



Mount Calvary Connected

March 16, 2023

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 Jonathan Adams

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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/

Readings & Sermon from the Past Sunday

Listen to the readings and the sermon from this past Sunday on our website: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/sermons/>

The Congregational Self Study (Survey)

If you already completed the survey (paper copies are available in the Nathex), thank you for your response! If you have not yet had the opportunity to complete it, please print the survey (Congregational Self Study 2023 Mt Calvary) and return it no later than Sunday, March 19th.

A Message from Pastor Jonathan Adams

In one of my favorite sermons over the past few years, and one that I hear may have been a favorite of many of yours, I paraphrased a line from John F. Kennedy's famous inauguration speech and encouraged you all, "Ask not what your church can do for you, ask what you can do for your church."

It's time to bring that back around...

Times of pastoral transition are crucial times to consider what it is you may be able to do for your church. It's not that church isn't still doing things for you, certainly it is, but it's a time where church may need your help more than others.

Right now, we're looking to rebuild a team of folks who can bring Holy Communion to those unable to join us for worship: those in nursing homes or otherwise "homebound." It's something that can largely be done

on your own schedule, with a partner, or even with your whole family. We'll provide the training and the "equipment," we'll even give you someone experienced to tag along with if it'll help you feel more comfortable. If we have enough people, you may only be asked to be responsible for a few visits each month, but you'll be doing vital work to extend our table beyond the literal communion table in the church to dozens of places across our community.

In the next few weeks, Terrie and I will be looking to push our schedule of readers, communion assistants, ushers and greeters out into the summer months of May and beyond. We'll be starting by reaching out to those who have served these roles in the last year or so, but there's always room for more. Could this be a way for you to contribute to our shared worship?

Beyond those two things, there are numerous other projects we'll be looking for volunteers to assist with, some of them are no doubt things we haven't even thought of yet. Or maybe it's something you've thought of, and we haven't; maybe you have a particular gift or talent that you feel could be used for the good of God through our church. We're certainly open to dreaming and envisioning new ways for everyone to serve and feel included. Just let me know.

I hope that church is doing a lot for you, and that in response to that you might consider the things that YOU can do for our church. Together we are stronger, together we are church for the sake of the world.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Meetings & Events

Property Committee - Thurs., March 16th at 6 pm

Social Ministry Meeting - Thurs., March 16th at 6:30 pm

WELCA - Mon., March 20th at 6 pm

Church Council - Tues., March 21st at 6:30 pm

Ask – A Lenten Series (Mt. Calvary) - Wed., March 22nd at 7 pm

Ask – A Lenten Series (Benscreek) - Wed., March 29th at 7 pm

Stewardship/Administration Meeting - Thurs., March 30th at 6 pm

ALPHA - Every Tuesday in March

Donate your gently worn, used and new shoes!

From March 1st - May 1st, Mt. Calvary is partnering with the Greater Johnstown YWCA to raise funds for a new lunch/storage counter for their daycare. The more shoes collected, the more money we raise! A list of participating drop off locations and more information can be found here!

Furry Friends

During March, you'll notice a marked bin in the Narthex for donations for the Cambria County Humane Society and Second Chance Stray Cat Rescue. The list of on-going needs is quite large and includes just about anything imaginable for puppies, dogs, kittens and cats. More information is available on the bin, on our website, or contact Erin Powell 814-244-0221 or erin.powell03@gmail.com.

Easter Flowers

Easter Flower envelopes are available in the Narthex. The cost for each plant is as follows:

5 Bloom Lilies- \$12.00

6 Bloom Tulips- \$12.00

3 Bloom Hyacinths- \$12.00

Please return your envelope with your selection(s) and payment by March 20th.

Give a Gift to World Hunger

If you would like to give a Gift To World Hunger this Easter Season, the envelopes are in the Narthex.

Donations are due by April 1st.

“If I am hungry, that is a material problem; if someone else is hungry, that is a spiritual problem.” - Paul Farmer

Save the Date!

The property committee will not be having its usual April meeting. We will however, be hosting our annual Weed and Feed. It will be held Thursday, April 13 at 5 pm.

