



Mount Calvary Connected

May 5, 2022

Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter sent out at the end of each week. Our goal is to keep you connected to your church and your faith with messages from our pastors, information about upcoming activities at Mt. Calvary and more!

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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 also stream these services live over the internet. Simply visit www.mt-calvarylutheran.org and click "Live Radio Broadcast" from the home page on Sunday mornings.

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/

"God-as-parent is a Radical Metaphor"

By Debie Thomas, "Minister of Lifelong Formation" at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto, California

My youngest child turns 20 this month, which feels like a milestone. No more teenagers in the house! Everyone's an adult (sort of)! We've officially launched our kids!

Those exclamation points are in earnest; I have much to celebrate, and much to be grateful for. At the same time, I'm feeling tender and pensive. Like Mary in Luke 2, I'm pondering many things in my heart. What have the last two decades meant? Who was I when I became a mother, who have I become since, and who will I become now? Most of all, I'm pondering the bewildering business of letting go. My children are out in the world now. How will I bear the uncertainties of that?

Spiritually, this tender time has led me to contemplate one of the Bible's central metaphors for God: God as parent, as father and mother. This is a metaphor I've always taken for granted, but now I'm freshly curious, hungry to know more about the paternal and maternal faces of God.

Thankfully, the Bible gives me plenty to work with. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him" (Deuteronomy 32:11). "How often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Luke 13:34). "I will bellow like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant" (Isaiah 42:14). "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2). This small sampling reveals so much. The God these passages describe loves his children wildly and without restraint. She has a long memory; she holds the stories of her babies. He resists complacency

and insists on courage, growth, and risk-taking. She does so with wisdom; she hovers, launches, supports, and guides. He longs to give and receive affection and aches when his children refuse his embrace. She groans in labor, giving herself over to shattering pain to bring new life into the world. He keeps house, honoring the diversity of his children by preparing not one room but many rooms for his children to return to and call home.

What strikes me most about these images of God-as-parent is God's vulnerability. In a beautiful reflection on Isaiah 42:14, Lauren Winner describes it this way: "The point is not just that God is vulnerable, although that itself is startling. The point is that in the struggles of labor, we can learn what strength is. If our picture of strength is a laboring woman, then strength is not about refusing to cry or denying pain. Strength is not about being in charge, or being independent, or being dignified. If our picture of strength is a laboring woman, then strength entails enduring, receiving help and support, being open to pain and risk."

I remember giving birth as one of the most empowering and vulnerable-making experiences of my life. I was stunned by what my body could do, as well as by my need for the love and knowledge of those who accompanied me. During those grueling hours in the delivery room, I was simultaneously powerful and powerless. Alone and surrounded. Fierce and fragile. I can't think of a better, more radical metaphor for God's paradoxical strength.

Looking back now over my years of parenting, I can see that vulnerability has been the name of the game all along. My cocky sense of certainty ended seconds after my daughter was born. I couldn't get her to breastfeed. Or sleep through the night. I didn't know what to do when she cried. As she got older, she asked questions I couldn't answer. She had opinions I found bewildering. She faced challenges I couldn't fix. Every moment of pain, fear, loneliness, or defeat she and her little brother experienced resounded inside of me, a deafening gong. To give myself over to mothering was to know powerlessness like I'd never known it before. Yes, I had authority and strength. But my strength never canceled out my vulnerability.

Is God's experience similar? I was taught that God is unchanging, transcendent, all-knowing, all-powerful. But the truth is, it's not possible to parent without experiencing risk, weakness, pain, and transformation. It is not possible to offer up your own body as nourishment, or to nudge your frightened child out of the nest, or to carry your reckless young on your outstretched wings, or to watch your children refuse your protection, or to offer first-rate hospitality in the full knowledge that it might be rejected—and not embrace vulnerability as a way of life. If God is indeed our parent, then God daily puts God's heart at risk for the sake of love.

In this tender season of my life, I'm grateful to be in good company as a mother. Whatever else God might be, God is a parent who knows what it costs to hold and what it costs to let go. I'm grateful for a vulnerable God who births, nurses, loves, guides, and launches us, her heart on the line until we learn to fly, choose our course, and make our way home.

