



Mount Calvary Connected

July 28, 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!

Pastor Scott Klimke Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421 Email: sklimke6@gmail.com	Pastor Jonathan Adams Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704 Email: revjonoadams@gmail.com
---	---

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 Loves Bold Requests"

By ELCA Missionary, Corey Driver

I have strong memories of growing up in churches, listening to the prayers of the people and learning that prayers were simply to request that God would perform God's will. I know it's not this way in every congregation, but I was told repeatedly and disciplined to believe that humans should never ask for what we want but only for what God wants. But as I grew and began to read Scripture more, I came across examples of times when it was not only acceptable for people to ask boldly for what they wanted but to even ask God to change God's mind, if our Creator was willing (e.g., Exodus 32:9-14; Numbers 14:11-20; Amos 7:3-6; Jeremiah 26:12-19; Jonah 3:10; Matthew 26:39). In this week's lectionary readings, we have two models of bold requests.

Jesus included bold requests as the very foundation of his lessons on prayer for his disciples. In response to a request that he be a little more like his relative John the Baptizer, Jesus taught them a formal prayer. The disciples were to open by addressing God as Father, an address neither revolutionary nor particularly incendiary in first century Judaism. God refers to Godself as a parent in Scripture (Isaiah 63:16, 2 Samuel 7:14 and elsewhere), and by the beginning of the second century, an early version of the popular liturgical song "Avinu Malkeinu" ("Our Father, Our King") was already being recited.

After blessing God's name and asking that God's kingdom come, Jesus told the disciples to make three bold requests. First, they were to ask for their daily bread. Second, they were to ask that God forgive them their sins because they forgave those who were in debt to them. Make no mistake, the disciples' willingness to release others from principally economic obligations was to be the reason for God to forego punishment for their sins, at least in this version of the prayer. Finally, Jesus told his disciples to

ask God to spare them from times of trial.

But Jesus wasn't done insisting that his disciples should pray boldly. Perhaps noticing that some of them were a bit uncomfortable with the requests he was telling them to make of God, Jesus told a parable to show them how bold they should be. You have to know that few people would have intentionally left bread out overnight in Southwest Asia. Just a few verses earlier, the disciples were instructed to pray for daily bread, and it means what it sounds like. Each day households made bread for the day, and most didn't have much or anything that was wasted, especially during the heavy taxation of the Herodians for the Romans. So the idea that someone already curled up for sleep would have any bread, much less three loaves, is ludicrous. And yet, because of the shamelessness of the repeated request, the friend will give whatever is asked of him, including firing up the oven and making more bread. Jesus says God is like this friend, who is willing be roused by bold requests.

Looking back to the beginnings of the biblical narrative, Abraham also made bold requests. When he heard God's plan to interrogate the wickedness of the cities of the plain and destroy them if the report of their sin was accurate, Abraham intervened. Remember, in addition to his nephew's family, Abraham knew the people of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar, whom he had already personally rescued and brought out of captivity (Genesis 14:8-16). Abraham challenged God to not destroy the righteous with the wicked, going so far as to shame God as a potentially bad judge if God were willing to inflict collective punishment (18:25). God relented to each of Abraham's six requests to save the cities if a decreasing number of righteous people could be found there. That there were not enough righteous people to save the town notwithstanding, Abraham practiced what Jesus taught his disciples: bold conversation with God that asks for exactly what the person wants, even if it means that God might change God's mind.

A quick word as I close. Obviously, God isn't a cosmic vending machine where we can simply insert a prayer and out comes what we want. Sometimes we pray faithfully but the answer is "no." Even Jesus, who spent hours prior to his arrest asking God to remove the cup of crucifixion, apparently received a negative reply. That said, Jesus instructs those who would follow him to boldly ask for what we want. Hebrews 4:16 invites us to boldly approach the throne of grace so that we may find mercy and grace. For me, this is still a stretching task, as I am much more comfortable saying "thy will be done" than asking God to change my cup. How can we lean in to bold prayer and, in so doing, obey Jesus' instruction?

Cory Driver is an ELCA missionary serving as the director of graduate studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo (Egypt).

Upcoming Meetings

Bible Study on Psalms: August 3rd at 6:30 p.m.

All Parish/Evangelism Committee: August 4th at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: August 9th at 6:00 p.m.

Social Ministry Committee: August 11th at 6:30 p.m.

WELCA: August 15th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: August 16th at 6:30 p.m.

