



# Mount Calvary Connected

November 5, 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.*

## Pastor Scott Klimke

Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421

Email: [sklimke6@gmail.com](mailto:sklimke6@gmail.com)

## Pastor Jonathan Adams

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: [revjonoadams@gmail.com](mailto:revjonoadams@gmail.com)

## A Message from Pastor Jonathan

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to participate in an online conference presented by one of my colleagues about creative Christian education during our current pandemic. It was neat to hear from someone who is so passionate about rethinking how we share our faith during this time in the wilderness when the old ways aren't as effective, and I gathered some ideas that I hope to share with folks here at Mt. Calvary and Benscreek.

But as is often the case with the way my mind works, I was drawn to one particular quote that the pastor shared to close out her presentation. From C.S. Lewis, "The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts."

I think the reason it resonated so strongly with me, is that the image of jungle versus dessert, or cutting down versus watering isn't just about education, but can easily be expanded to an understanding of life as a whole. I wonder if the late C.S. Lewis might be okay with me trading out one word in his saying, and make it something like this:

"The task of the modern Christian is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts."

Because as Christians, we should constantly be seeking ways to help others grow in faith, and help the church to grow. And it could be so easy to fall into a trap of trying to shape and reform the things that are already growing. It could be so easy to look at the wilderness around us and think it's barren. But given the choice, we should turn our attention toward that "barren" land, toward the places where things aren't growing, and see what might be able to grow.

I tend to believe that we did quite a lot of jungle-cutting and bushwhacking several months ago when we stripped down our understanding of church to the bare essentials. NOW, we're at a different stage in the life cycle, we are surrounded by ground that could be fertile if it were only nourished a bit. Why don't we irrigate the desert and see what beautiful desert flowers might grow?

It reminds me of a piece of scripture that has also resonated with me quite frequently over the past few months, from Isaiah 43:19, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

One of the most amazing things about being in the wilderness is that there is so much that is untouched and untapped. There is so much opportunity to try and do new things.

It would be so easy to become frustrated with our continued time in the wilderness, but maybe we'd be better off imagining it the way that the prophet Isaiah and C.S. Lewis have, as an opportunity to plant, nurture, and see what new things grow.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jonathan

---

### **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.

#### **About Our Members:**

**John Cafeo** passed away on 10/27/2020.

**Deb Zilch** is awaiting surgery.

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 David Rizzo by the Whetzels.

---

## ***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.

---

### **Photo Scavenger Hunt**



Families of ALL ages, young AND old, are invited to participate in a photo scavenger hunt to celebrate Martin Luther and our reformation history. Read the story of Martin Luther and take ten photos to help tell the story! Photos will be combined into a video shown in worship next month, and a mystery celebrity judge will pick the best submission to receive a family fun night basket. For information about how to participate,

visit: <https://rebrand.ly/Reformation2020Photos> and be sure to email your photos to Pastor Jonathan no later than November 9th!

## **Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week Nov. 8 - Nov. 14.**

**Nov 8** - Andrew Holt, Chase Molchany

**Nov 9** - Joshua Brehm, Ruth Pozun

**Nov 10** - Laura Bower

**Nov 11** - Kevin Barrick, Drew Palaskick

**Nov 12** - Wilma Hiltz, Grant Lumley, Jon Ross, Jr.

**Nov 14** - Glen Elliott Sr., Alyssa McQuaide, Donald Wertz

**Nov 14** - Gerald & Marlene Barrick (60 years)

### **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, and Sally.

## **CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 31:31-34**

*The renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the LORD means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:16). The renewed covenant is possible only because the LORD will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.*

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### **SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 3:1-3**

A saint is one who has been set apart by God for God’s purposes. God, out of divine love, set us apart to be the children of God. Our holy hope is that we shall see God as God really is.

1See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

In the Beatitudes, Jesus provides a unique description of those who are blessed with God's favor. His teaching is surprising and shocking to those who seek wealth, fame, and control over others.

1When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

### **SERMON BY SCOTT**

The book of Revelation, which we hear from today, requires its own dictionary and I'd like to spend some time with a bit of its unique language today. In today's reading, it's hoped that God shall be hailed and honored forever and ever. The language of "forever and ever" recalls how Revelation often describes God as the One who was, is, and shall be. This is an uncommon, but highly powerful way to describe God. It communicates that God and his throne have been around forever and shall endure forever as well. Way back in the beginning, God's sovereignty was uncontested; allowing God to create heaven and earth in just six days according to Genesis chapter one. Since then, God's sovereignty has been challenged, but to no lasting effect. God's throne endures. God and God's way shall win in the end. God was, is, and shall be. It's Good News for us today and tomorrow.

It's Good News today because it tells us baptism counts for something. Today we remember some of those who were baptized in the past year. Did these baptisms count for something? The answer is they did. God's throne endures. God's edicts do not evaporate. God was, is, and shall be. As our reading from Revelation informs us, the baptized, wearing white robes in our text, as they often do on the day of baptism, have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. They're God's children now, as our reading from 1st John puts it, and bound for the heavenly choir described by our reading from Revelation. Does baptism count for something? Oh yes it does!

Jesus instituted baptism according to the will of the One who was, is, and shall be. With baptism being one of them, the edicts of the One who was, is, and shall be do not evaporate. This may not be common knowledge and we may doubt it sometimes, but it will happen. God was, is, and shall be. The baptized are headed for victory where white will be the only color in their closet and the palm branches of victory shall be the tools of their trade forever and ever. This matters so much that we can even greet death with enduring and defiant hope.

