

Sermon for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost (C), Proper 13, 29.vii2007, 08:30, 10:00  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint James the Apostle / Brogue, Pennsylvania  
Holy Eucharist (Missa Brevis) / Service of the Word  
Genesis 18:20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19); Luke 11:1-13

# J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was  
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

**"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.'"**

**-- Luke 11:9,10**

The God we meet on every page of the Bible, the God we meet in the Church's memory of Jesus the Christ, the God Who reaches out to meet us in the preaching and teaching of His Word and in the faithful administration of His Sacraments is a God Who demands a *personal* relationship with us. Our God is not content simply to be God, the anonymous, transcendent reality above the whole universe. Our God tells us

His *Name*: ‘I am Who am!’ ‘Immanuel’/’God-with-us,’  
‘Jesus’/’He-will-save-His-people.’ And our God calls *us* by  
name, *Israel* by His covenant with a particular people,  
*Ecclesia/the Church* through His covenant with all people  
through one Son of Israel, Jesus Christ. That is to say, we are  
called by grace through faith into a *personal* relationship in  
which we know and call each other by *name*, a *personal*  
relationship in which there is communication, speaking and  
listening and simply the joy of being *with*, a *personal*  
relationship which is nourished by *prayer*.

Because the Lord’s Prayer begins with the words,  
ΑςΘ,Δ {0:φ< / ‘Our Father,’ it is the special prayer of the  
Christian Assembly, of the Gathered Church. In those parts of  
the world in which the Christian faith and the Prayer Our Lord  
gave us has become traditional, *really* traditional, part of the  
very soul and life of the people for centuries, a way was devised

by the Church to include those in that Prayer who had to work in the fields or hospitals or defending the peace or the ramparts under enemy attack. As in many churches in Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and even a few across North America, the church bell is tolled seven times during the praying of the Lord's Prayer, one for each petition. It is a sound for which Christians outside the church walls and precincts listen, praying the prayer themselves while at their work, pausing if they can, and knowing that they are included in that prayer by each one who prays it.

Of course, the church bells are largely silent in our country, apt to be complained about as a disturbance of the peace, even when rung only at the beginning and end of worship, and few if any are listening for that toll that includes them in the prayer of the whole Church as they go about the toil and the follies they have scheduled for themselves. Here, in

what some have the nerve to call a ‘Christian nation,’ who answers the call to prayer? Who cares?

Who? Even here Christ cares whether we pray, and that we include everyone and everything in this world in our prayer, because it is the world created through Him, the world He loves completely. The Church, the true Church of Jesus Christ, cares very much about prayer and practices that care I many different ways. In each Sunday service and on weekdays, such as Wednesdays in Lent, all members of our Congregation and community are invited to prayer. Through our telephone Prayer Chain, the needs of others are constantly remembered to God, I am sure often using the Prayer Our Lord gave us. Sometime last fall, our Council came up with an excellent idea along these lines, an idea to encourage prayer and to, literally, open this church up as a House of Prayer for any who might want to come one evening in the midst of the week for a couple of hours

of refreshment, for an hour or two of prayer in silence or prayer with others present. This idea was implemented immediately. Unfortunately, as with many good ideas, there has been a very evident disconnect between the thought and the deed. I am sure it was the right idea, but perhaps at the wrong time.

Should the LORD someday grant better times in this Congregation, they will surely be marked by a hunger for prayer and an eagerness to pray. Let us look for and pray for such a sign! ✠ Amen.

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to Our God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. ✠ Amen.



**S. D. G. !**