



# Mount Calvary Connected

July 7, 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](http://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/](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/)

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## A Message from Pastor Scott Klimke

When he was jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, and under pressure to lighten up on his calls for equality and justice, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "The time is always ripe to do right." These words are reminiscent of Jesus' first sermon in the gospel of Mark. Making use of a Greek word for "God's time" often buried in our language's limited vocabulary for "time," Jesus says to you, to me, to all, "God's time, the ripest of all times, has arrived as promised and the kingdom of God has forever drawn near. Repent and believe in the Good News," (Mark 1:15).

Likely responsible for Martin Luther King Jr's similar sentiment, Jesus too thought the time was ripe for that which was right; for anything and everything comporting with God's will. He continues to think the same today. In worship over the weekend, we heard Jesus say, "The time is ripe! The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers few," (Luke 10:2). As he delivered this message over the weekend, Jesus also spoke to how we can take in the harvest God would have us collect. He said, "Cure the sick and let it be known that the Kingdom of God has drawn near forever," (Luke 10:9). If we're unclear about how this is to be done, here's at least part of what's involved.

Starting with the Kingdom of God part first, we draw attention to the Kingdom of God by drawing attention to Jesus. The Bible tells us the Kingdom of God first broke into our zip code in Jesus. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out demons, restored relationships, welcomed the unwelcomed, raised the dead, and rose from the dead himself, never to die again. Just as good, this One who acted as if the time is always ripe to do right is with us until the end of the age. It all adds up to what I've already written. We draw attention the God's Kingdom among us by drawing attention to Jesus.

Quite often, with earlier this morning being yet another example for me, this involves relaying that Jesus is our best source of information about God. When life gets tough, when the chips are done, we

are very easily tempted to think and feel that God is responsible for our troubles—that God is somehow punishing us or being unfair. When we fall prey to this temptation, we forget that Jesus is our best source of information about God. And here’s the thing about Jesus. Jesus doesn’t hurt. He heals. Sometimes it’s in this life. Sometimes it’s in the next. But Jesus doesn’t hurt. Jesus heals; telling us that God too is there not to make the pieces, but to put them back together. Relaying this Good News is part of how we cure the sick.

We also help to cure the sick by communicating that the time is always ripe to do right. In the New Testament, illness is often associated with the presence of demons. Whatever else they might do, demons distract us from what we can do and paralyze us with thoughts about what we can’t do. This leaves the harvest God has prepared with too few workers. In life, there are just questions we can’t answer and things we can’t do. When we become overly invested in the unanswerable or the undoable, the demonic holds back the ever-advancing Kingdom of God by keeping us from the questions we can already answer and the things we can already do. Along with telling them about Jesus, we cure the sick when we restore the focus and the purpose that demons steal away from us. When we’re healthy, we recognize not every question is ours to answer and not every problem is ours to solve, but there’s still more than enough for us to do. Leaving the undoable and unanswerable behind, what would God have you do today? Remember! The time is always ripe to do right and the right is done whenever we love God by loving our neighbors.

Pastor Scott

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### **Upcoming Meetings**

Property Committee: July 12th at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA: July 18th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: July 19th at 6:30 p.m.

Bible Study on Psalms: July 20th 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.

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### **Shine a Light on Us**

The Tribune-Democrat is accepting nominations for the “Simply the Best” contest. Vote online at [www.tribdem.com/simplythebest](http://www.tribdem.com/simplythebest) and nominate Mt. Calvary Lutheran as the “best place to worship” and our own Richland Learning Center as “best preschool/daycare.” Deadline to vote is July 8th. Paper ballots are in the June 25th and 29th editions of the paper, too.

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### **2022 Offering Envelopes**

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

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### **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!

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### **Get Well Cards for Pastor Jonathan**

Cards can be mailed to:

Pastor Jonathan Adams  
219 Ohio Street  
Boswell, PA 15531

If you'd like to send a meal to Pastor Jonathan & his family to help during his recovery, visit the Meal Train website: <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/n15v0q> Thank you!

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### **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!

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### **Giving Tree**

For the months of July and August, the Giving Tree will be used to collect \$5 donations for the Jared Box Project. This is a charity that helps brighten the spirits of children in our local hospitals. The money collected will be used to purchase a small bag of activities for each child. The bags will be packed and delivered on God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, September 11th. Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Computer & Internet Connection Now Available**

Members may use the computer in the library during office hours: Monday – Thursday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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### **Scheduled Worship Help**

#### **Saturday, July 9:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Lori & Brian Hiltz

**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

#### **Sunday, July 10:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed!

**Communion Assistants:** Todd Moss & Jeff Penrod & Noelle Berkey

**Saturday, July 16:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Pat Bittner & Linda Barnhart

**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

**Sunday, July 17:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed!

**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers 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.

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## Youth News

**Mt. Calvary's Adventures of "Flat Jesus":** This summer, Pastor Jono Adams invites you to adopt "Flat Jesus" and take him on your summer adventures! Please see the additional information below or visit Mt. Calvary's website.

