



Mount Calvary Connected February 11, 2021

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 Jonathan

With Valentine's Day coming up this weekend, it seemed appropriate to take a moment to consider the connections between our faith and the most prominent theme of the holiday: love.

It's not a far stretch to say that Christianity has a lot to say about love. My mind is almost immediately drawn to an old camp song called "Beloved," which follows the words of 1 John 4:7-8: *"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."* And then of course, you have the "greatest commandment" in Matthew 22:36-39, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... And love your neighbor as yourself."*

Love shows up all throughout scripture in a variety of ways. In the "New Revised Standard Version," the English translation that we use most in Lutheran circles, the word "love" appears 538 times! And what's maybe even more interesting is that there isn't just one word that gets translated as love. Both the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament have several different words that indicate the difference between a "brotherly" love between friends, versus familial love between parents and children, or intimate love between romantic partners.

But in all its many forms and words, the evidence seems to be conclusive: God is love, and love is GOOD.

So where does that leave us as we approach what some call a "Hallmark Holiday?"

I think we can set aside the commercialism and focus on the root of it all: love. We can lift it up as a celebration of all forms of love: the love we show for friends and neighbors, family members, spouses, pets.

The love that we show to others because God first showed it to us.

Even if you don't have someone to officially call your valentine this weekend, you can surely find a way to pass along God's love to someone who needs to be reminded of it. It is the greatest commandment, after all.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

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>

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship

Tuesday, February 16th Meetings

6:30: Youth Committee and All Parish Ministries Committee meet for one hour.

7:30: Congregational Council meets, with election of officers and seating of new council persons.

Wednesday, February 17th at 7 PM

Ash Wednesday Service

Coming Soon

Lenten Viewings of "Passion of the Christ"

Backyard Ministries Cookie Collection

Each week, Backyard Ministries usually has a small pack of cookies to give to each family they visit at the Coopersdale Homes. These cookies were made by other churches in the area. However, due to social distancing they have not been gathering to bake. They are asking Mt. Calvary to donate 200 packs of cookies (store bought is ok, if they are not individually wrapped packs, they can be 5 in a zip lock bag) a month for them to deliver. The first pickup being on **February 4** and then continuing on the **first and third Thursday of each month**. Cookies can be placed in the bin outside the church, or the labeled one inside. If you have any questions please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

Year Round Giving Tree

For the month of February, the money collected will continue to Pro Papa Missions to help the country of Honduras. It was decided that we will keep the same organization for two months instead of one. Thank you to everyone who has bought a mask or made a donation up to this point!

The Social Ministry team would also like to thank the following individuals for making this tree a success. It would not have been possible without them:

Anita Brodt - tote bags
Barb Meltenberger - masks and tote bags
Marelyn McClland - masks
Jane Layton - student bags
Charlie Nemeth - Giving Tree

About Our Members:

James Balogh passed away on January 30, 2021.

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

Thank you for the Beautiful flower I received after Christmas. I am still enjoying it today. I have received my first Covid 19 vaccine shot and hope to soon rejoin my friends at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church.

Jayne Dunbar

Birthdays for the Week Feb. 14 - Feb. 20.

Feb. 14 - Mark Blough, Kathy Geiser, Richard Wagner

Feb. 15 - Riley Alexander, Sarah Costlow, Edward Pawlowski, Kiley Zubay

Feb. 16 - Helen LaTulippe, Bonnie Logar

Feb. 17 - Carrie Foor, Molly Leverknight, Kollin Long, Kelsie McQuaide, Julie Rohrabough

Feb. 19 - Lisa Gembinski, Jerry Heinze, John Plunkard, Natalie Popp, Penelope Reininger

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Linda & Dick, Jamie, Don, Joanne, Shirley, Chris, Tracy, Flanagan Family, Roy, Joyce, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Rick, Joe, Pat Conklin, Gerald Barrick, Patti Sliko, Brooke, Balogh Family, El Warshel, Grosholz Family, Dean and Paul.

Support of Mount Calvary

Through the end of November, Mount Calvary's monthly expenses have been averaging about \$17,685. This is in the neighborhood of \$4,225 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! Now all that's left to do this year is to top things off with another strong and robust December as we have done for many years running.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 40:21-31

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.

²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; ²³who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-23

God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.

¹⁶If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

GOSPEL: MARK 1:29-39

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

"Hello darkness, my old friend" begins a song of some note. These same words are sometimes sung by the Old Testament and the New Testament. Even if not as a friend, darkness shows up from time to time. The Old Testament is haunted by the experience of a foreign power ransacking the people of God's homeland and holding those people in foreign captivity for close to fifty years. In the New Testament, there's the crucifixion of Jesus and the subsequent persecution and sometimes martyrdom of his first disciples. From front to back, the Bible sometimes speaks of dark, dark times when God recedes to the shadows. And of course, in three of the four gospels, this is exactly what happens on the day of Jesus' death.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the sun disappears and darkness blankets the land as Jesus suffers and dies for you and for me. On Good Friday, God recedes to the shadows, as Jesus secures our forgiveness by taking the full brunt of the wrath rightfully reserved for lifelong sinners like you and me. Spiritually, it's what happens when it gets dark and God recedes to the shadows. God withdraws us from the protective cover of his grace and we experience wrath, the natural consequence of our sins. But just as Scripture warns that God

will sometimes recede to the shadows, it just as commonly insists that God shall also eventually reemerge from the shadows in which God has hidden for a time.

