangerous.

And he's saying, just imagine that you've drawn something really special for God, a nice picture for him, and then you gave it to a dog. What's the dog going to do with it? The dog's going to eat it. Or imagine if you had some nice pearls. We've got some great pearls here. Must be very, very valuable, this necklace. Very, you know, precious, precious stones on it. Imagine if we just threw it to some pigs to say, well, what do you think of it? They're not going to put it on, are they, and wear it. They're probably going to eat it and then try and eat me. Okay? What is Jesus saying though? What does he mean? Well, the pearls that Jesus is describing, the precious thing, is the news about him. And Jesus says that we're to tell the news about him to everyone in the world because everyone needs to hear about him. But sometimes when you tell someone about Jesus, they so mock the message and they so mock you for believing it, that actually there comes a point when it wouldn't be good to keep telling them about Jesus. They've already made clear they're not interested. And the more you tell them, the more they'll insult Jesus and the more they might come after you. And there comes a point when you have to think, I'm not going to give that to them anymore. I'm going to step away until I see more of a sign that they're interested. We can't decide that before we've told them because the most unlikely people come to know Jesus. The school bully might want to hear about Jesus. The most amazing people are coming to know Jesus all the time. Drug addicts, gang leaders, people in prison are coming to know Jesus. Muslims are coming to know Jesus. Atheists are coming to know Jesus. Even doctors, even some doctors are coming to know Jesus. Even lawyers, some of them are interested in Jesus. So we don't think, oh, because they're that kind of person, I won't tell them. But once we try and tell them, if they're really hostile, if they're really kind of against what we're saying and against us, then we can step away and think, well, I've tried and I'll keep praying for them, but I don't need to keep telling them. Otherwise, it can be dangerous that they keep insulting Jesus and insulting us. So we have to think about it. How interested is this person? Pigs and dogs, specks and logs. Now Jesus is going to turn from us judging other people and not judging other people to think about how we judge God in how we pray to him. So we're going to think in a moment about what he says about prayer in the second part. But first, we're going to think about that overall thought about letting our light shine. And we're going to sing the song we know about that.

[3 : 39] So the band are going to come up and let's get on our feet and we'll sing those words straight from Matthew chapter 5 that he used to start this sermon. Let your light shine. When you break a string, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. And to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 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? So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets.

Can't believe it. Right. Okay. So we're thinking about the next bit. Jesus is talking about prayer.

Okay. And he's talking about how we've had specks and logs and pigs and dogs. Now we're on stones and snakes. I don't know if you heard that. We're going to think more about it in a moment. Jesus is saying that we should pray and we should pray and pray. The words here for ask and seek and knock are words about keeping on doing it. Keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking. Now why does Jesus say that?

[5 : 52] It's because he knows that we stop praying. We don't keep praying. We think, oh, God will just do what he wants anyway. What's the point in praying? Or we think, maybe God is not really hearing me when I pray.

Maybe it's just the walls. Or we think, well, maybe God doesn't really care. Maybe he doesn't care that I think I need this from him. Maybe it's just not that important to him. He's very busy. So Jesus says, think about God as your perfect father, that he is kind, he is gentle, he's firm, he's generous, he's strong, he's wise. And he compares it with a funny picture of what it might be like to ask our parents for things and what they're like. So we're going to think a bit about that now. And Amy is going to come and help us straight from the kitchen. Straight from the kitchen, everyone. Yeah, which just may not be obvious that I've been cooking lunch all morning, but in case you didn't spot it, it's because of the hat. And then you can see my spoon. So I've been cooking all morning. But I just thought, halfway through church, don't you get a bit hungry and like want some elevenses? Does anyone else get a bit peckish halfway through church? Yeah, oh yeah, all the grown-ups like need a biscuit.

Would anyone, I thought I'd bring some snacks. Would anyone like a snack? Yeah? Okay, I've got some snacks. Has anyone got a favorite snack? What sort of favorite snacks have you got? Go on. Crisps. Did someone say crisps? Oh yeah, I've got some crisps. Oh, oh, would anyone like to open these crisps? Yeah, okay, Hannah, see if you can open these crisps. Here's some crisps for you. Just, yeah, there you go. You can have a snack on those. Oh, what is it? It's bubble wrap. It's not crisps. It's not crisps, it's bubble wrap. No, no, jokes, jokes, everyone. Okay, no, I've got some snacks. I've got some snacks. Okay, has anyone else got a favorite snack? Yes, down here. Did you say Susan's tray bake? I think you did. Oh my goodness. Would anyone like to see some? Okay, I've got some of Susan's ginger slice in here. Oh, oh, oh, in this nice tin. Would you like to open this tin? Yeah, there you go. There's some tray bake in there. What is it? It's a snake. Oh, it's a snake.

