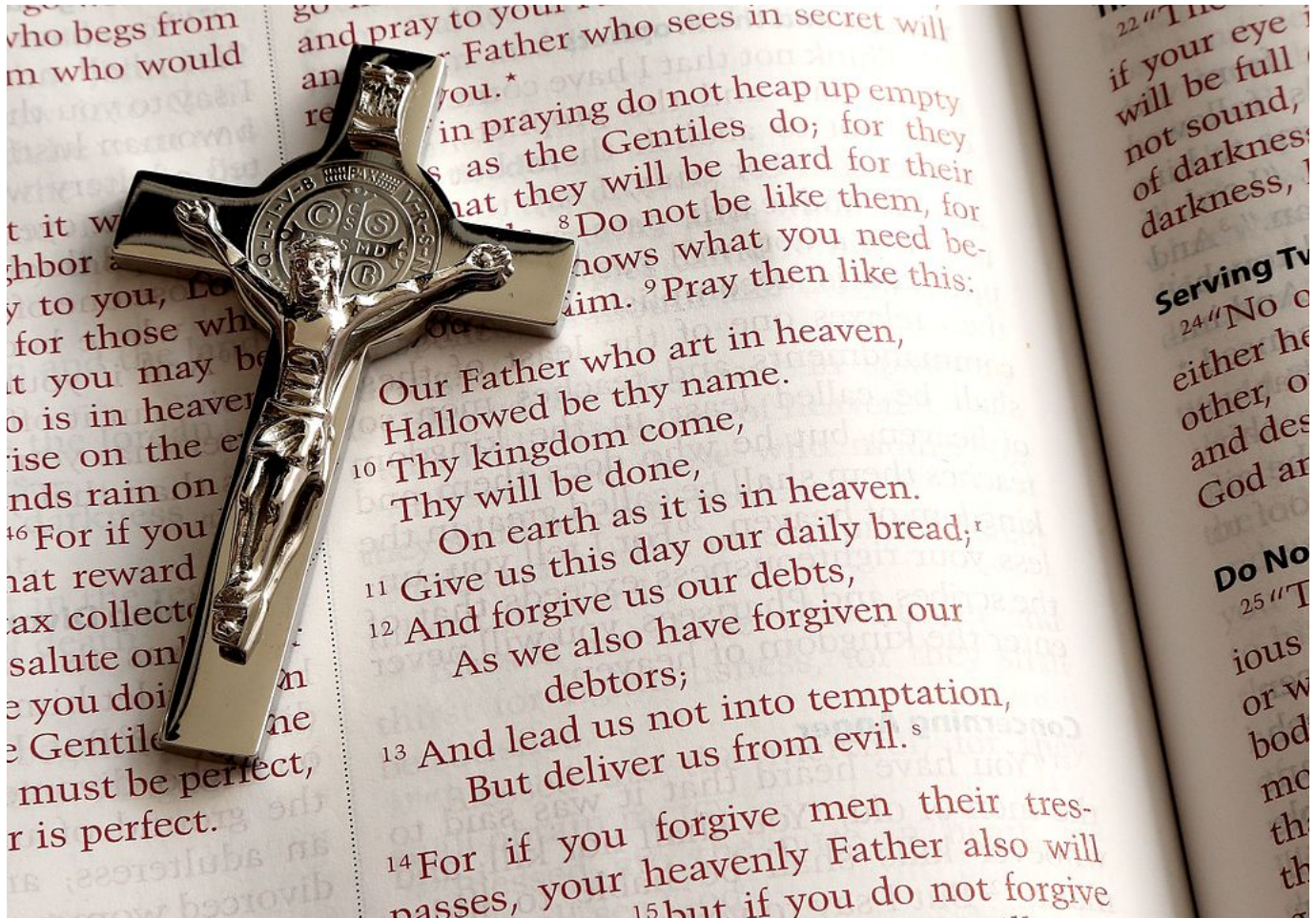


# “Reconciled—So Let’s Pray!” A Reflection on Luke 11:5-13



Lord's Prayer and Crucifix found on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Prayer)

## Co-missioners,

Today we follow up Carol Braun's reflection of last week with one by another lay writer, Chris Neumann. Both prepared these for a series of midweek prayer services that unfolded over Zoom this past Lent. The series was organized by our Thursday Theology editor, Jerry Burce, for the congregation he serves in Fairview Park, Ohio. The title for the series was "Reconciled, So Let's..."—a riff on a key exhortation in the Epistle lesson for

Ash Wednesday, 2 Cor. 5:18ff.: “We beg you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (v. 20).