In the New Testament, the basis for this confidence is Jesus' resurrection from the dead. On Easter Sunday, it's forever proven and proclaimed that God, the Light and Life of the World, shall not be detained by the shadows forever. In the Old Testament, this same confidence exists, but its basis is different. In the Old Testament, it's God's creation of all, not Jesus' resurrection from the dead, which leads some pages of Scripture to sing out, "The sun will come out tomorrow. You can bet your bottom dollar on it." Our reading from Isaiah is a case in point.

In that reading, as the captivity of God's people is coming to an end, the prophet announces that with God coming out of the shadows after a long, dark night of the soul, Israel's return to the Holy Land is immanent. And, again and again, it's revealed that the prophet's confidence that God shall come out of the shadows for good is God's identity as the Creator of heaven and earth. In our reading from Isaiah chapter forty today, God is from the beginning; from the very foundations of the earth. There's not a force or power which precedes God. The reason and basis for all life, God is responsible for the initial existence and the continuing existence of all that might ever stand in the way of God's people. At any moment, our reading from Isaiah insists, God can turn off the switch of life that God turned on in the first place; in the process coming out of the shadows for good by dispelling forces and powers that have gotten too big for their britches. Whether it's on the basis of God's creative authority or on the basis of God's authority over sin, death, and the devil, Scripture insists that God shall come out of the shadows for good, just as God will also sometimes recede to the shadows for a time to remind us of how life is apart from his grace.

Now when God does come out of the shadows on the basis of one authority or another, one of the things that happens is that we come out of the shadows with our ailments and our illnesses on full display. When the Light responsible for all light is absent, we keep those ailments and those illnesses covered up. But when the God the Light and Life of the World reemerges from the shadows, we open up. We're no longer crippled by shame and fear. We no longer hunker down in defensive postures which aim to keep things from getting worse than they already are. It's precisely what happens when Jesus shows up in Mark's gospel.

I mean: Last week we did hear that Jesus showed up in Capernaum and his piercing light revealed the failings of the religious status quo and scared a demon not just silent, but off to another zip code entirely. This is God coming out of the shadows for good. And what happens next—what happens today? First a sick mother-in-law is brought out of the shadows for healing. Then, the hospitals are emptied, the skeletons are brought out of the closet, and the sanitariums are vacated with Capernaum bringing all of its sick and possessed to Jesus for healing. This is the fear of failure taking flight. This is shame being told to take a hike. This is people coming out of the shadows, out of their defensive positions and postures, to be healed. And Jesus, the Light and Life of the World delivers; healing and exorcizing up a storm. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever laid it all out there for Jesus, with him more than coming through in the clutch?

If you haven't, it can happen today or any other time we come together. Through these mutual gatherings, God is always coming out of the shadows for good. Sometimes it's through the words of Scripture or through words inspired by Scripture. Sometimes it's through communion and the remembrance or celebration of baptism. Sometimes it's through the comfort and consolation offered through and by our siblings in Christ. One way or another it happens. Through these mutual gatherings, God comes out of the shadows for good. May the Holy Spirit lead us to take full advantage of these opportunities. May we come out of the shadows with our ailments and our illnesses. May we dispense with fear, send shame packing, and put it all out there with no defensiveness at all so we might be healed or at least begin our journey toward healing. And then after the healing process is completed or at least underway, let's not retreat to the shadows again, but stay out of the shadows for others; positioning ourselves to be agents and means of healing whenever Christ is ready to use us in this way.

This is, after all, the progression in our reading from Mark. Jesus comes out of the shadows in Capernaum. Next, Simon Peter's mother-in-law and her illness are brought out of the shadows for healing. And

then, after being healed, the first female disciple mentioned in Mark's gospel stays out of the shadows to serve the Church Jesus is in the process of forming. It's where Mark first telegraphs Jesus' later assertion that in his Church the greatest of all shall be the servant of all. It's how it's supposed to go according to Mark. God comes out of the shadows with light, love, and healing. In response, we come out of the shadows allowing all of our illnesses and ailments to be exposed by the light of day. And then, after healing concludes or at least gets underway, we stay out of the shadows for others so God's light, love, and healing might flow through us whenever God deems the time to be right.

And so, as I've encouraged you to come out of the shadows today, let me be vulnerable myself and thank you for all the times you've knowingly or unknowingly stayed out of the shadows for me. As you might recall, our time together began with a tragedy. Very soon the 19th of February will mark the fifth anniversary of my kid sister Amy's death at the age of forty-four when her youngest wasn't even yet seven. A long journey towards healing began on that day and you've knowingly and unknowingly helped it along, as you've also knowingly and unknowingly helped me travel down other difficult paths in my life as a pastor. Thank you! It's happened because you stayed out of the shadows for others after receiving some measure of healing yourself; leaving yourself out there for God to use as God saw fit. Whether it be you or me, may this be something the Holy Spirit continues as long as we gather together as church. Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

P: For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For creation: for insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, for cattle and the rainwater they drink, for the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For the nations: for all who lead in cities and towns, states and countries; for community organizers, school officials, and CEOs; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For all wearied by life's burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other sickness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you (*especially*), let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For this congregation: for outreach and social ministries centered here (*especially*); for parish nurses and visitors; for ministries of companionship and support, for the young people in this place who open us to new understandings, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: In thanksgiving for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors, that their lives serve as witnesses to the goodness of God, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **A: Amen.**