**Pastor Jono's Sunday school class, and the nursery/childcare** has concluded for the summer. We look forward to seeing you all later this year!

**Synod Day @ DelGrosso's Amusement Park:** Monday, August 1st

**Lutheran Day @ the Curve:** Sunday, August 21st @ the Curve Baseball Field in Altoona

**IGNITE - Elementary Youth Retreat (Grades 2 - 6):** September 24-25 @ Camp Sequanota

**PLUNGE - Jr. High Retreat (Grades 6 -9):** October 1-2 @ Camp Sequanota

**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](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com)), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

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### **Mt. Calvary's Adventures of "Flat Jesus"**

This summer, Pastor Jono Adams invites you to adopt "Flat Jesus" and take him on your summer adventures!

"Flat Jesus" was inspired by a children's book by Jeff Brown called, "Flat Stanley." In the book, a boy named Stanley becomes flattened and is able to be mailed to different places, having all kinds of exciting adventures.

“Flat Jesus” is a way to keep our church family connected as we enter into the summer traveling season. Bring home a “Flat Jesus” and take him with you as you travel...or to whatever you do this summer. Take a picture of him doing lots of different things: going out to dinner, having fun at the beach or the mountains, hanging out with friends or cousins, or whatever you are doing! It will be an amazing adventure! It is a great way to remember that Jesus is always with us, wherever we go. And it just might start up a conversation with someone about what you are doing...and why!

AND THEN... SHARE HOW JESUS IS ON THE MOVE!

When you have taken photos of “Flat Jesus,” you can share your “Flat Jesus” pictures:

1. By emailing photos to RevJonoAdams@gmail.com or texting them to 412-817-6704.
2. By uploading your picture directly to Facebook. Tag Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA. Add the hashtag #flatJesus and/or #jesusisonthemove

It will be so exciting to see where Jesus is on the move this summer as you share your adventures! And remember, Jesus is with you ALWAYS!

We’d LOVE to see at least one “Flat Jesus” photo from every family in church. And if we get enough, we’ll combine them into a video at the end of the summer!

If you won’t make it to church to pick up a printed “Flat Jesus,” but still want to participate, you can download and print your own by visiting Mt. Calvary’s website: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/mt-calvarys-adventures-of-flat-jesus/>

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### **Youth/Family Ministry Ice Cream Event**

We’ll hear screams for ice cream on August 20th after the 5:30 p.m. service. Our youth and their families are invited to enjoy an ice cream sundae in our side yard under the pavilion. Bring a chair or sit in the grass, meet new friends, eat ice cream, and enjoy summer before school starts! More details to come!

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### **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.

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### **Walk Thru Basket Party**

We are having a Walk Thru Basket Party on September 24th and September 25th. Tickets will be on sale in July. We are asking for your support of the event with the following: purchase tickets, filled baskets, gift certificates, or cash. Themed baskets, monetary donations, or gift cards for baskets can be dropped off at the office. Thank you!

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### **Clothing Sale**

The Social Ministry Team will be having their annual clothing sale on Saturday October 8th. We now have a storage area downstairs at the church that allows us to start collecting items earlier. If you have any clothes you would like to donate, please bag them by size and gender. This makes it easier during

the sorting process. You can drop the clothes off at any time. If the church is locked, and no one is available in the office, please leave them by the blue bin outside. It will be checked daily. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

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### **14-Day Biblical Pilgrimage Adventure to Israel**

Jerusalem Seminary in Conjunction with Redstone Presbytery and Friends

October 15 to 28, 2022

Please see email sent May 31st for trip information, including the itinerary, or visit:  
<http://redstonepresbytery.org/>

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### **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

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**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the  
Week: July 10 – July 16, 2022**

**July 10** - Colt Anderson, Carmen Schellhammer, & Beverly Tallyen

**July 11** - Margaret Balogh

**July 12** - Kimberly Smith

**July 14** - Donald Schellhammer

**July 15** - Anita Brodt & Megan Loftis

**July 16** - Harold Ashcraft & Eric Bunnell

**July 11** - Jeffrey & Corey McKool

**July 12** - James & Leda Miller

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**Remember those that prayer has been requested for:**

Linda & Dick, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Shirley, Debbie, David, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan, Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner & Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Bob Trotter, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, Teplitza Family, Melanie, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Dorothy, Irene, Karen, Erin, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, Pastor Jonathan & Family, Roxanne Horner, Miriam Horner, Becky Lilja, Kathy P., Al Johnson, Chris, Donna & Danny, Cheryl, Jennifer & Family, Jaime, Matt & Ashley, Landon, Max Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Dean, Madi & Family, Patty & Family, Sydney & Family, Paulette, Ron, Andrea, Mary Ann, Midge, Rayford, Lois A., Dwane, Nicole, Trent, Kim, Kyle, Anna, Beverly, Sondra, E. Warshel, Audrey Rubis, Carol, Katey, Janice, & Trina & Family.

