***Possible* Prayer of Church for 21st Sunday of Trinity October 20th, 2024**

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible] Brief silence.

LORD of hosts, Your Word is a weapon that teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight. Strengthen us for every spiritual battle, and establish us to resist the lies and temptations of the old evil foe. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Defend Your Church against the schemes of the devil. Equip Your Church, and especially all pastors, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, that Your creation may be recalled from futility back to its Creator. Outfit Your saints with the full armor of God, with salvation, faith, peace, righteousness, truth and every benefit that comes from Christ Jesus, that we may be able to stand firm to the end. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

LORD God, You entrusted Your creation to man to tend, subdue and keep. Bless the farmers who tend the land for its increase. Grant them a rich harvest and so provide for us also, as each lives out his particular calling according to Your Will. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

O LORD, You have said by Your apostle that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers over this present darkness and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Lead us to respect godly authorities, to oppose what stands against Your Word and to see every unbelieving person as Your creature for whom Christ has died. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, do not despise our prayers because of our weak faith. Grant life and healing to those who are troubled, ill or at the point of death *[especially **Faith & Our Savior Prayers**]*. Free us from all adversities to serve You devoutly in all good works. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

O God, You rested on the Sabbath and established it for Your ancient people as a commemoration of Your creative work. Do not let us forget that it is You, Lord, who sanctifies us. Give us rest in Your gifts, especially the sanctifying body and blood of Christ in His blessed Sacrament. *LORD, in Your mercy*, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty and everlasting God, in Your Son You have promised us the forgiveness of sins, righteousness and everlasting life. Enliven our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that in daily prayer we may seek help from Christ against all temptations and, believing His promises, obtain that for which we pray and be saved at the last; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

TRINITY-21/P.22B **John 4:46-54** ***"FAITH IN WORD ALONE"*** **10.20.24 F.OS.L**

A REAL CAPERNAUM EVENT There was a certain nobleman, one of the royal **officials of King Herod, whose son was critically ill and about to die.** This nobleman had heard about Jesus, a Prophet whose powerful teaching was backed up by miraculous works, like the turning of water to wine. In fact it may well be that this royal official had heard Jesus preach in person, since he lived in Capernaum and Jesus had previously been there. So when the nobleman heard that Jesus had come to Cana, which was in the same general region, he went to Him there to implore His help.

GEOGRAPHY From this we can see that the **nobleman had faith in Jesus.** It may have been faith that had a long way to grow in terms of perceiving the fullness of who Jesus was, but **it was faith nonetheless**. This man was not merely grasping at straws in coming to Jesus, willing to try anything since nothing else had helped. Consider this: Cana was eighteen miles away from Capernaum, easily a day's journey on dirt roads, more than two-thirds the distance of a marathon. That meant that he would have to be away from his dying son for at least two days, traveling there and back. How could this man leave the bedside of his deathly ill child that long unless he believed that Jesus could really help? No, this man had faith in Christ. He traveled those eighteen lonely miles, sometimes walking, sometimes running, until he came to Jesus to plead for His help.

YOU ARE A/THE NOBLEMAN **You are not unlike this nobleman.** You are **here today** because **you have faith in Christ**. You are here by God's grace to seek the help that only He can give. I certainly hope you wouldn't take this chunk of time out of your schedule for any other reason except that you believe Jesus can do for you what no one else can do–forgiving your sins, rescuing you from the power of the grave, restoring you to life with the Father–and that He does it in this very place through His words and sacraments. Today this place is Cana, the location of Jesus for you.

RUN A HUNDRED MILES Still, when we see the example of this nobleman, we have to ask ourselves, **are we that fervent in our faith?!** This man had only the slightest knowledge of Christ and His Word. And yet he had faith enough to go immediately to Christ in his time of need. On the other hand, we've had God's Word preached and taught to us for years and years, and yet how sluggish our faith often is! Would you walk eighteen miles to church? Is your situation that urgent? Do you see your need to be that dire? It is, you know. Apart from Christ you are without hope, without help, in bondage to sin and death. Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism that every Christian **should be willing to run 100 miles to hear Christ's Words** of Absolution and life.

COME TO MY HOME The nobleman traveled the long distance necessary to get to Jesus. He came before Him and begged Him to go down with him to heal his son. And what was Jesus' reply? *"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."* Why would Jesus respond that way? Clearly the nobleman believed. Otherwise he wouldn't have come all that way. He wasn't asking for some miraculous work before he would believe.

He already believed and trusted in Jesus to help him and called on His name. Why these seemingly stern words?

