



Mount Calvary Connected

May 12, 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/

A Message from Pastor Scott Klimke and An Article by Reverend Tish Harrison Warren

Julia and I returned from two, life-giving weeks of vacation on Monday evening. Over the course of our vacation, we were in three states, spent time in Phoenix, Las Vegas, and San Francisco, enjoyed visits to thirteen parks or other places of national significance, and were able to visit with Julia's Aunt Sue and Uncle Bob in California for a couple of days. It was one of the best vacations we've ever had. Best of all, we got to do it all together and in celebration of our forthcoming twentieth wedding anniversary.

Even before the first week of our vacation had drawn to a close, I was touched by the following piece. It tells the truth. We are made for community with one another and the rest of creation. When the ties that bind are broken at home, at school or work, at church, in the local community, or with our non-human neighbors, we suffer immensely. I've always known this about human community. After just spending two, life-giving, soul-expanding, soul-enriching weeks with nature, I have been unmistakably reminded we also don't want to separate ourselves from the rest of creation as well.

Enjoy Reverend Harrison-Warren's article and then go spend lots and lots of time with your friends and family, your siblings in the Lord here at Mount Calvary, your local and not so local neighbors, and with the rest of creation. We truly are less than human without this kind of community.

"The case for taking 10 minutes to watch a rainstorm"

by Tish Harrison Warren

It rained one morning this week. I moved back to Texas last year, in part for the rainstorms. Here, it rains decisively, gloriously, like it really means it. It explodes, pounds, roars, thunders and then, suddenly, moves on. I stepped on my back porch, not wanting to miss the show.

I sat, silent, smelling that indescribable rain scent and stretching out my hands, palms open in supplication, the same position I use in church to receive communion. The physicality of the experience, the sensual joy of sounds, smells, touch and sight, was profoundly humanizing. In a very real way, I am made for that. I am made to notice the rain. I'm made to love it.

We are creatures made to encounter beauty and goodness in the material world.

But digitization is changing our relationship with materiality — both the world of nature and of human relationships. We are trained through technology (and technology corporations) to spend more time on screens and less time noticing and interacting with this touchable, smellable, feelable world. Social media in particular trains us to notice that which is large, loud, urgent, trending and distant, and to therefore miss the small, quiet importance of our proximate and limited, embodied lives.

I have been rereading Michael Pollan's 2008 book, "In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto." In it, he writes that how and what we eat was historically embedded in and determined by community, religious practice, nature and culture. Then came an industrial revolution of the American food industry that found its heyday in the second half of the 20th century. Technology promised to improve our health and our food. Not only did this change how food is grown, but we also began re-engineering foods to supposedly keep out the bad stuff (like saturated fats) and boost the good (like vitamins).

Industry promised a glorious new age. It delivered on some of its promises: Food is abundant, cheap and always available (no need to wait on growing seasons or worry about Twinkies expiring). But obviously, there's been enormous fallout from this revolution, both for the land through environmental destruction and to our physical health and wellness. Pollan writes, "the chronic diseases that now kill us can be traced directly to the industrialization of our food." His advice is to go back to old ways, to wisdom, to reclaim lasting, communal ways of eating. He calls us back to "history and culture and tradition."

Reading about the early promises of industrial food, it now seems so naïve. And also hubristic. How did so many people become convinced that we could change something as elemental to being human as eating and not have enormous unforeseen consequences?

I bring this up because I can't help drawing an analogy to our current technological revolution: the rise of digitization and social media. This time, industry is re-engineering our social and communal lives. We were told that social media would create deeper connections, that it would help spread democracy, that it would end loneliness.

What we are beginning to see, however, is that as the digital world captures more of our imagination and time, the material world recedes and becomes less real to us. This has disastrous consequences.

In an April article on adolescent mental health for The Times, Matt Richtel wrote, “Recent studies have shown that teenagers in the United States and worldwide increasingly report feeling lonely, even in a period when their internet use has exploded.” He quotes the psychologist Bonnie Nagel, who said that teenagers are “hanging out” with friends online, but “It’s not the same social connectedness we need and not the kind that prevents one from feeling lonely.” There is ample evidence this holds true for adults as well.

Both Richtel’s article and another article released the same week by The Times highlight the emerging trend of people having romantic relationships with fictional characters, rather than human beings. There is evidence that teenagers are consuming more pornography, even as fewer are having sex. In a piece for The Atlantic, Derek Thompson highlights the growing concern that screen habits are displacing beneficial experiences for kids, noting that compared with the early 2000s, teenagers are less likely to “go out with their friends, get their driver’s license or play youth sports.” They are also less likely to get enough sleep.

“Children today spend less time outdoors than any other generation,” the National Recreation and Park Association reports, “devoting only four to seven minutes to unstructured outdoor play per day while spending an average of seven and a half hours in front of electronic media.” I realized recently that I can identify more apps by sight than species of trees.