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**Financial Update**

When the congregational council recently reviewed financial reports for May, very little had changed. By way of example, last year's property expenses and this year's property expenses were separated by just \$250.14 and last year's wages and this year's wages were separated by just \$74.89. This stability in Mount Calvary's largest areas of expense speaks to the great job being done by your elected leaders. Have you said, "Thank you" to one of those leaders lately? Are they regularly a part of your prayer life?

There's also stability when it comes to the income side of the equation. We continue to feel the impact of the pandemic slowdown and even more so the impact of members moving out of our area, but May

income was still slightly higher than it was a year ago. This too speaks to the effective job being done by your elected leaders. Please pray for them. Please be encouraging and grateful. They're doing a great job. Along with those effective leaders, may we all just continue doing our part; maintaining our previous giving as a baseline and increasing when and where possible.

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### **Condensed Worship for Sunday, July 3, 2022**

#### **Prayer of the Day**

P: O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, you are the city that shelters us, the mother who comforts us. With your Spirit accompany us on our life's journey, that we may spread your peace in all the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

#### **First Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14**

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her—that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. For thus says the Lord: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

#### **Psalm 66:1-9**

P: Be joyful in God, all you lands; be joyful, all the earth.

**A: Sing the glory of God's name; sing the glory of God's praise.**

P: Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great strength your enemies cringe before you.

**A: All the earth bows down before you, sings to you, sings out your name."**

P: Come now and see the works of God, how awesome are God's deeds toward all people.

**A: God turned the sea into dry land, so that they went through the water on foot, and there we rejoiced in God.**

P: Ruling forever in might, God keeps watch over the nations; let no rebels exalt themselves.

**A: Bless our God, you peoples; let the sound of praise be heard.**

P: Our God has kept us among the living and has not allowed our feet to slip.

#### **Second Reading: Galatians 6:1-16**

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's

burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads. Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

**Gospel: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'"

"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

**A: Praise to you, O Christ!**

## Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

Ministry and life in general can be frustrating, if we let them. In real time and space; there's fluctuation; high points, low points, and times which are just kind of blah. I've always said there's never a time or place when every Christian and congregation doesn't have at least one reason for thanksgiving and our reading from Luke agrees. It says we can have perpetual joy. We hear the same in other New Testament writings and that we also have access to the peace which surpasses all understanding. But as our reading from Luke also acknowledges we can lose track of the sturdy joy and unsurpassable peace God gives. The frustrations and trials of both ministry and life in general can steal it away. With this kind of theft possible, it raises the question of when congratulations are in order for the Christian. When is it that we have attained spiritual maturity? When is it that we have put an end to childish ways? Again, when are congratulations in order for the Christian?

At least two of today's readings from Scripture speak to questions of this sort quite directly. It's likely that every worship service comes with at least one reading from Scripture which does the same. I think of last week's list of the Spirit's fruits. I think of a forthcoming reading from Luke which shall say congratulations are in order when we push self to side and live for others and their needs; knowing that God will have our back in the end. I think of 1st Corinthians 13 which says we put an end to childish ways when we love in a fashion that doesn't insist on its own way and that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. There just are a lot of ways to talk about when congratulations are in order for us as we travel the way who is Christ. But certainly, any consideration of the topic I have raised needs to spend some time with the way Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount.

Starting at chapter five in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount begins with what are sometimes called "The Beatitudes." Over eight verses, Jesus extends end-time blessings to different kinds of people. He starts the list by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We find a similar list in Luke where the blessings also are paired with woes. For our purposes today, it's helpful to understand that the word for end-time blessings used by both St. Matthew and St. Luke could just as easily be translated as "congratulations are in order." And so, any time we want to know when congratulations are in order for the Christian, "The Beatitudes" we find in Matthew chapter five or the blessings and woes we find in Luke chapter six, would be a good place to start. Maybe some of the material we find in these places can be brought into helpful conversation with what some of today's assigned scriptures have to say about when congratulations are in order for people like you and me.

With that possibility in mind, let's remember what I've just said. The first beatitude assigns end-time blessings to the poor in spirit. Specifically, it finds Jesus saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It's a formulation which suggests pretty strongly that if you want to spend eternity in heaven's kingdom, you'll want to be poor in spirit. For me, it's a formula that's got more than a little to do with how in our reading from Luke, Jesus says, "Don't rejoice that the spirits submit to you. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Here's where I hear the connection.