Bring your favorite gardening tool. A light meal will be provided. Hope to see you there!

Our Annual Flea Market

Items that you are collecting for the Flea Market can be brought to the church starting April 1st and taken to the Old Lounge, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Please no clothing, TV's, or shoes!

Shoes being collected until May 1st can be put in the Narthex in the appropriate collection bins.

Ask – A Lenten Series

In partnership with Benscreek Lutheran Church, our 2023 Lenten midweek offering is entitled “Ask,” a series that will encourage us all to remember that having faith and having questions are not mutually exclusive.

We’ll gather at 7pm for the five Wednesdays in March, alternating between the two congregations for a worship service that feels a bit more like a bible study. Or maybe it’s a bible study that feels a bit more like a worship service? We’ll figure it out as we go along.

Join us for one or two, or for the whole series!

March 22nd – 7pm @ Mt. Calvary

March 29th – 7pm @ Benscreek

Benscreek Lutheran Church is located at 4459 Somerset Pike, Hollsopple, PA, one mile north of the Thomas Feed Mill, less than 20 minutes from Mount Calvary.

Attention Church Committees!

If your group orders anything that will be delivered to the church or to your home, please don't assume that the invoice is automatically sent to the church office or to Bev. Most times, it isn't.

If paperwork is in any box that you open, please mark it to Bev's attention, give it to her, or slide it into the slot in her office door. It is also a good idea to let her know ahead of time that you've ordered something so she knows it's legit.

Remember to communicate and keep her "in your loop!"

Readers/Communion Assistants:

March 18 – Cindy Buday

March 19 – Mike Kozak

March 25 – Kevin Oleksa

March 26 – Ray Leverknight

Those interested in volunteering may contact Pastor Jonathan to sign up.

Article

Did God intend for Adam and Eve to live forever?

by Brian Bantum

There are few more rigorous theological spaces than the kitchen table with a four-year-old. On one particular occasion we were talking about creation and the garden of Eden and the arrival of death in the Fall. "So before that, everything lived forever?" my conversation partner asked. "The trees kept growing and there were more and more and more tigers? And what did the tigers eat? What did the T. rexes eat? Would people have just kept filling up everything? Where would it all go?"

As we talked, I imagined looking around and seeing trees pressed together and humans and elephants and bears and coyotes and roaches and mice and dogs and cherry trees and azalea bushes and dandelions—all slowly pressing together and then piling on top of one another. Millions. Billions. Billions of billions of living things that never die.

"Well, it was just the humans who lived forever." As soon as I said it, I knew I was wrong. Everything else lives and dies so that we don't have to? When we interpret humanity's relationship to creation, maybe our domination over creation isn't our only misperception. Perhaps we miss the possibilities of our life when we believe human beings are intended to be exempt from death.

Our personhood, the body we speak of so confidently that was meant to live forever, is itself an arrangement of cells and tissues that are cycling through life and death. Our bodies are constantly undergoing changes, small transformations in our gradual development from infant to adult. Our bodies are no different and are connected to the cycles of life and death that are intrinsic to creation's goodness. As Indigenous theologian Randy Woodley reminds us, "Death is simply another part of living."

I have begun to wonder if living forever was really the Edenic ideal. Is it possible that we were all meant instead simply to live long lives filled with friends and companions? That we could see the children in our midst grow up and have children of their own? And that when our body is laid to rest we are surrounded by those who love us and in whom our life continues?

In so much of our language around sin and salvation, death looms as a monster, the consequence of disobedience. But we rarely ask what we mean by death—or by everlasting life. In Jesus' resurrection, his body shows us that our bodies will matter. In Jesus' resurrected body there is a likeness to who he was with the disciples. But he's also different. His face sometimes unrecognizable from the friend they walked with. Appearing and disappearing from rooms. Recognition that only comes with teaching or a meal. This is surely the body of Jesus, but even his body and life have undergone a change, a transformation. Perhaps life everlasting is not the resurrection of my mid-30s self.

Change, transformation, death, cycles of renewal and cessation—these are all part of God's creation. And this change is beautiful and good.