We are made to enjoy the physical presence of other human beings. We are made to enjoy rainstorms or sunshine or walks in the woods. We are made to enjoy touchable things. We cannot escape or overcome this need through technology. Our attempts to do so go against the grain of our deepest human needs and longings.

Claims that we can fundamentally alter how human beings have learned, lived and interacted together in essential institutions and activities like education, worship, friendships, dating, communities, work and parenting without large unforeseen social consequences smacks of the hubris and reductionism that told us to throw out apples and make way for processed fruit snacks. But instead of yielding increases in heart disease and cancer, this revolution gives rise to social disintegration and pathologies of the soul.

Reading Pollan, I’m struck by how there is something irreducibly mysterious about the way food nourishes us. Pollan points out that traditional ways of eating are good for us in ways that scientists do not understand. He says that oceans of ink have been spilled analyzing the Mediterranean or French diet “hoping to identify the X factor of its healthfulness.” But the “whole” of traditional eating is “evidently greater than the sum of its parts.” It simply cannot be reduced, measured and engineered without losing something essential to health.

In the same way, I think we are finding that there is something essential and mysterious — dare I say, holy — about human beings interacting in person and with the natural world that simply cannot be replicated in virtual reality.

So what do we do? In his book “Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing,” Andy Crouch writes, “Perhaps the two best beginning moves, for those of us swaddled in affluence and intoxicated by our technology, are into the natural world — the world of stars, snow and rain, trees

and deserts — and into the relational world — the world of real bodies and heartbeats, hands and faces.”

Just as people have worked to revive slow, unprocessed and traditional food, we need to fight for the tangible world, for enduring ways of interacting with others, for holism. We need to reconnect with material things: nature, soil, our bodies and other people in real life. This doesn't necessarily have to be big and dramatic. We don't have to hurl our computers into the sea en masse.

But we do have to intentionally resist the siren song of digitization, which by and large promises far more than it can deliver. We have to be cautious and wise about introducing devices into our lives that fundamentally change how humans have interacted since time immemorial. We have to plunge ourselves primarily into the natural world and embodied human relationships, with all the complexity, challenges, inconvenience and pain that entails.

Go watch the rain for 10 minutes. Go on a walk with a friend. Get off social media and meet one neighbor. Keep your kids offline. Put your hands in the dirt. Play an instrument instead of a video game. Turn off your smartphone and have dinner with people around a table. Search for beauty and goodness in the material world, and there, find joy. The way back to ourselves, as individuals and a society, runs through old, earthy things.

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.

Stewardship/Administration Committee: May 19th 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!

Yarn Collection

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!

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 14:

Greeters/Ushers: Mark & Deb Rychak

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss & Pat Bittner

Sunday, May 15:

Greeters/Ushers: Jim & Chris Koshute

Communion Assistants: Kierisa Hockensmith

Saturday, May 21:

Greeters/Ushers: Todd & Jill Moss

Communion Assistants: Cindy Solarczyk & Missy Brodt

Sunday, May 22:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Ray Leverknight

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.



Youth News

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.

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!

1st Annual Cruise-In

Sunday, July 24th from 1-4 p.m.

Mt. Calvary parking lot

Open to all cars, trucks, and bikes. A gift bag will be given to the first 25 vehicles. There will be food, dessert, and a DJ. Any questions, please contact the church office at 814-266-4859.

Flea Market & Bake Sale Update

Thanks to all who helped get ready for the Flea Market, worked all day, and cleaned up afterwards. We had some awesome workers!! We made a total of \$2103.46. Thanks to all who donated to the bake sale also and a thank you to all the workers who worked that day. They made a total of \$376.45. For a grand total of \$2479.91.

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!

Ascension of Our Lord @ Zion Lutheran Church

Thursday, May 26, 2022

Zion 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.

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

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the
Week: May 15 – May 21, 2022**

Happy Belated Birthday to Walter Mattern who turned 95 on May 10th.

May 15 - Jim Miller

May 18 - William Coble, II

May 19 - Vincente Lorenzo

May 20 - Austin Nider

May 20 - Jacqueline & Michael Cassidy

May 20 - Christopher & Tiffany Swartz

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 Teplitza 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 8, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: O God of peace, you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of your eternal covenant, make us complete in everything good that we may do your will, and work among us all that is well-pleasing in your sight, 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: Acts 9:36-43

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 23

P: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

A: The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

P: You restore my soul, O Lord, and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

A: Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

P: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

A: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 10:22-30

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

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 our Lord and Shepherd. Amen.

Having spent at least a little bit of time around sheep during my life, I can tell you that they basically have two emotional states that they alternate between: either they are calm and relaxed, oblivious to the world around them, fearless in the face of any possible threat.