Debie Thomas is "Minister of Lifelong Formation" at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto, California. This article originally appeared in The Christian Century.

Adult Sunday School

Adult Sunday School is ongoing! We were happy to see some new faces and hope that even more join us! We meet in the conference room/library each Sunday after worship.

Upcoming Meetings

WELCA: May 16th at 6:00 p.m.

Council: May 17th at 6:30 p.m.

The Property Committee will meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. in the old lounge. *No meeting in May.

2022 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2022 are available in the narthex. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

Help Wanted

The Property Committee is looking to recruit a number of small job volunteers. Tasks might include replacing light bulbs, changing hardware on a commode, getting a lawnmower or snowblower ready for use, etc. The Committee believes we have a lot of talent in the congregation and wants to make greater use of it. Every small job handled by a member equals one less call that needs to be made to a vendor who may have a minimum visit charge or an hourly rate of \$50 or more.

Volunteers who can be available on short notice are needed to help with set-up, serving, and tear-down after funeral luncheons.

Interested parties should contact Mark Rychak or one of the pastors. A message could also be left with the church office at 814-266-4859. Thank you!

Annual Flea Market

May 7, 2022

Please no clothing or shoes at this time. Items must be dropped off at the church during office hours, Monday through Thursday between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

We would like to have volunteers to set up the Flea Market on Friday, May 6 at 6:00 p.m. Thank you!

Bake Sale

Calling all bakers! We are getting close to May 7th, the day of our annual Flea Market. WELCA is once again holding a bake sale and we need YOU to contribute your favorite goodie. Peanut butter, chocolate, trail mixes, fudge, and no-bakes are always popular. If you need ideas, call Joan Hunter at 814-955-2737.

Baked goods can be dropped off at the church office between 9-1 or on the evening of May 6th (set-up). Bake Sale tables will be in the narthex. Thank you!

Yarn Collection

While everyone is cleaning out and getting ready for the flea market, if you find leftover yarn of any size, the Prayer Shawl group would appreciate it if you would bring it in and donate it to our cause. There will be a bin in the narthex where you can place it. Our supplies are getting low and we could use your help. Thank you so much!

Annual Weed and Feed

We will be having our annual weed and feed on Tuesday, May 10th at 5:30 p.m. Please bring your favorite gardening tool and mark your name on it so that we can get it back to its proper owners. There will be vittles served afterwards. This will be in place of our normal property meeting, so there will not be a property meeting in May.

Mount Calvary Youth & Family Cookout

Saturday, May 14th at 6:30 p.m.

Celebrate the end of the school year and beginning of the summer and let US do the cooking for your whole family! Come to 5:30pm worship beforehand, or join us just for dinner. The church will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, and paper products (and possibly some of Pastor Jono's famous smoked pork!) Bring a lawn or camp chair and yourself!

RSVPs appreciated online at: <https://rebrand.ly/CalvaryCookout22> or to Pastor Jono at 412-817-6704 or RevJonoAdams@Gmail.com

Backyard Ministries Summer Club Volunteer Opportunity

For the past 5 years, members of Mt. Calvary have been volunteering their time one day a week, for one hour to spend with the children of Coopersdale during the summer months. We have a core of about 5 people, but when one or more can't show up on a certain week, it makes things more difficult.

If you want to make a difference in underprivileged children's lives and share the word of God with them, then please consider this opportunity! All you need to do is show up. We already have games and activities, as well as the Bible lesson to share each week. If you are interested, or would like more information on this rewarding experience, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

Backyard Ministries Snack Collection

If you would like to continue to donate prepackaged snacks please continue to drop them off at the church. We have decided that we will also start accepting monetary donations. If you would like to contribute, and this is an easier way for you to do so, please drop off any donations at the church office. Thank you for your continued support!

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, May 7:

Greeters/Ushers: Anita & Dick Brodt

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss & Deb Rychak

Sunday, May 8:

Greeters/Ushers: Jim & Cathy Prisk

Communion Assistants: Chris Koshute

Saturday, May 14:

Greeters/Ushers: Mark & Deb Rychak

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss (Need 1)

Sunday, May 15:

Greeters/Ushers: Jim & Chris Koshute

Communion Assistants: Volunteer needed!