[8 : 34] There's a snake in the tin. That's very unlike me, isn't it, Martin? I wouldn't normally do that. I promise the lunch is actually pasta bake. Okay, okay, okay, last one, last one.

Um, did somebody, what other snacks do people like? What did you say earlier? Chocolate. Do people like chocolate? Martin, I might need your help for this one. Okay, okay, okay. A box of unopened celebrations. So this couldn't go wrong, could it? Right, we're on to the good stuff now. Let's see, let's see. There's the tab. Confirm it is unopened. There you go, there you go, there you go. Open that, there you go. That's for you, Martin. Special, special.

Oh, this is just from the shredder, Amy. It's just from the shredder. It's just paper from the shredder. It's not like me, is it? I wouldn't normally do that. No, you wouldn't normally do that, no. No, I don't know quite what's happened to Amy today. No, sorry. Okay, thanks, Amy. I'm not sure about Amy, actually. Okay, not sure about her. Okay, thanks, Amy.

So, do you see what Jesus is saying with the picture? Amy wouldn't do that, would she? Amy. And it's just like that. Jesus is saying, think about your own father, your own dad, and what parents are like. Do you remember that time? Do you remember the time when your mum or your dad asked you what you wanted for your packed lunch, and you said your favourite sandwich, and when it got to lunchtime and you put your hand in your lunchbox, it was a stone instead of, do you remember? And when you got home and you said to your parents, why did you give me a stone? They just laughed at you and said, you're so silly. Do you remember that?

Of course you don't remember that, because it didn't happen. Jesus is saying, your parents wouldn't do that. Okay, and they're sinners. They are sinners, and they know how to give good gifts to their children. How much more will God give good gifts to you? Because he is a good heavenly father. So what we have to do is keep asking and keep seeking and keep knocking. What stops us from keeping on asking God for things? Sometimes it's pride. It's that we don't think we need God's help. I think the grown-ups are maybe worse at this than the children, that we think we don't ask God because we don't think we need God. We forget that he gives us everything, and we have to keep asking. Sometimes we don't ask because we don't think it'll make any difference. I used to go

to football matches, and we used to have a song at football matches, If You Were Winning, and when we were watching the football match, and our team was winning, and the other team makes a substitution to try and make things better for them. So they take off a player, and they put on a new player, and our song was, it won't make any difference. It won't make any difference. Okay, sometimes we think like that about prayer. We think, I won't bother asking God because it won't make any difference. I take it from what Jesus says here that prayer will make a difference because he says it's the one who asks who receives. It's the one who seeks who finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. That's how God makes things happen. So as we hear all the ways that

[11 : 59] Jesus is training us to be righteous, I don't know how you feel. He's told us to be really prayerful, to keep talking to our Father. He's told us to look out for the planks in our own eye before we look at the specks in other people's eyes. Maybe you feel crushed by how we don't live like this.

We're not good enough for this. Let's remember that Jesus says that when we feel crushed, we can go to him, and he will forgive us. We don't get blessed by God because we're righteous. We get blessed by God because we know we need the gift of his righteousness. We know that we're poor in spirit, and he's the one who will forgive our sins and call us to be his children. So let's remember that and take this call as a good call to strive to be the kind of people he wants us to be. So we've got some questions to talk about now on the screen. Why don't we, if you're at the front, you could maybe go and find the people you're with, and we're just going to talk to each other. Just pick one of these questions and talk about it. You could talk about prayer, and how do these verses make us think about prayer, and what have we heard about God that would help us remember to pray, or maybe we can think about that plank and speck.

What is it that Jesus is saying, and can we think of a time when we've noticed the speck in someone else's eye but forgotten the plank in our own eye? Let's take a couple of minutes for that, and then we'll hear from Ali and Robbie again, and see if Robbie's finally got what it means to train with Jesus. So let's head back, and let's talk about these for a couple of minutes.