1. The answer, I believe, is **twofold. First, Jesus was testing** this man's faith in order to strengthen it. Would he continue to seek Christ's help after this rebuke or would he succumb to doubt and despair? Was his trust resting entirely on Jesus and nothing else? The nobleman had completed the journey in body. Now our Lord sees to it that he completes the journey of faith, in heart and soul as well. In the fires of desperation our Lord purifies this man's faith and draws him closer. The nobleman throws himself completely on the grace and mercy of Christ, crying out, *"Sir, come down before **my child dies**!"*

KYRIE ELEISON! Perhaps there have been times when **you've felt such urgency and desperation** because of trials and afflictions in your life or the lives of ones you love, or because of the awareness of your own fallen condition before God. You know the temptation to succumb to doubt and despair. But in those trials our Lord is seeking to purify your faith, as gold is purified and refined in the fire, to strengthen your reliance on nothing else but Him. His rebuke is not meant to turn you away but to draw you closer. So let your prayers become urgent, and even desperate. *"God, help us!" "LORD, save **me**!" "Christ, have mercy on me!" "Sir, come down before my child **dies**!"* If you have never prayed such prayers, then you have not yet learned how to pray. Faith is born and enlivened under fire, in desperate circumstances. Such faith prays fervently.

2. And there is **a second reason why Jesus** responds to the nobleman in the fashion that He does. The man's request was that Jesus come back with him personally to heal his son. He believed that it was necessary for Jesus to be visibly present in order for Him to exercise His power. He wanted the Lord to do this in such a way that he could witness the miracle with his own eyes. But faith has nothing to do with what you see. As it is written, "We walk by faith, not by sight." It is not necessary for our Lord to be visibly present to exercise His power. Nor is it necessary for faith to have a visible sign before it truly believes.

SURE & SOLID FAITH In fact Jesus once said, *"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!"* What is your faith based on? What sustains it? Is it special experiences or supernatural occurrences in your life? Faith based on such signs is not Christian faith at all. For then it is not trusting in the eternal Christ but in temporary events. And who knows if that sign was really from God anyway? It could be that the devil conjured it up to lead you astray. It could be that you were just looking for something to confirm what you already thought or that helped you rationalize what you already wanted to do. Signs by themselves are slippery and unsure. Faith is about what is sure and certain and solid.

WHAT JESUS *SAYS* Christian faith is based entirely on the Eternal Words of Christ. As it is written, ***"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*** Faith doesn't have to see a thing to be satisfied. It relies entirely on **what Jesus says**.

FAITH BY HEARING And that's why Jesus doesn't come back with the nobleman. He wants him to rely **not on his eyes but his ears**. Our Lord gives the nobleman nothing but His Words, *"Go your way; your son lives."* Jesus says. **That was ALL the nobleman needed.** This was the **Creator** speaking, whose words bring about what they say. By the Holy Spirit of Christ, the man believed the words that were spoken to him, and he went his way. By all appearances he was returning with nothing more than he left with. But by faith he was returning with the greatest treasure of all, the healing words of Jesus. He traveled those eighteen miles back home trusting in what Jesus said.

AT THAT VERY SECON **The nobleman's faith was not in vain.** On the way back, before he arrived home, his servants met him with Good News about his son which showed the wonderful power of Jesus' Words. Remember, Jesus had said to the nobleman, *"Your son lives."* And what are the first words out of the mouths of the nobleman's servants? ***"Your son lives."*** It was at the seventh hour of the day before that the son had gotten better; and it was at the seventh hour of the day before that Jesus had said to the nobleman, ***"Your son lives."***

CREATOR SPEAKS **Jesus speaks, and it is so.** He is the very **Son of God** through Whom all things were created. He is the Word of the Father who calls things into being out of nothing and who gives life to the world. He says, "Let there be light," and there is light. He says, "Your son lives," and he lives.

CREATOR SPEAKS *TODAY* And so it is still today. The same God who said, *"Let there be light"* and *"Your son lives"* **is still speaking**. Now He is calling Christians by the power of **His Word in the water**. To every parent at Baptism He says, *"Your child lives."* Now the LORD is speaking the Absolution, *"I forgive you all your sins."* And it is so; by the power of those words of Christ, your sins are truly forgiven. Now the Son of God is saying, *"This is My Body; this is My Blood."* And by the power of those creative Words, the bread and wine truly are His body and blood, so that eating them in firm faith you may be filled with His healing and share in His resurrection. As Jesus says, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS Indeed, **Jesus Himself** is raised up from the dead. We can now say to the Heavenly Father, ***"Your Son lives."*** He who suffered on the Cross at the seventh hour to take away your sins is alive forevermore to bring you into the new creation to come, in which there will be no more sickness or sorrow or death. For the old order of things has passed away.

GO IN PEACE As you make that journey to your new and everlasting home, God grant you **the desperate, fervent, confident faith of the nobleman**. Cling to the Words of Jesus as you make that sometimes difficult and lonely trek. In the end your faith will not be in vain. Go your way in peace. Because, by the grace and mercy of Christ, **YOU LIVE.**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.** ***SDG***