

Glen Ridge Congregational Church  
The Rev. John Sampson, Pastor



Title: Will It Be Given?  
Scripture: Luke 11:1 – 13  
July 27, 2025

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

One of the things I love about being back in New Jersey, is that I get to be back with my boys, the boys in blue, the New York Giants. I get to be reunited with a football team I have followed literally since I was in grade school.

Up where I used to live in the Adirondacks, I wasn't able to follow them very well because their games weren't show often on network tv, and they weren't carried on the streaming platforms I subscribed to, and I wasn't going to pay to get the NFL package. So, as that old song says, we're reunited, me and the Giants, and it feels so good.

Now the Giants haven't been doing so well in the last couple of years, but I can remember when they went to the Superbowl multiple times, and they actually won. Maybe that will happen this year. I am praying that it will. And I've actually started praying already. I'm not

one of those wishy-washing fans that only prays at the time of a game-changing field goal. I'm praying now, amassing that spiritual energy for them, so that it's already in the bank before they even start the season.

I share this hokey story with you because I think it's a funny way to enter into the subject of prayer. The focus of our story this morning. Now, prayer is an ocean. There are all kinds of prayer, and so many deeply faithful people have prayed, and reflected on prayer for centuries and millennia. There's the Jesus Prayer, also known as the Prayer of the Heart, where you say, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." You repeat it over and over again so it becomes like a mantra. There is Centering Prayer, which is based on the prayer technologies first developed in the early monastic communities, and it teaches us to let go of the thoughts and emotions that arise in us, emptying ourselves to the presence of God, which visits us in void of contemplation.

But when I say the word "prayer," for many of us, it can bring to mind a kind of prayer where we address God, and ask for something for ourselves, those we love, sometimes even for strangers, or the world. This kind of prayer is called intercessory prayer. It asks for God's intercession, God's action, in our lives, and the life of the world. "God, please let the Giants have a winning season this year." This is the kind of prayer Jesus is describing in our passage this morning.

When asked by someone to teach them how to pray, Jesus gives a shortened form of what we often call the Lord's prayer, which is found in its more well-known version in the Gospel of Matthew.

And this is one of the reasons why I love Jesus, and am his follower. Because Jesus always has a way of challenging us, and our assumptions, even if it doesn't appear that way at first. I think that is definitely what he is up to here.

If I were to ask you what you want to pray for today. What would you say? I've already let the cat out of the bag, as the saying goes. I'd pray for my Giants. But when Jesus hears us pray in this way he says, "Hey, slow down, you've missed something. You've missed God."

He reminds us of what our first movement in a time of prayer should be. Before we ask anything for ourselves, Jesus invites us to first praise God, and ask that God's great plan for the world be blessed.

And what a difference this makes.

Because this way of praying moves us beyond ourselves and reorients our spiritual posture to focus on God's values and God's perspective. It reminds us of who we are, and who we belong to, and whose world we live in. And although the way our reading is told suggests

that Jesus moves quickly to the next step in the prayer, I think this is a place to pause, and rest. Because this reorientation has the possibility of moving us out of the self-centered ways we often take for granted.

If I'm honest, my prayer of "God let the Giants have a winning season," is only tangentially about the Giants. In truth, it's all about me, and my wants, and my dreams, and my desires. And it sets up a transactional dynamic where God becomes a kind of cosmic Santa Claus, doling out the treats, instead of a moment of spiritual communion with the Holy One.

Think about your prayer life. When you pray, do you start by praising God? Do you begin by blessing God for all of the wonder of your life, even the hard parts? Do you come into spiritual relationship with the Sacred Source, first and foremost? To riff on the Psalms, in prayer are you still, and do you know that God is the Holy One?

When I start my prayer this way, and maybe you've experienced this too, when I get to this place of communion in my prayer life, I admit, some of the things I've wanted to ask for begin to slip away. I don't really care so much if the Giants have a winning season, or not. Because the very act of praying has changed me. I've changed in the Presence of the One I have approached.

Now this doesn't mean I don't still ask for the things that sit in my heart. It simply means that they now reside in a new context, a new perspective.

It's while sitting in this sacred experience that we can understand the rest of the prayer. It's not simply a generic prayer that can be useful to all people in all times. It is that, and it's something more. It's the expression of what our priorities become when we hold to the true Center of our lives.

Sustain my physical body so that I can continue to experience the wonder of this life.

Forgive me for the times when I fall away from you, and your dream for me.

Let me heal the moments of separation that divide me from your other children.

And let me avoid the experiences that will tempt me to be the kind of person I don't want to be, and the kind of person God doesn't want me to be.

Sitting in deep communion with God, asking God for the support and commitment to help us live into the life God calls us to, is the purpose of prayer. It is the door, which Jesus tells us will open to each one of us, if we but knock, even if sometimes we have to knock more than once, even if we have to knock in the middle of the night, even if we feel like our plea is only met initially with rejection and resistance and silence.

It's a beautiful gift.

Now, I'll keep on praying for my Giants. I'll keep praying that they have at least a winning season. But if they don't that will be OK, because I've got something better. You've got something better. Something we only have to ask for.

Amen.