

**“ASK OF ME.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden**

**April 19, 2026, 6:00 PM**

**Texts for the Sermon: Acts 1:12-14, 21-26; Matthew 7:7-11**

**Matthew 7:7-11** “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The greatest events on earth have come about as a result of asking in prayer.

The power of the prayers of godly, faithful men and women have turned back/appeased God’s wrath, driven away temptations and doubt, expelled demons and resisted and overcome the devil, it has called down from heaven the ministry of angels, subdued and quenched the violence of fire, extinguished wars, quieted the elements of nature, burst the chains of prison and death, opened the gates of heaven, cured sickness and disease, repelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stopped the sun in its course, and stayed the wheels of chariots, it has ruled over gods, shut up and opened up the storehouses of rain, stopped the mouths of lions and opened up closed wombs, reconciled enemies. By it God has been pleased and glorified and has been moved to supply all our needs. Prayer is an inexhaustible fountain, the mother of ten thousand blessings coming from the Father’s hand in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit (edited from John Chrysostom and Jeremy Taylor).

By prayer and faith people:

**Hebrews 11:33-35** ... conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became

mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection.

The earth has literally been moved, angels have been propelled into action, God's purposes have been advanced. The greatest successes that have come to God's cause are created and carried out by prayer.

Jonah asked and God saved him and delivered him from the belly of a whale.

Hezekiah asked and his prayer changed God's purpose and fifteen years were added to his life.

Elijah and Elisha both asked and a child was raised from the dead, and the powers of famine were broken (I Kings 18; II Kings 4).

**James 5:17-18** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Have you noticed most of the statues of great men and women everywhere in the world all show them standing. But the greatest men and women in the world, who have accomplished truly the greatest successes and victories, they are all kneeling.

Prayer is powerful and effective. Prayer puts the full force of God at work in our world. The advance and triumph of God's work on earth is powered by prayer.

Asking in prayer is the power God uses to shape the world and carry out His great work on earth.

How can we "move" a sovereign and omnipotent God? We do not understand. We simply obey because it is a law of the universe, as we obey other laws of the universe, knowing only that this is how things have been arranged.

The secret to all things in this life is prayer, and the solution of all your problems.

If all of this is true about prayer then the perplexing question is, “Why don’t we pray and why don’t we pray more?”

We have received the greatest invitation from the most loving, gracious, generous God to pray and ask Him for what we need, and it is without a doubt one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Christianity and in the church how much and how often this invitation is ignored and neglected.

**John 1:12** To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

**I John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

**Romans 8:32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

St. Augustine: “For what would he not now give to sons when they ask, when he has already granted this very thing, namely, that they might be sons?”

God has issued an immutable and eternal decree, ask of me. It is the simplest command. It can be done by anyone, any age, anywhere, anytime. We are to pray, and God answers.

**John 15:7-8** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

You are aware of the symbolism in Scripture of censors with incense which represents the rising prayers of the saints up to heaven.

**Revelation 8:3-4** An angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

No smallest prayer is ever lost, but, like the smoke of the incense on the golden altar, rises from the hand of the angel before God.

What is in your censers, what prayers are you filling your censers with? Prayers for your family, prayers for your church, prayers for salvation for those you know who are unsaved.

Consider filling your children's and grandchildren's censers with your prayers. Imagine the incredible legacy of prayer you can leave to your future generations by praying prayers now that continue to rise to the ear of God long after you are dead.

In the second commandment, God says that He shows "lovingkindness to a thousand generations to those who love Me and keep My commandments." If you are a Christian, please pray for your descendants. If you have great-grandchildren then you are four generations into the promise of God to show His hesed, steadfast lovingkindness. Pray God would enable succeeding generations to love Him and keep His commandments.

Imagine the poverty of the son or the daughter whose parents were too busy or too unbelieving to pray and left their censers empty.

The simplest and purest reason for prayer is that God has ordered life such that *we have not because we ask not*. We have not because we have not humbled ourselves before our God, our creator and redeemer. Prayer is the chief means by which we receive God's blessings and benefits. Prayer puts us in touch with the very power of God. The secret to our success this year rest completely on our ability to pray and our faithfulness in prayer.

Prayer is our highest and most holy calling. And when we are gathered in God's house it's right and best that we pray for He has said: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isaiah 56:7).

God has created us to be dependent creatures and He has issued an unchangeable decree:

*Asking* is the foundational rule of the Christian faith, the necessary duty of every Christian, the means by which God sends favor, blessing and help. No one is exempt from this rule, not even the Son of God Himself.

We should expect nothing from God if we have not asked. The work that is before us as a church is spiritual and it is utterly futile without spiritual help and strength and wisdom.

God has ordained in Scripture that certain men be set apart as elders and deacons for the good order of the church and for the spiritual leading and caring of the souls of the flock. He means for us to decide. No angels, no handwriting on the wall, but prayerful dependence.

Scripture teaches the method for deciding is twofold (see Acts 1:21-26). *First*, by prayerfully seeking His will. Prayer is at the heart of every passage that deals with the choosing of leaders.

And *second*, by exercising godly discernment in choosing only men who know Jesus, who have a relationship with Christ and are living a life that reflects it and are living a life dependent on Him. Leaders who know Christ and follow Christ will inspire faith and trust in their followers.

Nothing is more important to the life and health and future of this church than the choosing of godly leadership. A flock must have faithful shepherds.

As we prepare to vote to set apart men for elder and deacon, we must pray.

That's why I have called us to pray tonight. This is the most important decision facing us as a church this year. Please pray and fast and pray some more and continue in steadfast and earnest prayer all this week.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, lead us by your Holy Spirit to have your mind and heart in this most important matter. For the sake of the flock, please hear and answer. For the sake of the witness of your church in this community please hear and answer. For the sake of your glory and honor and for the sake of the glory and honor of Jesus Christ and His church, please hear and answer. We ask for your will to be done on earth and in your church and in this church as it is in heaven. We ask you to choose and set apart those who are most fit to serve in these offices at this time in your church. This is our earnest prayer. Have mercy on us and help us we pray, in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.