Bible Study on Psalms: August 17th at 6:30 p.m.

Bible Study on Psalms: August 31st 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.

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!

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!

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!

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 Saturday, September 10th. Thank you for your continued support!

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.

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, July 30:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!
Communion Assistants: Cindy Solarczyk

Sunday, July 31:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!
Communion Assistants: Ray Leverknight

Saturday, August 6:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!
Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Sunday, August 7:

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.



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

Youth/Family Ministry Ice Cream Event: August 20th after the 5:30 p.m. service

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), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

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/>

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!

Walk Thru Basket Party

We are having a Walk Thru Basket Party on September 24th and September 25th. We are asking for your support of the event with the following: purchase tickets, filled baskets, gift certificates, or cash. Tickets will be on sale at the Cruise-In on July 24th. Tickets will also be on sale before and after church services on July 30th and 31st.

Touch a Truck!

Saturday, September 10th from 10-2 p.m.

There will be all types of vehicles to explore, including fire, police, rescue, and commercial trucks. Snacks and drinks will be provided. There will be a special appearance by Po Poore!

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!

Boscov's "Friends Helping Friends" Shopping Passes

WELCA is selling Boscov's "Friends Helping Friends" discount shopping passes again this year. Your \$5.00 donation entitles you to a shopping pass to Boscov's on October 19th, giving you a 25% discount on most purchases. Proceeds benefit WELCA's many activities throughout the year. Let any WELCA member know you'd like to purchase a pass or watch for someone selling them in the Narthex after services.

Thank You!

Thank you to everybody that participated or helped out with our first annual cruise in. It takes a team to put this on, and we have the best!

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/>



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

June 1, 2022

Thank You

Mount Calvary Lutheran Church
1000 Scalp Ave
Johnstown, PA 15904-3035

Dear Mount Calvary Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$4,884.00 to the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

*Bring us, O Christ, to share the fullness of your joy;
baptize us in the risen life that death cannot destroy*
(ELW 328).

This is a season of reflection and sacrifice, but also a season of hope. As we walk the 40-day journey of Lent, we know that we are walking toward Easter and the promise of renewal. Your gifts to the ministries of the ELCA are bringing that promise and hope to your neighbors around the world.

With your gifts, you are putting God's love into action. Your generosity allows this church to continue to spread the good news of Jesus Christ by equipping leaders, positioning communities to grow, and sharing the love of a faithful and abiding God.

You are creating new beginnings. Thank you for sharing the hope of new life and the fullness of Christ's joy.

With gratitude,

Rachel Wind

Rachel Wind
Executive for Philanthropy

P.S. Please see the reverse side of this letter for your official receipt.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Gift date: 5/25/2022

Gifts are designated for:

Chicks	\$160.00
Goat	\$300.00
Piglet	\$150.00
Cow	\$500.00
Share of a cow	\$200.00
Share of a fish farm	\$50.00
Honey bees	\$240.00
Water Filter	\$90.00
Latrine	\$300.00
Farming field school for a woman	\$75.00
Microloan for a woman	\$125.00
School fees and uniform for a girl	\$400.00
School supplies for a child	\$200.00
Fruit-tree seedling	\$80.00
Community vegetable garden	\$200.00
Seeds and gardening tools	\$150.00
ELCA Good Gifts - Hygiene kit	\$25.00
Mosquito net	\$20.00
Stock a health clinic for a week	\$825.00
Clinic visit for a child	\$140.00
Total contribution:	\$4,884.00

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

Updates from Our Members & Community

Our own Albert Johnson, father of Debbie Wechtenhiser, has moved into the Lutheran home. His former residence and its belongings are being auctioned off through August 23rd. Take a look at <https://rulloauctionservices.hibid.com/auctions/>

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: July 31 – August 6, 2022

July 31 - Ray Leverknight

Aug. 1 - Michael Berkey, Blake Brehm, Craig Kuyat, Benjamin Leverknight, & Thomas Venet

Aug. 2 - Gretel Kaltenbaugh & Kate Rychak

Aug. 4 - Nichole Brehm & Cindy Solarczyk

Aug. 5 - Rachel Kishlock

Aug. 6 - Jared McQuaide

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, 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., Nicole, Trent, Kim, Kyle, Anna, Beverly, Sondra, E. Warshel, Audrey Rubis, Carol, Katey, Janice, Trina & Family, Jake Wissinger, Candi Walker, Dave Brehm, Chrissy-Baby Emma, Wyatt, Gerald Barrick, & the Shreffler Family.