There are sign up sheets in the Narthex for Greeters/Ushers and Communion Assistants. Please sign up for the dates that would suit you best. We appreciate you volunteering. If you have questions about these roles, please contact Christine Koshute at 814-421-4921 or Chris Oleksa at 814-244-9851.



Summer Camp at Sequanota: We are blessed to have a GREAT Lutheran church camp practically in our backyard just twenty-five minutes away at Camp Sequanota near Jennerstown. Registration is now open, with programs for all school-aged kids. Talk with Pastor Jonathan to brochure, or visit www.sequanota.com for more information.

Pastor Jonathan LOVES to get out and see our Mount Calvary youth in action doing the things they enjoy! Be sure to share your schedules for sports, concerts, recitals, etc. You never know where he might show up!

Pastor Jonathan's office hours at Mount Calvary are Mondays & Wednesdays, 10am-3pm. He is available outside of those hours via email (RevJonoAdams@gmail.com), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

2022 Social Ministry Good Gifts Campaign

During the season of Lent and continuing through Easter, Mount Calvary's Social Ministry Team used its "Giving Tree" to support the ELCA Good Gifts program. ELCA Good Gifts are a creative, meaningful way to support the ministries of the ELCA throughout the world. Each of these programs is a long-term, partnership-based ministry that focus on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.

Each week, a different theme was highlighted with opportunities to make gifts matching the costs of various projects within that theme. As of the end of the Easter weekend, \$4,709 has been collected!

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously! And for the social ministry team for giving us this fun and exciting opportunity to support Lutheran missionaries and the work they do all throughout the world!

Giving Tree

The Giving Tree for May and June will go to The Precious Life Baby Bottle Campaign that runs through Birthright from Mother's Day to Father's Day. There will also be a basket in front of the tree to collect clothes for toddlers. Thank you for your continued support!

Afghan Drawing

Thank you to everyone who donated to the afghan drawing for the Good Gifts campaign. The winner was Sara S. We were able to collect \$80 to send two girls to school in honor of Anita Brodt.

The Greater Johnstown Community Chorus presents: *The Rhythm of Life*

Directed by Michael Meketa, accompanied by Jeff Hornick

Saturday, May 7th at 1:00 p.m.

Christ Lutheran Church

337 Elknud Lane

Johnstown, PA 15905

Donation \$10 at the door

Ascension of Our Lord @ Lion Lutheran Church

Thursday, May 26, 2022

Lion Lutheran Church

613 Locust Street

Downtown Johnstown

Holy Communion at 2:00 p.m. (Chapel) and 7:30 p.m.

Roast Beef Dinner at 6:00 p.m.

A free-will offering will be received.

Sign up by Sunday, May 22, 2022 by calling the church office at (814) 535-2050

Give now for Eastern Europe Crisis Response

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Friends, I write to you again about our neighbors in Eastern Europe. First, I thank you for your outpouring of prayers and generosity — you are making a difference in the lives of people impacted by the war in Ukraine.

Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response during this crisis are already at work. Because of your generosity, \$1 million will support the Lutheran World Federation and these member churches:

German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania

They are distributing hygiene supplies, food, medicine, bedding and psychosocial and pastoral care to refugees and internally displaced people, most of whom are women and children.

Your support has made this possible, but more work remains. Your gifts to "Eastern Europe Crisis Response" will be used to in full (100%) to address the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

Additional responses through partners in these countries and others in the region are expected in the coming weeks and months, and Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying those partners as the situation evolves. We pray for the Roma communities and foreign nationals who are facing racial and ethnic discrimination at the borders as they flee Ukraine. Our companions are ensuring that people in these marginalized groups will be treated with respect and dignity as they seek safety.

We know there are many organizations that you can choose to support, but it is only by giving to Lutheran Disaster Response that guarantees your gift will fund ELCA-supported work through faith partners in the region.

I invite you to watch this [video](#) from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton about the situation in Eastern Europe and the ELCA's response. To share this information with your congregations, download this [bulletin insert](#).

Together we pray for our siblings in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. May God be with them in their time of need.