Or... it's absolute chaos and sheer panic.

Sheep are not emotionally complex animals. They're not very intelligent animals.

Sheep would be lost without a shepherd. A shepherd who can provide stability in their lives. Who can keep them safe. Who can bring them back to the place where they belong. A shepherd to keep them rooted, anchored.

It's another one of the traditions of the church and the lectionary that this fourth Sunday of the season of Easter is referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday." It's one of the several times each year where the 23rd psalm is read. And on each of the three years of the cycle, there is a different Gospel reading of Jesus referring to himself as a shepherd.

He is the shepherd, and we are the sheep...

Now, in light of what I said to begin with, that sheep are not intelligent or emotionally complex, it might at first seem a bit demeaning to allow ourselves to be compared to an animal like a sheep.

But try to imagine your life on the scale at which God sees the world... Compared to God, we aren't all that bright. Compared to God, we're not all that emotionally complex. It would be easy for someone or something as large, all-powerful, and all-knowing as God to simply write us off as insignificant.

And yet, God recognizes each one of us as unique individuals. God loves each one of us all the same. God and Christ Jesus tend to their flock, caring for us, bringing us back when we wander away, anchoring us to a safe spot in the midst of whatever storms life may bring.

We ARE more emotionally complex than sheep, BUT, there is a certain comparison in terms of the fact that we spend the first chunk of our lives like those first sheep, innocent like children, oblivious to danger, and fearless in the face of any threat.

My daughter Annabelle who has spent nearly every Sunday of her life in church with people she doesn't entirely know, but who are typically friendly and kind and delighted to have her talk to them, doesn't really have a sense of "stranger danger." She doesn't understand that there are people out there who aren't friendly, who aren't kind, who might do bad things to her if given the opportunity.

We try to stress to her, that there are people and things to be afraid of. That she needs to be careful. But I'm afraid that won't really sink in until she has a bad experience and learns the lesson firsthand.

Frankly, I dread the day when she learns that lesson. When she realizes that there's more to be afraid of in the world than just a scary scene in a movie or a shadow in the corner of her bedroom. Obviously, we're a bit more emotionally complex than sheep, but the loss of innocence, the beginning of fear, is not something that I imagine any parent looks forward to.

Meanwhile, most of us here lost that innocence years ago.

We know that there are people to be afraid of.

We know that there are things to be afraid of.

We've experienced heartbreak and loss. We've experienced death, disease, and disaster. We know that the world is not all sunshine and rainbows. We've seen evidence of evil in the world.

Earlier this week, my wife, Annabelle and I had a 48 hour stomach bug. It was miserable, and I think I probably got the worst of it. I still don't quite have my voice back from how irritated my throat got from dry-heaving. And all week, people have been telling me, "you don't need to be sick right now with that surgery coming up."

And all I could do was sort of sigh, and say "yeah," in my head knowing that I didn't need a stomach bug, just like I didn't need to have car trouble last month, or furnace trouble the month before that, or trouble with our other car before that.

In the grand scheme of things, I have a lot of blessings in my life. But a lot of little storms can add up. A lot of little stressors can wear you down. Big and small, there are things in life, in the world that can make life difficult, stressful, chaotic. Once your innocence has been lost, it's hard not to see all of the things lurking around the corner.

But through it all, through the depths of despair, Christ is our shepherd. Christ is our anchor.

It's those times of fear and doubt and stress that we begin to realize how lost we are without our faith. And that's the story we've heard again and again in the Gospels these last few weeks, without our faith, we struggle to keep our head above water, to know which direction is up.

But with our faith, we have a shepherd watching over us. We have an anchor holding strong.

And no matter what might come at us, whether it's something we're afraid of, or something that's truly happening in the moment, Christ as our anchor will hold. Jesus will be with us. The boat will never get swamped, the sheep will never be too lost.

So have no fear little flock, the Good Shepherd is watching over us. 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: Gentle Shepherd, enable your church to respond to the voice of Jesus. Give us unfailing trust, unafraid to join in Jesus' work of renewing all things. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Feed your people at the table of creation. Prepare a safe place for those whose environments are dangerous or unhealthy, especially those making difficult journeys. Prosper your creation for the sake of every living thing. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Warm the hearts of all who celebrate and all who mourn on Mother's Day. Accompany those yearning to be mothers. Help us to heal from broken family relationships and open us to receive your nurturing love from all who serve mothering roles in our lives (especially). God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Seek out those who weep while they await healing or consolation (especially). Set people in their path who can provide the care they need, and wipe away every tear from their eyes. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Inspire the words of prophets and saints who employ innovative imagery to stretch our understanding (as did Julian of Norwich, whom we commemorate today). Send Christ to instruct us with motherly care. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Enfold us in the great multitude of saints from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. Wash us in your saving grace every day, guiding us to your waters of life. 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 the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**