



# Mount Calvary Connected

November 12, 2020

*Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter that will be sent out each Wednesday while the church is pressing "pause" on in-person gatherings. Our goal is to keep you connected to your faith and your church with messages from our pastors, health information, and ways to share Christ's love during our current national crisis.*

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## **A Message from Pastor Scott**

My musings on Israel's wilderness experience have been sedentary for some time now. As previously covered, Israel comes to Rephidim, meaning "resting place," in Exodus 17:1 and it rests—remains sedentary—for two full chapters. But once chapter 19 begins, the siesta ends. Exodus 19:2 informs us that Israel "journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness" before the mountain Moses would ascend to receive The Ten Commandments. This is a journey from rest to work. Israel rests at the resting place called "Rephidim" and then journeys on to Mount Sinai where it receives the commandments which are to define its work as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. As God's people, we are to both rest and work. It's an understanding of life that goes back to the Bible's very first chapter with God working for six days and then resting on the seventh. With this in mind, how are we doing when it comes to balancing rest and work?

Having just come back from what turned out to be a staycation, I can tell you I feel fairly rested. This was not the case when I returned from another staycation earlier this fall. During that time away, I realized I had been running on empty without really knowing it and that just one week away wasn't going to bring me back to normal. I suspect this might be true for a lot of us this year. If my own life and vocation are at least somewhat representative, there has been a lot of mental and emotional stress to bear this year. In the third verse of chapter three, the book of Ecclesiastes informs us there "is a time to break down and a time to build up." Normally these phases of life turn out to be like chapters in book, with more than one page of life separating them. But not this year!

For many of us there's been little to no gap between the breaking down and building up we've had to do. As the chair of our bishop's budget and finance team where I serve with our own Bill Layton and Paula Nihoff, I can tell you we've had to redo this year's budget four times in four months, with many of the revisions impacting people's lives quite directly. Here at Mount Calvary, Pastor Jonathan and I, along with a number of key volunteers, have had to rethink and redo worship numerous times, as we've also had to figure out how to visit, counsel, baptize, confirm, marry, and bury in ways that not only help those in need, but are also safe for all involved. Add it all up and this amounts to an awful lot of breaking down and building up with no real break in between. I suspect many of you have experienced your own version of this pattern. It can tucker you out, with every new day tempting you to expend even more of yourself. Let's do our best to see that this not happen very often. We're built not just for work, but also for rest. Let's make sure to rest so we might experience anew the One who has promised to give us the rest we need to keep functioning at a high level (Matthew 11:28). But after Jesus gives us the rest we need, let's also get back to work.

Like Israel before us, our work as God's people is to be done in accordance with the commandments God once handed down at Mount Sinai. In the New Testament, Jesus sometimes speaks about the most

important commandments (Matthew 22:34-40), as he also sometimes hands down new commandments (John 13:34). Though it might seem like it, this doesn't find Jesus editing the commandments Israel receives at Mount Sinai or departing from them altogether. What Jesus is up to is the work of a good preacher and teacher. He's making things clear and concise so there's no confusion about when we do and do not work for God. According to Jesus, our best source of information about God, the commandments Israel receives at Mount Sinai tell us that we work for God when we love God by making life better for others so that the community on which we all depend is as strong as possible. As it's put so poignantly in one of the New Testament's many letters, "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen," (1 John 4:20). And so, near, far, and in between, who do you see that needs some love? After Jesus has given you rest, go to work for God by giving them the love they need. It's what we do as God's people. Doing both, not just one or the other, we rest and we work out the love the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Pastor Scott

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### **LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION**

At Mount Calvary Lutheran church, we strive to spread the good news of the gospel by any means available. Today's technology allows us to provide alternatives to in-person worship. This includes social media such as Facebook, internet live streaming, recorded sermons, and through FM radio broadcasts.