What resemblance does my 40-something self have to my three-month-old self? An Edenic ideal that sees an unchanging, immortal ideal humanity can't help but attempt to freeze life around it, a human exceptionalism that clings to everlasting life as what it means to be with God but never quite asks what the nature of that life is. Maybe immortality is something more than not being dead.

And if this is true, we might find that notions of immortality and everlasting life are more than an undying body. In truth, our bodies and lives are always extending far beyond time and space. The tendrils of my life fly out into the world in the words I have written, in how my son cuts his grilled cheese, in the way I sit like my grandmother when I eat, in the lives of those I love or have simply encountered in brief moments.

Sometimes those resemblances are so clear in the faces of the ones we love. But other times we do not recognize them until the teaching, the eating, the way the bread is broken. There are so many ways we continue to live in this world—the death of our bodies may not be the end. This makes me wonder more and more about God's warning to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for they will surely die.

Perhaps death is not the bodily death they imagine. I wonder if God's warning is about loss: where once every tree nourished you and you could appreciate the variations, their limits and their beauty, after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil every tree turns sour. Seeing what we do not understand makes us turn what is a gift into a burden. Death was not a condition of dying, it was a tragic way of living. But when the fear of death, the fear of losing our life, becomes the totality of what we are, it becomes so much easier to kill others to preserve ourselves, to justify the impoverishment of others so that we might be full.

Maybe death is not what we should fear. Without death we do not grow. Without death our creation accumulates and crowds and ultimately withers, because constant growth is not sustainable. Even death was in the garden, yes, even our deaths. And it was good.

Brian Bantum is professor of theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and author of Redeeming Mulatto and The Death of Race.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

March 19 – March 25, 2023

Birthdays

Mar. 19 - Carolyn Makin

Mar. 20 - Vicki Hershberger

Mar. 21 - Evan Beglin, Jaclynn Hauger, Randy Whetzel, & Ethan Zukus

Mar. 22 - Dan Bantley

Mar. 23 - Draven Herring & Brenda Kuyat

Mar. 24 - Jeanne Hockensmith & Robert Neumar

Mar. 25 - Shannon Lamoreux

Prayer Requests

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Kim; Devin; Laura & Family; Dorothy; Jo Ann; John Alt; Jan Mertz; Denny; Jill Lisson; Jaci Hauger; Sharon; Barbara; Dennis; Mary M.; Joel Penrod; Tim Miller; Cathy T.; Paul Brodt; Kim Stayrook; Alan; Pastor David Louder; Frank Robison; Sandy; Louise; Brooke & Bill; Chuck; Dawn; Cherie; Sandy; Lorrie; & Bill; Jamie Bloom; Nancy Moore; Wilma Hiltz; Johnny Nerone; Cheryl & Roger; pray for the Alpha Course participants that they may receive the holy spirit; James; Denny & Ellen; Bill; Sue; Stan McQuaide; El Warshel; Kathy Price; Beth Oldham; Stacy & Josh; Bill; Janet; Landon; Harold; Gonzales Family; Mary.

Condensed Worship

Saturday, March 11, 2023 & Sunday, March 12, 2023

Questions for the Curious

Prayer of the Day

P: Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **A: Amen.**

First Reading: Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did

so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

The word of the Lord, **A: Thanks be to God.**

Psalmody: Psalm 95

L: Come, let us sing to the LORD; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

A: Let us come before God’s presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.

L: For you, LORD, are a great God, and a great ruler above all gods.

A: In your hand are the caverns of the earth; the heights of the hills are also yours.

L: The sea is yours, for you made it, and your hands have molded the dry land.

A: Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

L: For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God’s pasture and the sheep of God’s hand. Oh, that today you would hear God’s voice!

A: “Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert.

L: There your ancestors tested me, they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

A: Forty years I loathed that generation, saying, ‘The heart of this people goes astray; they do not | know my ways.’

L: Indeed I swore in my anger, ‘They shall never come | to my rest.’”

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 4:5-42

P: The holy gospel according to John.

A: Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If

you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

The gospel of the Lord,
A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Lent 3A – March 11 & 12, 2023 – John 4:5-42

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our curious Lord. Amen.