People who have a lot of spirit, with the spirit being more human than holy, never meet a mountain they don't wish to climb and think they can't climb. I have a lot of this in me. One of my professors in seminary once said I'd never met a challenge I didn't like. There must be something to this because I still remember it many years later. It's a disposition which can be as good as it is bad. Sometimes in life

our aspirations are way too low. Sometimes we can accomplish way more than we think we can. Like you, I hope, I've experienced more than once the joy of climbing a mountain which once seemed impassable. But here's the trap.

When you start climbing mountains, when the spirits start submitting to you, you can start to think it will always happen and that's an illusion. In our lives, we're not going to get through to those whose hearts have blocked out their heads completely. In life and in ministry, healing and help can't be extended to those who don't think they need any or are just too afraid to admit they do. For mere mortals, these are impassable mountains. It's when we've got to pray and pray and pray and trust that God knows what God is doing. This is part of what it means to be poor in spirit. When it's beyond us, we turn it over to God and trade in impassable mountains for mountains we can in fact climb. But there sure is one mountain we have a whole lot of trouble turning over to God.

It's the mountain that climbs past death. It's the mountain that climbs past the come and gone nature of being dust that shall return to dust. It's the mountain which summits at the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. We can't climb this mountain, but do we ever try. We try to justify ourselves before God and others all the time. We try to justify our sins and our failures; our fear and our cowardice; our greed and lack of generosity. What we do all the time is try to justify ourselves past all the penultimate judgement seats in this life and even past the ultimate judgment seat which sits before the door to the life to come. But in spite of the intensity we bring to the project, it's a project bound to fail. There's only way to be justified forever and ever and that's by the grace of God at work in the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. And we attain spiritual maturity, congratulations are in order, when we're ready to live in and by what God has freely done. To be spiritually mature, to have congratulations in order, is to live in and by God's eternal thumbs up in Christ and the Spirit rather in response to the thumbs up we do or do not receive from ourselves and others. This is to be poor in spirit. This is to rejoice not because the spirits submit to you, but because your names are written in heaven. As a Roman Catholic sibling in Christ has said, "Joy is the kind of happiness that does not depend on what happens."

But this doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. What we do is turn to "we," now that God has taken care of "me;" climbing the mountains we can and leaving the mountains we can't climb to God's steadfast love and superior mountaineering. This is the other side of the coin called spiritual maturity; the second instance in which congratulations are in order for us. The spiritually mature, those with congratulations in order, turn from "me" to "we" with greater and greater regularity. It's why in our reading from Galatians St. Paul doesn't just say he refuses to boast in anything but the cross of Christ. He also says the world's been crucified to him and he to the world. This is a "me" confident in God's grace turning away from "me" and towards "we" more and more. The same dimension of spiritual maturity is accentuated more than once in the Sermon on the Mount. For now, let's just stick with the end-time blessing pronounced upon the pure of heart.

When we're pure of heart, we have no self-seeking, ulterior motive. We don't try to put God out of a job by trying to justify ourselves apart from God's grace in Christ and the Spirit. We also don't try to scam others for the benefit of self, but instead consistently work for what's best for everybody. Here too a "me" confident in God's grace in Christ and the Spirit turns away from "me" and towards "we" more and more. This is spiritual maturity in its entirety. A "me" confident in God's grace in Christ and the Spirit turned toward and invested in "we." This is when congratulations are in order.

If such congratulations are already in order, praise be to the Holy Spirit. If they're not yet in order, come, Spirit, come. Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need.

P: Lord of the harvest, you send your church into the world to proclaim Christ's new creation to all. Renew the church as it carries out your mission of peace and healing. We pray for missionaries who accompany your people. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Your creation abounds with flowing waters and diverse creatures. Guide the work of climate scientists as they develop and advocate ways to restore earth's natural balance. Motivate humankind to adopt lifestyles that protect and sustain the earth. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: You guard the nations; let no leaders exalt themselves, but lift up the most vulnerable and work for the good of all. Send your Spirit to eradicate classism and inequity, violence and war, poverty and hunger. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: You desire abundant life for all. As we celebrate Independence Day, instill in us gratitude, generosity, and persistence in working toward freedom for all people (especially). God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Mothering God, you care for all people in need. Nourish those who are hungry. Restore employment to those who have lost work. Heal those who are sick, and comfort all who are dying or grieving (especially). God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: We remember the saints who proclaimed your reign on earth and now rest in you (especially Thomas the Apostle, whom we remember today). Make us faithful in our witness to Christ's new creation. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: God of every time and place, in Jesus' name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping.

**A: Amen.**

### **Blessing**

P: May Christ, the wisdom and power of God, and the source of our life together, keep you united in mind and purpose. And the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. **Amen.**