Carol recalls Jerry as having encouraged his writers to understand “be reconciled” as a synonym for trust—specifically, trusting that God for his part has reconciled us to himself, “not holding [our] trespasses against us” (v. 19). She adds: “In the vein of Crossings-style theology, he also encouraged his writers to focus on what it might look like, in everyday practice, for us to take that reconciliation seriously: to go about our days as people relieved of the burden of having to please God, because we trust that he is already pleased with us.”

You’ll see this counsel reflected in Chris’s piece too. Chris has written for Thursday Theology several times before—most recently, in a memorable [personal essay](#) on the concept of eternity. In this week’s piece, he grapples with the central promise of Luke 11:5-13 with his characteristic frank honesty. From that grappling he leads us first through a recapitulation of the Gospel and finally to an invitation to action which, as Carol also recalls, was stirring to hear last month, even on a Wednesday night in Lent, even over Zoom. We trust it will invigorate your current Easter week as well.

Peace and Joy,  
The Crossings Community

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**Reconciled—So Let’s Pray!**  
by Chris Neumann

A reflection on [Luke 11:5-13](#) against the backdrop of [2 Cor. 5:16-21](#),

for a Lenten prayer service on March 23, 2022

I have a confession to make. And a bone to pick tonight.

This particular passage in all its familiarity...it irks me. It does. It causes my jaw to clench and my lips to purse, hiding teeth that are busy grinding away. For starters, on the surface it would seem easy ammunition for the crowd that thinks we're wasting our time with this Jesus thing. These folks who are anxiously waiting to poke holes in Jesus' words, words that in this case seem way too good to be true—especially in a world like this. What's worse though is the tendency I have of letting myself start nodding along in agreement. Maybe they're right. Maybe this is too good to be true.

It's just so easy to stumble when hearing this. Again, just now from Luke, Jesus is speaking to his disciples, people



Photo by [Luis Quintero](#): Found on [Pexels](#)

presumably meant to include the likes of you and me: “Ask, and it will be given to you; Seek, and you shall find; Knock, and the door opened to you. For everyone who asks receives...”

Sounds great, but...really?

Because to be honest, I can just as easily relate to the other parts of the reading—you know, the kid getting a scorpion or that friend in need who just got turned away, left standing at the door empty-handed.

I prayed for clarity, but I'm still confused.

I prayed for comfort, why then am I still afraid?

I prayed for peace, yet war rages on.

I asked for health but was given sickness.

I sought healing but instead found death.

Right?

Hey, not even asking for ridiculous things here. No money. No fame. No power. And seriously, we just heard it—Jesus' own words vividly illustrating the sheer absurdity of a father dishing out bad things when good ones are requested. I mean, c'mon, what kind of father doesn't want direction, health, and courage for his children? What gives?

And did you catch that bit in tonight's Psalm, "no good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly" (84:11b)? Huh? I just rattled off several good things that God withheld when I asked, so apparently it's me—I'm not good enough to get the answers I want. Exactly how much better do I need to be? And wait a second—what about that guy? He's nowhere near as good as I am but sure seems to be much better off. Good grief. Why bother at all?

The devil, of course prowling as always, jumping at the opportunity to pile on this frustration and doubt—Told you, he says...told you that you can't trust that guy! You know, if God's not coming through with no-brainers like peace and health then how on earth can you count on him for anything more than that,



huh? Guess it's time to get your act together and start walking more uprightly. And with that, I'm suddenly miles from the encouragement and promise Jesus was conveying to his disciples. Maybe you've felt this way from time to time too.

So what's next? Where does that leave us then? Well, let's start by remembering what God said to us in Isaiah this past Sunday morning—"my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways." How many times over have we said the Lord's Prayer—"your kingdom come; *your* will be done"? And yet when push comes to shove—I'm not sure I really mean it. Especially if *your* will means hardship and confusion for me. I thought God was supposed to be good. You told me to ask. I did!! I started to hope only to get let down. What a bitter pill that is to swallow!