Financial Update

When the council reviewed financial reports through the end of June on Tuesday, things were largely as they've been for some time. There's stability at Mount Calvary. Even with the volatility affecting the savings and investments of so many, our overall holdings are up a tad from a year ago. Income is over budget and expenses are under budget.

The biggest danger before us is not to fall into a false sense of security. The pandemic threw not just Mount Calvary, but much of the Church into neutral for what has been over two years now. Every minute in neutral is a minute lost and as the minutes add up so do the losses. It's why inviting and welcoming without interruption and maintaining or increasing giving when possible are important.

They stave off the losses that are inevitable even when it's full steam ahead and are now more important than ever since things haven't been full steam ahead for some time.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, July 24, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty and ever-living God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and you gladly give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us your abundant mercy. Forgive us those things that weigh on our conscience and give us those good things that come only through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

Then the Lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know." So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Let me take it upon myself to

speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.” Then he said, “Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.” He answered, “For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.”

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 138

P: I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.

A: I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.

P: When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.

A: All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth.

P: They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord.

A: The Lord is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar.

P: Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.

A: You will make good your purpose for me; O Lord, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

Second Reading: Colossians 2:6-19

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.” And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

It’s been almost two and a half years now since Julia and I traveled to Israel and Jordan. When we got back, the pandemic quickly left us thinking about other things. But from time to time, something reminds me the trip did happen. This weekend’s appointed scriptures, for instance, made me think of the Muslim call to prayer we heard in various places. I remember hearing it in Amman, Jordan and Bethlehem in particular. When we were at our hotel in Bethlehem, we more than once heard the local Muslim community called to prayer; which usually happens five times a day. Bursting forth from a minaret, the slender tower atop a mosque, the call to prayer is an almost otherworldly sound you don’t quickly forget.

Though perhaps not as jarring or penetrating as the Muslim version, it must be said that this weekend’s readings have their own call to pray to issue. In our reading from Luke, Jesus calls us to make use of what has come to be known as The Lord’s Prayer. His call has been heard. How many times will The Lord’s Prayer found only in Luke and Matthew be used this weekend? To make the number even bigger, how many times has The Lord’s Prayer been used since it was first handed down by Jesus in the neighborhood of two thousand years ago? A lot, an awful lot, an awful, awful lot, is all we can say. And turning now to our reading from Genesis, how often has Abraham’s courage to call God back from potential injustice itself encouraged people to pray? When combined with how Moses prays similarly in the book of Exodus, the answer is a lot; an awful lot; an awful, awful lot. Like the air in and around Bethlehem and other places with strong, Muslim communities, Scripture is filled with its own calls to prayer. Why is this so? Why is prayer stressed?

There are likely many answers to this question. As for today’s answer, I’d like to suggest that prayer is a potent and powerful reminder of who we are and how this identity is to carry over into real life. When the reminder bears fruit, we get better and the world gets better too. And as our readings describe it, this can go for God as much as it can for us. Remember! We don’t worship a God who sits above it all.

This God becomes one of us in Jesus Christ. This God walks with us. This God is in conversation with us; is in dialogue with us. And our reading from Genesis certainly informs us this was going on long before Jesus became flesh.

In our first reading, it's prayer, dialogue, conversation which moves God to investigate what's going on in Sodom and Gomorrah. Does God need to be reminded to do God's job? It would seem so. It's only after an outcry, a great outcry, comes to God through prayer that God springs into action. Based upon what Abraham later says, it would seem the prayerful outcry being raised against Sodom and Gomorrah is instigated by a lack of righteousness. Righteousness is a relational term. The righteous are true to their relationships; keeping faith with God and neighbor, whereas the unrighteous break faith with God and neighbor.

With this in mind, it would seem that over in Sodom and Gomorrah it's alleged that people are trampling all over one another as they were prior the flood; with the most trampled upon likely the most vulnerable already—folks like widows and orphans and strangers. And as our reading from Genesis describes it, God isn't moved to take care of this potential outrage until multiple prayers remind God that a big part of the divine job description is to protect the vulnerable. What's more is that once a great and prayerful outcry gets God going, Abraham repeatedly feels God also must be reminded that the divine response to Sodom and Gomorrah must be measured and just. This reminder too is delivered through what we are to regard as prayer. This is prayer reminding God who God is and what God is to be about so that God might act the part and make the world better in the process. The same understanding of prayer explains why today's psalmist seeks aid and assistance by reminding God that God is supposed to be faithful and abounding in steadfast love; caring for the lowly and imperiled as beloved creations of God's making. For God and us, prayer is again represented as a reminder of who we are and what we are to be about so that we might act the part in love and mercy. Thank goodness such a practice exists.

