

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Third Sunday of Preaching Series on Worship

Genesis 18:20-32

Psalm 138

Colossians 2:6-15[16-19]

Luke 11:1-13

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

<sup>1</sup>[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.”<sup>2</sup>He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

<sup>3</sup>Give us each day our daily bread.

<sup>4</sup>And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

<sup>5</sup>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; <sup>6</sup>for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ <sup>7</sup>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.’ 8I 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.

9“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. 10For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 11Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? 12Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? 13If 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!”

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Questions and Answers**

Good Morning! The sermon today will be a little different. Rather than the normal pattern I will instead be answering your questions! So, let’s jump right into it with one of my favorites!

1. *“Why does the pastor drink all the wine at the end of communion but doesn’t eat all the bread?”*

The simplest answer is because we just don’t have the time for all of you to stand around as I finish a loaf of bread! Traditionally the elements are consumed after they have been blessed. At the seminary there was always a group of us who stuck around

after worship to finish off the bread and the wine. Here at St. Paul's I finish one chalice of wine and leave the other. The sacristy, which is the fancy name for that room behind me, has a unique drain that only churches are able to install. Instead of being attached to the sewer system it just ends in the ground. This way the blessed sacraments are put back into the earth. The leftover bread is broken up and thrown out in the grass for the birds to consume.

2. *"Why do we only sing one hymn at the gathering?"*

In the United States mainline Protestant denominations we have one rule that is more important than any other... worship CANNOT go over one hour. Here at St. Paul's we're a little unique in that our worship service lasts about an hour and 15 minutes. This isn't the case for some other non-denominational congregations, and African-American churches especially are more comfortable with longer services. But the answer for this question is just that it's a time constraint.

3. The next two questions are related. *"During the Apostles' Creed why do we mention the holy 'catholic' church?"*

This is something that I asked when I was younger too! I remember being confused. "Why in the world are we confessing faith in those darn Catholics?!" I asked. If you look at page 9 of your bulletin you will notice that the "catholic" in the creed is lowercase. This is because the word catholic simply means "*universal or general.*"<sup>1</sup> When we see the word capitalized it is referring to the denomination that we all know. When it's not, it just means Christian.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/catholic>

4. *“Why were the words of the creeds changed?”* And *“Why do we sometimes use ‘descended to the dead’ and other times ‘descended to Hell?’”*

Technically speaking the words of the Creeds have never changed. It’s our English translations of them that have been tweaked and updated. The “new” version we use now was printed in 1988 by the English Language Liturgical Consultation.<sup>2</sup> So I don’t know if we can call a 31 year old document “new.” When I was little I loved the version that mentioned Hell because it was the one time I was allowed to cuss, and in church no less! The text we currently use is first and foremost chosen because it is a better translation of the original, and because it’s easier to understand. Since arriving at St. Paul’s, I have slowly transitioned to this more current translation. If you see us use an older version it is because we are being intentional, like our service a few weeks ago where we followed the old Service Book and Hymnal. Maybe one of these days we’ll start using the “modern” Lord’s Prayer that was first used in Lutheran churches in 1976...

**(Post-Sermon Edit)**

*After delivering the sermon I had an additional thought about this question. We use different creeds at different times of the year. This may lead some to be confused about what we use and when. We have three creeds that we confess. The Athanasian Creed is rarely used in churches and is used here at St. Paul’s only once a year on Holy Trinity Sunday. The Apostles’ Creed is the shortest and the Nicene Creed falls somewhere in between. We usually rotate between the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds throughout the year.*

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<sup>2</sup> Brugh, Lorraine S., and Gordon W. Lathrop. *The Sunday Assembly*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008. p. 166.

5. *“Why are there different church years? How do they decide what is read on each Sunday? Is there a method to the madness?”*

Again, great question! Sometimes we spend so long in a church that some of the questions we used to ask have begun to be assumptions. In the Lutheran Church we follow a three year lectionary cycle. This is called the “Revised Common Lectionary.” It’s the work of a group called the “Consultation on Common Texts” which is an organized group with over 23 American denominations. This is the most ecumenical Lutheran group in existence with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the church body we are a part of, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church all being members!