In Christ's service,



The Rev. Daniel Rift
Director, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Updates from Our Members & Community

Rachael and I would like to thank all the Altar Guild members and volunteers who helped us with our Altar Guild duties during the month of April. The old adage is very true...many hands make light work. We appreciate everyone's support, especially during Holy Week and Easter. A special thanks to Lois Gallus for answering our twenty questions even while she was in Hawai'i. God bless you all!

-Susan and Rachael Brandau

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: May 8 – May 14, 2022

May 8 - Shane Katrancha

May 9 - Daniel Trevorrow

May 14 - Robyn Berkebile

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Jennifer & Ryan, Linda & Dick, Dolly & Chiz Palm Family, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Midge, Shirley, Debbie, David, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan,

Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner and Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Bob Trotter, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, the Teplitz Family, Ethel Warshel, Melanie, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Dorothy, Irene, Karen, Erin, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, John Rychak, Pastor Jonathan & Family, Roxanee Horner, Lynn Palm and son, Alex, and Alex's wife, Becky Lilja, Kathy P., Al Johnson, Chris, Donna & Danny, Cheryl, Jennifer & Family, Jaime, Dorothy, Matt & Ashley, Landon, Max Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Cheryl, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, the Chavis Family, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Dean, Madi & Family, Patty & Family, Williams Family, Sydney & Family, Paulette, & Andrea.

Financial Update

Due to teamwork and consistent effort, the finances of Mount Calvary remain in good shape. Since last March, our overall financial position has improved by over 12%. Through the end of this March, actual gifts and receipts are ahead of budget in three categories and behind budget in three other categories. Thankfully, the three categories which are lagging behind account for less than 8% of our total revenues and receipts. If there's a place to be behind, it's in these categories.

As for expenses, we are running 5% ahead of budgeted expectation, with almost all the difference related to some one-time, computer expenses paid in March.

The big picture thing to keep in mind is that our positive financial position finds us making do with less than we have had to use in the past. Moves out of the area have removed significant resources from our budget in recent years; as in over \$40,000 a year. As council and stewardship and administration continue to work hard to make the most of our resources, we will eventually have to start to make up some of the resources we've lost due to moves through bringing in new disciples and increasing our own giving when possible.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, May 1, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Eternal and all-merciful God, with all the angels and all the saints we laud your majesty and might. By the resurrection of your Son, show yourself to us and inspire us to follow Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 9:1-20

Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

[The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."]

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 30

P: I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have lifted me up and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

A: O Lord my God, I cried out to you, and you restored me to health.

P: You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.

A: Sing praise to the Lord, all you faithful; give thanks in holy remembrance.

P: God's wrath is short; God's favor lasts a lifetime. Weeping spends the night, but joy comes in the morning.

A: While I felt secure, I said, "I shall never be disturbed.

P: You, Lord, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains." Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear.

A: I cried to you, O Lord; I pleaded with my Lord, saying,

P: "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?

A: Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; O Lord, be my helper."

P: You have turned my wailing into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

A: Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing; O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Second Reading: Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and

honor and glory and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 21:1-19

After [he appeared to his followers in Jerusalem,] Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Jonathan Adams

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus who needs us as much as we need him. Amen.

Before the point in time where I actually submitted my application to seminary and to officially begin the process toward ordination, there were plenty of times that I considered ministry as a vocation. I've shared parts of that story in the past, but I mention it today because for years, every time I considered it I would shrug it off.

I figured that God didn't need someone like me.

And I share that, because to me, I imagine that being sort of the mindset of most of the disciples at this point in our post-resurrection story.

Jesus had been preparing them to carry on his ministry from the day he called the first disciples. The day of the resurrection, he had paid them a special visit, to calm their fears, allay their doubts, and send them out to continue his ministry. As we heard last week, he even made a special trip so that Thomas could have his own experience, so that he could see and believe in all that he had heard about the risen Lord.

But it seems that still didn't quite make much of an impact on the disciples. Maybe they asked themselves, "Why? Why does Jesus need us to do anything if he can come back from the dead? Why can't he take care of the work of preaching, teaching, healing and baptizing himself?"