Mt. Calvary hosts live broadcasts of the liturgy at 8:45 AM Sunday mornings. The broadcast can be heard by tuning your radio to 88.3 FM if you are near the church. We can also stream the service live over the internet. By clicking the following link, you can gain access to the live stream audio. <https://streams.radiomast.io/96172026-6cba-407b-9090-e150b471ae0e>

We want you to stay connected to Mount Calvary, even if you cannot be here in person. Help us spread the good news of the gospel by inviting friends to tune in, as well. Everyone is welcome to use any of these methods to join us and hear the message and teachings of Jesus Christ. Facebook Live versions of the service will be made available on Wednesdays most weeks, but on other days as well depending upon the schedule of the preaching pastor. Our Facebook page is found at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

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### **Backyard Ministries Socks and Toy Collection**

As we enter the holiday season, they are asking that we once again collect a pack of socks and a \$1 toy for the children of Coopersdale. Just like the hats and gloves, labeled bags (size and gender) will be in the narthex. Once you have the items, you can return them in the bag to the blue bin outside the church, or the labeled bin in the narthex. All donations must be in by Wednesday December 16. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Backyard Ministries Hat and Gloves Collection**

Thank you to everyone who donated hats and gloves for Backyard Ministries! All bags were filled and delivered!

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### **Family Kitchen Christmas Collection**

Each year the Family Kitchen has a Christmas dinner where they give the attendees a gift basket. This year Mt. Calvary is responsible for providing boxes of cereal for the baskets. If you would like to donate a box of cereal, you can place it in the blue bin outside the church, or the labeled bin in the narthex. All donations must be in by Wednesday December 16. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880.

## Meetings

**Monday, November 16th, WELCA Meeting 6:00 PM**

**Tuesday, November 17th Meetings**

**6:30 PM**

All Parish – Sanctuary  
Social Ministry – New Lounge  
Stewardship/Administration – Conference Room  
Property – Classroom

**7:30 PM**

Council – Choir Room

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## Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries (ALSM)

### Virtual Shopping Event

**November 6th – November 25<sup>th</sup>**

Enjoy shopping from the safety and convenience of your home and support ALSM with your purchases. Each vendor is donating a portion of sales. Vendors will post to ALSM's Virtual Shopping Facebook group available products as well as links to order. To join the group visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/842577266570159> Thank you for your support of ALSM. We wish you a Happy Thanksgiving and a Blessed Christmas

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## The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree will be set up in the narthex. On the tree you will find gift tags with "Bag of Candy" written on them. Take a gift tag for candy and place candy under the tree. Also on the tree will be envelopes marked with different denominations. Return your envelope designated "Helping Hand Mission" in the offering plate or drop o at the Church Office. All donations will go to the Helping Hand Mission in Portage, PA. Mt. Calvary has been reaching out to the Helping Hand Mission for many years. Thank you for being a "Helping Hand"!

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## Christmas Pageant

A slightly different holiday season calls for "A Slightly Different Christmas Pageant!" This year's Christmas program by the youth of the church is entitled "A Slightly Different Christmas Pageant" and will be social-distance friendly with families contributing pre-recorded segments that will be edited into a video to be shown in worship and online. If you have kids, watch for information from Pastor Jonathan about how to participate!

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## Poinsettias – World Hunger

You are invited to contribute toward a Poinsettia or World Hunger as a "Memorial" or in "Honor" of someone. All contributors will be listed in the Christmas Eve Bulletins and the poinsettia will decorate the Sanctuary. Please make checks payable to Mt. Calvary and mark either "*poinsettia*" or "*world hunger*" on the memo line. Please fill in the blanks below, then drop off in the offering plate or the church office.

**The deadline for orders is November 30.**

No orders can be accepted after this date

In Memory Of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor Of: \_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

Offering Envelope Number: \_\_\_\_\_

World Hunger Offering Amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Total Number \_\_\_\_\_ of Poinsettias Ordered X \$8.75 Each = \$\_\_\_\_\_

## About Our Members:

**Bill Kane, passed away on November 5, 2020**

**Deb Zilch's** surgery went well she has another appointment next week.

Reminder to please pray for our members and their families that are affected by COVID 19.

**Given to the Glory of God!**

**Flowers:** In memory of Andy Tallion by Paula & Bill Nihoff.

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## *Kid's Corner* with Pastor Jonathan

Each week, Mt. Calvary will be publishing "Kid's Corner" as an offering for our children and families. Kid's Corner is part Sunday school lesson, part children's sermon, and all about sharing God's love. Join us each week for this and other online offerings from Mt. Calvary on our church Facebook page: Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

## Birthdays for the Week Nov. 15 - Nov. 21.

**Nov 15** - Lucille Badowski, Kelsey Carter, Alexander Marsh

**Nov 16** - Savannah Foor

**Nov 17** - Alex Miller, Leda Miller

**Nov 18**- Nancy Miller, Theresa Saloney

**Nov 19** - Matthew Carr, Robert Furry, Amy Seese

**Nov 20** - Beth Colvin, Timothy Goughnour, Andrew Walsh

**Nov 21** - Alex Hockensmith, Joyce Kunkle, Noah Shew, Ida Williams

## Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Dolly & Chis Palm, Sharon Custer, Bertha Ford, Bill, Barb, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Brooke, Beck Family, Catherine, Sarah Polkowski, Pastor Toby Holland & Family, Bob & Family, Larry, Bernie Gorba, Linda, Betty Mountain, Sally, Alison, Joe, and Kane Family.