The goal of the CCT in creating the Revised Common Lectionary is to create an understandable flow for the lessons that we read. You will notice that the first and second reading usually have something to do with the Gospel text. This is the work of RCL. The three year cycle isn’t ideal, but the church likes the number three. We currently spend one year focusing on the Gospel of Matthew (year A), and then a year (year B) focusing on the Gospel of Mark. But because this Gospel is a little shorter we intersperse it with the most selections from the Gospel of John. The third year (Year C), the one that we are currently in, is focused on the Gospel of Luke. We use the Gospel of John at different times throughout all three years but there is currently some effort to create a “Year D” that would focus specially on the Gospel of John.

The Narrative Lectionary is another option that some of you here at St. Paul’s are probably familiar with. I believe it was in use for several years before Pastor Chris left. This lectionary follows a four year cycle and was created by Luther Seminary with the

help of famous names like Rolf Jacobson who some of you heard speak at Power in the Spirit. It follows what we would call a school year, and the main readings run from September to May.

6. *“What do the seasonal colors mean? The different settings (sometimes different tunes) How to use the cranberry book for worship?”*

I’m not sure if I understood this question. If the person who submitted it grabs me after worship I think I can answer it a little better, but here we go. This question is related to our previous question and the liturgical year. We’ll answer this in reverse order. I think the person is asking why we don’t use the “cranberry” book for worship. This is the red hymnal in your pews that is called the Evangelical Lutheran Worship, or “ELW” for short. We use the hymnal for our songs, but the different settings are located in the front. The problem is that it’s impossible to follow along with the service. If a regular Joe or Jane showed up at worship and we were using the ELW the person would be completely lost and probably never come back. The ELW doesn’t print everything and so there are several times where the congregation wouldn’t be participating. The other reason we don’t use it is because of times like now where we don’t use a “setting” from the ELW and instead use a setting created by the famous Lutheran composer Marty Haugen.

Now, the next part of the question said “Different settings, sometimes different tunes.” Again, I think they are asking why we use different settings and different tunes. We do this because variety is the spice of life! We have 10 setting options in ELW. These allow us to change the musical structure and specific word arrangements so that we don’t fall into a pattern of complacency. The general structure of worship remains the

same, the pieces are all there, we just mix it up so as to reflect the different focuses of the church year.

Finally, they ask what the seasonal colors mean. To be honest, I had to look this one up. I know which colors are used for which season, and a few of them I understood why they were used when, but I had to do a little digging for this one. We use white or gold for high church days like festivals, baptisms, funerals, Easter Holy Trinity Sunday, Christmas, and Christ the King Sunday. In Advent we use blue because it suggests hope.<sup>3</sup> During the season of Lent we use purple. This helps to call to mind the purple robe that was mockingly put on Jesus before his execution. The color suggests repentance.<sup>4</sup> We usually keep the color purple up until the stripping of the altar after Maundy Thursday but traditionally the color scarlet is used to call to mind the color of blood. On Pentecost and Reformation we use red to symbolize the movement of the Holy Spirit. For the rest of the year, the season after Epiphany and the Season after Pentecost, we use green. It symbolizes the green of new life and growth.<sup>5</sup> Again, if I didn't get that question right please come tell me after worship.

7. *“Can we sing or why don't we sing during the offering?”*

Traditionally, the place we call the voluntary is where the choir would sing their choir anthem. As we collect our gifts for God's service the Choir offers up their own gift for the congregation and God. I'm not opposed to singing during the offering, maybe in the future it is something we can start doing.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/What\\_is\\_the\\_meaning\\_and\\_use\\_of\\_liturgical\\_colors.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/What_is_the_meaning_and_use_of_liturgical_colors.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

Finally, our last question.

8. *“When someone dies, why do we say that the person is in heaven now, when we are also taught Christ will return to raise up the dead to heaven.”*

While not technically a worship question, somebody asked it, so I will try and answer it. Let’s get this straight. You will NEVER EVER hear me say “they are in a better place now, looking down on us from Heaven.” This is simply something that we have developed to help us feel better. It’s sadly not technically true. The person who asked this question is rather smart to have caught this theological fallacy. While there is room for interpretation I think the most basic way to say it is this: we believe that when we die we sleep. At the end of time (whatever that is) Christ will resurrect us all and it will be like it is when we sleep at night, not even noticing the time that has past. Then we will rejoice together in heaven.

That’s certainly a heavy way to end but it has a certain rightness to it. At the end of time we will do what we are doing now, rejoicing and worshiping the God who created us all, who saved us, and who loves us! Amen!