In today's reading from Genesis, Abraham lifts up the possibility that a small number of righteous people may be found in Sodom and Gomorrah. Whether these people are completely sinless or just not guilty of trampling on the vulnerable isn't said. The New Testament eliminates the ambiguity. All sin and fall short of the glory of God. Or as our hymnal puts it, we are all captive to sin, sinning in thought, word, and deed, and unable to free ourselves from sin's tyranny. With all of us unrighteous, imagine the heartburn on the part of God. If a few folks in Sodom and Gomorrah could get God hot and bothered, what about the whole world sinning day after day? When we went so far as to nail God's Son Jesus to a cross, thank goodness prayer was available to him, with Jesus praying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Similarly, thank goodness before Good Friday, as our reading from Luke attests, Jesus responded to a question about prayer with a prayer which for centuries has reminded God that we're sinners in need of God's forgiveness. Again, prayer is a practice which reminds God and us of who we are and what we are to be about so we might act the part through lives of love and mercy. And now that we've talked about how this works for God, let's talk a bit about how it works for us.

In our reading from Colossians, the writer hopes that we might not be led to doubt or question the salvation already and forever won for us through Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. Forgetting that all of our sins have been nailed to the cross and forever forgiven, forgetting how we have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, the writer worries some sort of fear-mongering huckster

might get us to take up works and practices which won't add anything to our salvation, but will take needed time, talent, and treasure away from the least among us. It's a worry Church history has labeled real and legitimate more than once. But prayer can keep us on track and invested not in ourselves, but in the least among us; reminding us of who we are and what we are to be about so we might act the part in mercy and love. To pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," is to be reminded that we have been adopted as children of God. To pray, "Our Father who art heaven," is to be reminded that we are destined to inherit the best God has to give by way of baptism and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. By calling our attention to how we are God's children already, to how we are already heirs of salvation, prayer reminds we're now free, completely free, to work for the benefit of others. And my, oh my, do the prayers of Jesus on Good Friday and of Abraham in our reading from Genesis remind us of the power of righteousness, even if our righteousness shall never be as consistent as that practiced by Jesus. Again, prayer is a practice that reminds God and us of who we are and what we are to be about so we might act the part in mercy and love. And again, though less than us, God needs this reminder too. As this sermon heads towards closure, just think of the language of The Lord's Prayer.

This is language that represents God needing us as we also need God even more. We're told the will of God is done in heaven, but not necessarily on earth. The message is that God needs us to rectify this imbalance. We're also told that we need God to forgive our trespasses, but God also needs us to be practitioners of grace and mercy ourselves. What emerges from The Lord's Prayer is a two-way street. God needs us and we need God even more. Through the delivery of this reminder, The Lord's Prayer keeps traffic on both sides of the two-way street I've described moving. Thank goodness it does. The vulnerable, along with everybody else, need God and us to remember who we are and what we are to be about so that we might act the part in love. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: Trusting in God's extraordinary love, let us come near to the Holy One in prayer.

P: Rooted and built up in Christ, we pray for the church. Embolden church leaders to take risks for the sake of the gospel and equip the baptized to proclaim your extravagant love for the whole world.

Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Rejoicing in the works of your hands, we pray for the natural world. Make rivers and lakes, oceans and all waterways, sparkle with your radiance. Protect water sources (local water sources may be named) and strengthen those who defend them. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Interceding on behalf of the vulnerable, we pray for the peoples of the world. Inspire all rulers and governing authorities with your justice. Guide the work of legislators and public officials, that they advocate for the well-being of those they serve. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Persistent in prayer, we pray for our neighbors in need. To all who have hunger, give daily bread. To all who have bread, give hunger for justice. Open us to the cries of those who suffer (especially).

Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Abounding in thanksgiving, we pray for this congregation. Bless the prayer and fellowship ministries in this place. Call us together in times of praise and blessing, trouble and sorrow, in your holy name. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him to new life, we give thanks for your saints who rest in your eternal presence. Join our voices with theirs as we sing of your great glory. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Receive the prayers of your children, merciful God, and hold us forever in your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our holy Wisdom.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**