Having that kind of hope is important today we read the names of some of the baptized who have died in the last year. As we read their names, we do it in defiant hope; insisting that their light has not burned out, but instead shines on in Jesus, the Light of the World the darkness could not and cannot overcome. To be sure, there's a lot about this we don't understand on this side of the hereafter. Whenever a funeral is conducted according to the Lutheran liturgy, one of the prayers openly acknowledges that death thrusts us into the midst of things we cannot understand. But the pray goes on to say that we can still trust and believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting.

The reason for this defiant hope gets back to Revelation's uncommon language. God was, is, and shall be. God's throne and God's edicts endure. Even though they shall die, the baptized are bound for victory. They've been washed white in the blood of the Lamb and so it shall remain. God, the One who was, is, and shall be, has ordained and orchestrated it, and so, no matter what may come, white robes and the palm branches of victory await the baptized. God was, is, and shall be. It's why our reading from 1st John defiantly insists that we don't need to know all the details about what happens after death. By way of adoption through baptism, we're God's children now and that means we always will be. Our adoptive Father through baptism was, is, and shall be. The edict of our adoptive Father endures. It's Good News today and Good News tomorrow.

As to tomorrow, tomorrow shall be the time for us to get back to living as God's children in the world of our present. Today we pause to embrace joyfully and gratefully what baptism shall mean for us in the future. Tomorrow we get back to how baptism is meant to inform and to inspire our present. Here too the unique language of Revelation can be of assistance. Today our reading from Revelation calls Jesus the Lamb four times, with the same description showing up another twenty-six times throughout the rest of the letter. It's language that recalls how Jesus is imaged or described as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in the gospel of John, but it's also distinct. To understand how Revelation does its own thing with the idea that Jesus is a lamb you have to go back to chapters four and five where Revelation's tour of God's throne room begins.

In those chapters, Jesus eventually bursts onto the scene, with the heavenly throng singing the words responsible for the part of the Lutheran liturgy often called "This is the Feast," but more properly called "Worthy is Christ." Leading up to this grand entrance Jesus is billed as the Lion of Judah. It sounds like Jesus is some sort of strong man. It sounds like Jesus is a warrior the likes of which would have intimidated even General George H. Patton. It sounds like Jesus is some kind of fierce and intimidating presence. Think the mountain lion that recently chased after a jogger in Utah. But this isn't how it turns out.

Jesus shows up not as a fierce and intimidating lion, but as a bloody Lamb poked full of holes. And unlike in the gospel of John, Jesus isn't a grown lamb ready for sacrifice. In Revelation, Jesus is a fluffy, innocent, adorable, itsy-bitsy baby lamb who's been poked full of holes. And it's the blood of this meek, little creature which washes us white according to the book of Revelation. This fluffy, innocent, adorable, itsy-bitsy baby lamb poked full of holes is the faithful witness according to the book of Revelation; the very definition of purity and righteousness. He's our standard bearer and majorette. He's the way forward. He's the one we are to follow in this life until we don white robes and wave the palm branches of victory with the rest of the baptized forever and ever. And when it comes to how we follow our Lord, the fluffy, innocent, adorable, itsy-bitsy lamb poked full of holes, I'd say our reading from Matthew fills in the blanks very well.

We follow Jesus by hungering and thirsting for righteousness; hungering and thirsting for a society where resources and opportunities are allocated rightly; hungering and thirsting for a society where things are right in all families and between any and all neighbors; where relationships rightly come first and where the health and wellbeing of the community also comes first because they do. When our hunger and thirst for righteousness is not satisfied, we mourn just our reading from Matthew says we will. But we also get up and try again, even if it means we take a few pokes and suffer through some persecution in the process. This is what here and now followers of the Lamb do. Through tears and struggle, they defiantly demand right relations in all families all and between all neighbors. Though tears and struggle, they keep getting up and traveling across the bridge that separates them, their families, and their neighbors from righteousness. But like John Lewis, one of the saints who joined the Church Triumphant this past year, this isn't done arrogantly, aggressively, or violently. As Jesus says today, followers of the Lamb, children of God by baptism, aren't arrogant; aren't aggressive; aren't violent. Rather than being those things, they're poor in spirit, pure of heart, and meek. They're fluffy, innocent, adorable, itsy-bitsy baby lambs who pack more of a wallop than any lion ever could. In, by, and through the Holy Spirit, may we be those lambs now and until whatever we shall be is fully and finally revealed thanks to the God who was, is, and shall be. 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: Lord of all the saints, we praise you for evangelists and martyrs whose sacrifices witness to your gospel across time and space. Inspire us by their courage to carry our faith to new people and places around us. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Lord of every place, the universe proclaims your greatness from generation to generation. Bless the work of naturalists, conservationists, and park rangers who train our attention to the wonders of the world you have made. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Lord of every nation, guide this country—red states and blue states, rural voters and urban voters, young and old—as we share in another national election. Kindle hearts eager to understand our common needs and seek our common good. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Lord of every blessing, your Son's blessing came to those living with poverty, grief, hunger, thirst, and persecution. Shape our vision of the saints to match his own. Awaken in us your call to serve all who suffer. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Lord of every venture, anoint us with the missionary spirit of the early church. Bless all new missions of our synod (especially). Empower testimony from new communities of faith to shape a diverse witness to your saving power. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Lord of every time, countless are the multitudes you have called by name and gathered to yourself. Comfort us as we grieve those who have died in the past year (here the names of those who have died in the previous year may be read). In faith, may we join with them in ceaseless praise. 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.**