They figured that God didn't need people like them. Simon Peter especially probably felt down in the dumps, as word had probably gotten around that Jesus' prediction had come true, that in the heat of the moment, in the height of his anxiety, he had denied the Lord not once, not twice, but three times...

And so, with the heat in Jerusalem settled down, the disciples retreated back toward Galilee.

And it was there, out of boredom, or maybe out of simple necessity, that they returned to a task that was familiar to so many of them: fishing on the Sea of Galilee, because God certainly didn't need simple doubting disciples like them.

But, they soon find that their skills as fishermen have gotten a bit rusty, presumably from lack of use... A night in the boat and not a single bite.

They must have felt useless. They must have wondered what their purpose in the world was.

And then, the risen Lord, Jesus the Christ, makes one more spectacular and mysterious appearance. And he helps them fish. Helps them catch more than they had ever caught!

They needed Jesus. Whether it was his leadership or his fishing expertise or his confidence and ability to inspire confidence in others... They needed him. Suddenly with the missing puzzle piece returned to the fold all was well in the world. Simon Peter is even so excited that he jumps out of the boat!

It's a joyful reunion yet again.

But maybe it also renews that question in the back of their minds. If there are fishermen like Jesus in the world, why would anyone need them. Why would GOD need them? These men who couldn't catch a single fish.

I'm going to put on my "preaching to the choir" hat for just a moment. Because I assume that the fact that you are gathered here with us means that you know that you need Christ in your life. You need to hear a word of grace, to receive a meal reminding you of your forgiveness. Maybe you've even

experienced how meaningless life feels without faith, and have come to appreciate your faith all the more.

Each one of us knows that we need our faith, we need Christ.

I'm preaching to the choir.

But I'm pretty sure there are quite a few of us in this particular choir that are sometimes quick to take on that mindset I had before seminary, that the disciples had in those early days. I'm sure there are a few of us here that could stand to be reminded:

That for as much as we need God and Jesus in our lives.

Jesus needs us, too.

I think that's the real root of the conversation between Peter and Jesus during breakfast. When Jesus is repeatedly asking him, "Do you love me?" And Peter is maybe getting a bit offended. I think that Jesus is trying to convey to him, "Peter, for as much as you love and need me, I love and need you too."

Peter and the other disciples are ashamed of their actions, they're afraid, they don't think they have it in them to keep doing this work that Jesus had laid out for them. They're asking, "how could God possibly need someone like me."

And in return, Jesus is saying "I do need you. You look like a pretty darn good shepherd to me..."

It's a partnership. It goes both ways. For as much as we need God, God needs us to carry on the work of spreading the Gospel. For as much as we may feel like we need our church and our faith, our church and our faith needs us.

I hope the fact that we're gathered here together today underscores the fact that the disciples figured it out: they understood that God needed all sorts of people, that God needed them. They did the work that Jesus was calling them to. I hope the fact that I'm standing in FRONT OF YOU, underscores the fact that I finally figured it out, too. That yes, God certainly needs all sorts of people.

God needed a guy like Peter who thought he was good for nothing, God needed a guy like me, who thought I didn't have the skills or knowledge or background to be a pastor.

And God needs each one of you. Because this partnership only works if both sides hold up their end of the bargain. Imagine the things that God might need you to do, and quit shrugging them off. Because God does need someone exactly like you. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P: Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

P: Holy One of new beginnings, fill us with new life. Send us into the world as you sent your apostles Philip and James, to invite people to come and see your wondrous acts in Christ. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Revive ecosystems along coastlands that have been devastated by natural forces and human negligence. Reestablish plant and animal life that purifies air and water and that feeds humans and other living creatures. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Accompany laborers who get little rest from their work. Give them hope when they struggle to produce what they need. Give all who labor fair treatment and just wages. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Restore all people who cry to you for help (especially). Turn their mourning into dancing, clothe them with joy, and put a testimony of healing and praise on their lips. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Be present to faithful ones who are persecuted for following you (and especially the church in . . .). Sustain them by your faithfulness, and give them strength in the name of Jesus. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Join our voices with angels, creatures, and all the saints in praising Christ and bestowing upon him all blessing and honor and glory. Reveal Christ's glory to us and through us in our worship. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: May God who has brought us from death to life fill you with great joy. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**