Of all the various parts of being a pastor, very few of them are knowledge or skills that you can learn once and call yourself done. Most of it is much more of an art, skills that you practice and develop over time.

One of those skills, one that I've found particularly important, is the art of being ignorant.

It all boils down to a psychological concept called the Dunning-Kruger effect, which says that the less a person knows, the more confident they are in their knowledge. Albert Einstein said essentially the same thing in different language when he wrote, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know."

Now the art of being ignorant, is the art of actively pushing back against the Dunning-Kruger effect, pushing forward in the footsteps of Albert Einstein, and realizing that until you admit how little you know, you can't begin to learn more.

So, sometimes, you just have to be ignorant.

And SOMETIMES, you may even have to pretend to be ignorant. It is an art after all.

The pastor I worked with during my seminary internship was truly an artist in this way. Decades of experience as a pastor, decades in that specific congregation, getting to know every little thing about every person. And yet, he could smile and play dumb with the best of them.

He told me that sometimes you'll find out something about a person, but you just have to play dumb, and wait for you to tell them about it themselves. And that when you do that, when you start from a place of ignorance, you'll learn even more than you knew in the first place.

Ignorance, and maybe, curiosity, are incredibly important tools for a pastor. Incredibly important tools for all of us as people of faith. Because ignorance, and curiosity in the face of our own ignorance, is how we learn and grow.

And it is ignorance and curiosity that's at the heart of Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well...

It all begins when Jesus asks her for a drink. It's a simple request, but it's one that's rooted in curiosity, and feigned ignorance. He knows who she is, he knows that they shouldn't share according to cultural norms. But he pretends to be ignorant, he's curious how she'll respond.

And the woman is curious, too. She recognizes that Jesus is a Jew, she knows that even this little interaction would get them both in trouble from their respective religious authorities, but she wants to know... "How can you ask me for something like that?"

And as they talk, it's question after question, one to another. Neither assumes anything about the other. They ask questions. They get to know each other. They allow curiosity to be their guide.

They allow curiosity to build the relationship.

And that relationship brings many more Samaritans to Christ. Jesus is welcomed into their village because of the relationship he built with that woman, because of the testimony that she gave to her neighbors. The testimony that began with Jesus' curiosity.

Jesus and the Samaritan woman bridged a huge divide by avoiding assumptions and being curious out each other. Ignoring the things that they may have heard about one another, and simply engaging in conversation.

How much more open could our conversations with one another be if we did the same? If we allowed that to inspire us in conflicts in our church, in our communities, in our nation, and world? If we stepped back and acknowledged the fact that we don't know as much as we think we do, that we have more to learn, that we have more to be curious about?

With Christ as our guide, we can build bridges. It just takes a little bit of ignorance, a little bit of curiosity. It's an artform, but it's certainly one that we can all perfect with practice. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayers Of Intercession

L: Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

L: We pray for your church. Bless partnerships with other Christians and inter-religious dialogue. Guide the daily work of denominational and congregational leaders. Strengthen our combined witness for the sake of the gospel, that all experience your life-giving love. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We pray for the universe. All creation teems with life, from the depths of the earth and seas to the skies above. Fill us with awe and reverence for the diversity and preservation of life. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We pray for the nations of the world. Topple the dividing walls that separate us from our neighbors. Form us into your beloved community where diversity of gender, race, language, ability, and ethnic origin is celebrated and affirmed. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We pray for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. Be present with all who are lonely, and give courage to all who are afraid. Comfort those who live with chronic illness or other sickness. Give them your living water always. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We pray for this congregation, especially those preparing for baptism (at the Vigil of Easter/on Easter Day). Nurture their faith and pour your love into their hearts. Inspire our community by their testimony to God's grace in their lives. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We give thanks for the lives of all your saints (especially Gregory the Great, whom we commemorate today). Their hope in you sustained lives of faith and service. Encourage us with the hope they shared in you. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

L: We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth, and claimed us as children of the light, strengthen you on your journey into life renewed. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you ☩ peace. **A: Amen.**