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## Support of Mount Calvary

Through the end of October, Mount Calvary's monthly expenses have been averaging about \$17,655. This is in the neighborhood of \$4,260 a month less than budgeted. Thanks to your generosity and the faithfulness of your leadership team, Mount Calvary has not yet had to dip into reserves in spite of all the disruption introduced by the pandemic. We're a team and the entire team deserves a thank you!

Thus far this fall monthly giving has a dropped a bit from where it was earlier in the year. This is not entirely surprising since September and October have more often than not proved to be lighter giving months. But let's remain vigilant and take nothing for granted. Provided we all do our part, there's no challenge we cannot overcome.

## **CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8th.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **A: Amen.**

### **FIRST READING: JOSHUA 24:1-3A, 14-25**

*In the Near East, covenant means “agreement” or “alliance.” It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.*

<sup>1</sup>Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup>And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. <sup>3a</sup>Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

<sup>14</sup>“Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

<sup>16</sup>Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup>for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; <sup>18</sup>and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

<sup>19</sup>But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. <sup>20</sup>If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good.” <sup>21</sup>And the people said to Joshua, “No, we will serve the LORD!” <sup>22</sup>Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” <sup>23</sup>He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” <sup>24</sup>The people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” <sup>25</sup>So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

### **SECOND READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18**

*Some of the Thessalonians are worried that dead Christians will be excluded from the resurrection to eternal life when Christ comes again. Paul reassures them with the word of hope that all Christians, living or dead, will be raised into everlasting life with Christ.*

<sup>13</sup>We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

## **MATTHEW 25:1-13**

*Jesus tells a parable about his own second coming, emphasizing the need for readiness at all times.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup>But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

## **SERMON BY PASTOR JONATHAN**

*Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our Lord who gives us the fuel to keep our lamps burning. Amen.*

When you’re starting something new, it’s always important to know how exactly to jump in. You can dip your toes in the water, gradually getting acquainted and getting more deeply involved. Or, you can jump in with both feet, right into the deep end, and just start swimming and hope for the best.

True wisdom involves knowing how to avoid diving into a shallow pool, or inching your way across when you need to move quickly.

As I’ve grown in years, I’d like to think I’ve gotten good at figuring out which is which. But for me, I’m always still a little bit leery of jumping right in. Too many times in my life, I’ve gone hot and heavy into something new only to find that my interest, or my passion, or my energy, fizzled all too quickly.

It’s called burnout. And I know it’s not something I have the market cornered on.

It’s a pattern that’s easy to see in all sorts of different people, in all different areas of life. Whether it’s a new hobby, or an organization they’ve belonged to for years, people start out with a flicker of interest, a spark of passion, a flame of energy, and over time, whatever fuels that burning gets used up. Maybe the person got too into the thick of it from day one, or they simply failed to pace themselves, to refuel and take care. They get to a point where the fuel, the energy, is just not there, and whatever flicker was left burns out.

You see it in hobbies, and clubs, and even careers. And as a pastor, unfortunately, I tend to see it in patterns of people’s church participation. Faithful church members who were aflame for Christ simply lose their spark. Maybe they’d been burning dimmer and dimmer, slowly distancing themselves for a while, without anyone noticing, or maybe they started out hot and burnt through everything they had quickly.

One way or another, they get burnt out.

And it’s not just about whether they participate in committees or teams, or volunteer for special projects. Sometimes, it goes the whole way to their faith itself. We all need the bright light of Christ in our lives, but sometimes people reach the darkest part of night and find that there just isn’t fuel there. The flame has burnt out.

Burnout is real. It happens in our faith and in so many other avenues. And if we don't take care of ourselves, if we don't pay attention to the fuel we have, it will leave each of us in the dark sooner or later.

Maybe you're feeling burnt out in some part of your life or your faith right this very moment.

I think it's possible to hear Matthew's Gospel for today as a warning *against* burnout.