Photo by [Aslak Sørderland](#): found on [Pexels](#) (Bible Text Added)

Sure doesn't seem to be getting any better. And yet, as the despair mounts and I find myself choking on that pill of my own pride—"while still a sinner" as Paul would say—the wonder

begins. In steps Christ with a few more words—take and drink, my blood shed for you. Wash that pill down he says, and in doing so, let your mind rewind to what we heard Ash Wednesday, what we'll hear again this Sunday—our theme at Messiah this Lent, from St. Paul to the Corinthians: “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” In other words, take a deep breath, don't worry, we're just fine. More so, even. We're inexplicably seen as the righteousness of God, of all things. Righteous! Nothing held against us. Nothing at all, on account of what has been already done for us in Christ. This clean account I now possess, by the way, includes my presuming to play God and decide how quickly my prayers should be answered and to what end; this, of course, to say nothing of the faithlessness that ensues when I hear the word 'No'. Again: clean, righteous. Me, you. Done deal.

Now, for a path forward. We really need look no further than the one who settled our accounts. “In *Christ* God was reconciling the world to himself.” It's important to note that we're talking about a crucified Christ at this point. That's because this same Christ, if you remember, the same Christ in fact that we just heard saying “ask and you shall receive,” also had a prayer of his get answered with a resounding 'No'! Imagine the irony in that! Pleading with God in Gethsemane for an alternative to the death he faced—remove this cup from me, he cried. No, said God. I have bigger things in mind. And here's another dose of that wonder—as Christ, for his part in response, doesn't complain, doesn't demand God explain himself, doesn't curse God for not getting what he wanted, and most importantly, he doesn't quit. No, he trusts God and takes up the cross that God uses for our reconciliation.

You know what? God has those same big things in mind for me and for you. Things bigger, so much bigger, than discomforts or fears or even poor health—those are some of our crosses to bear.

Hard as that is to understand. It's true just the same. In fact, in all those things, those 'no's we hear, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, as Paul says to the Romans. We are reconciled through that Christ who refused to quit on us. It's time we all started thinking big too.

Keep these things in mind next time we pray. And pray we should!

Let's continue to pray the way Jesus taught us, '*your* kingdom come, *your* will be done'.

We *get* to say this, entirely confident in the very reason why we were reconciled: God not only wants us to be part of those big things, he's determined in his unthinkable love to make sure we're all a part of the big future he has waiting. To be sure, we will find it, and with the door wide open no less.

Let's continue to pray for health and peace, and our daily wants and needs.

We *get* to unload those anxieties and hopes onto the one who cares for us, knowing that even an answer of 'no' in the present is most certainly not a 'no' in the future. Where God is concerned, that reconciliation ultimately means 'yes' for each and every one of us! Nothing in all of creation is ever going to change that. Nothing. Ever.

Let's pray for the compassion to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

That unbelievable gift of reconciliation and release that feels so utterly good? We *get* to regift it! We've even been



St. John's Anglican Church, Ashfield, New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Found on [Wikipedia](#)

entrusted to do so. On behalf of God. On account of Christ. Us! To relieve the weight of sin from someone else. To deliver that clean-slate feeling to someone, whether they deserve it or not. Think about the magnitude of that for just a second—what an enormous privilege we get to carry out! Let's try it.

Let's pray to ignore the devil's whisperings—lead us not into temptation.



We *get* to ignore any suggestion from anywhere at all that we don't measure up. We *get* to know that it is not up to us to balance our accounts, to make sure we do enough good to finish in the black when it comes to God. We don't even need to worry about whether or not it will happen. Already done. Christ's work. The devil no longer has a say in the matter.

Let's pray for the nerve to put the gift of our reconciliation to use.

My goodness, none of this is easy. Just the same, we *get* a free swing at all of it! Let's give it a shot. You and I—we have nothing to lose in trying. Lead a bible study. Let go of the grudge. Give money to church. Be patient with the check-out clerk at the grocery store. Start an outreach project. Drop someone who is sick a card or phone call. Fill the food pantry. Support humanitarian efforts. Pray for someone. Don't flinch a bit the next time something bad happens to you. The opportunities we *get* are countless!

And finally let's not forget to pray in joy and thanksgiving for this reconciliation of ours.

What a gift! "All things are ours!" Folks, we have an entire life of freedom out there waiting for us. Reconciled to God already, all things are ours. We *get* to honor Almighty God and put a smile on his face by trusting this to be true.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds forever trusting Christ Jesus. Amen.

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**Thursday Theology: that the benefits of Christ be put to use**

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