In the parable, the bridesmaids are waiting to escort the bridegroom into a great and wonderful wedding feast. They didn't know how long they'd be waiting. It was part of tradition for the arrival to be somewhat unexpected, much like waiting for the bridal party to arrive at a modern reception. And it was also an understood piece of the puzzle that they might be waiting for a long time, that maybe the bridegroom would unintentionally delay their return in order to make a more extravagant entrance.

As the story goes, half of the bridesmaids were wise and ready for this extended wait. And half were foolish and where not.

Remember, Jesus is telling this parable right before his entrance into Jerusalem; he knows the end is near. And Matthew is writing it, re-telling it for a community that is impatiently waiting for Christ's return. He's encouraging people to keep the faith, to be patient, to be wise, to not use up all of their fuel.

To not burn out.

In all of my life, I've only ever completely run out of fuel in a car once. I was with my dad, in his truck, and he was insistent that we had enough fuel to make it where we needed to go. And then, sure enough, just a few miles short of the closest gas station, it sputtered to a stop.

I'd like to say that I learned from that experience, but I tend to cut it close, too. According to Ford, my 2015 Ford Edge has an 18 gallon gas tank, and when I've saved up Giant Eagle fuel perks and have ten, or twenty, or thirty cents off a gallon, I want to make the most of that discount, I try to run it as empty as possible.

But all too often, that leads to close calls, it leads to moments where I almost burn every ounce of fuel left in the car. And I have to weigh the desire to save money against the desire to be prepared. Prepared to have a full tank of gas in the winter when that extra bit of weight helps with traction in the snow. Prepared to have enough gas to take me to an emergency call with the fire department in the middle of the night, or to a hospital to visit a sick and suffering parishioner.

In order to be ready for all of that, in order to be prepared, I can't just burn out all the fuel in my car. I can't run it hard and expect to still have fuel left for a long trip. I have to pace myself. I have to top it off.

Our lives of faith are the same way...

We want to make the most of our time on earth as disciples, but sometimes we have to pace ourselves. We have to remind ourselves that we can't do everything perfectly all the time. We have to keep in focus that the only perfect disciple was the one whom we are disciples *of*.

But more than that, we *have* to refuel. We have to top it off. We can't just hope that the little bit we have will carry us through, we need to be ready for a long journey, *constantly*.

In order to have a light that is always shining bright to help others find their way to Christ's banquet, in order to make sure that we ourselves always have fuel for the journey, we have to be diligent about when and how we refuel.

We need to seek hope and comfort in the scriptures and the sacraments. We need to seek mutual support in communities of faith, groups of believers, like this one here.

It would be so easy to burn out right now. To allow our flame, our light to go out. But we can't allow that, not for our sake, not for the sake of others who rely on us to be light in the dark. Not for the sake of Christ.

We need to tend our flame, and ensure that our light can continue shining. That we are ready at a moment's notice to welcome those who need God's hope the most.

And through Christ, that is possible. God will give us the fuel we need. The interest, and passion, and energy that we need, in order to do the things that God is calling us toward. Because as much as think of Jesus as the bridegroom, I don't think he IS the bridegroom in this story. Certainly no one would ever get locked out of Christ's banquet.

But even so, God wants us to ready, to stay awake, to keep our light burning. Because you never know when you might be called upon to show someone the way in. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

P: Holy God, rouse us to deep praise as we gather for worship. Enliven our worship with sincere and heartfelt song. Sustain the work of all church musicians and artists who lead us in praise and prayer (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Holy Creator, surprise and delight us with the beauty of the world you have made. Bless the work of landscapers, architects, and artists whose work invites us into harmonious living with your creation. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Holy Judge, let justice roll down like waters over this world. Reign over the courtrooms of every land, in the hearts of those who guard the law and those who stand accused of crimes. Be present in cases where we long for both justice and mercy to prevail (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Holy Companion, console those who feel lonely or abandoned. Share the hours of those who live and eat alone. Comfort those who have few friends or who struggle with their identity and place in this world. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Holy Protector, be with all observing Veterans Day. Guard the lives of active duty and retired military personnel. Comfort all who mourn those who have died in the line of duty. Heal the wounds, both physical and mental, experienced by service members. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Holy and Immortal One, we pray in thanksgiving for the lives of all who have died. Remind us of the frailty and shortness of our own lives and inspire us to use them for the building up of your kingdom. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

**A: Amen.**