

PASTORAL PRAYER: September 24, 1978

WE FIND YOUR NAME, O GOD, upon our lips...for you have placed it in our hearts. However much we twist and turn...however much we flee from your great love, we sense in the innermost depths of our being that we really have no future save the future we have and know in You.

For minds that can think,
For hearts that can feel,
For hands and feet that can do...

WE THANK YOU!

For those large purposes that enlist us;
For concerns and causes that unite us;
For grace that forgives and love that restores...

WE THANK YOU, LORD!

us

When the problems that confront during the weekday seem more than we can handle, open our eyes to the resources at our command as servants of Jesus of Nazareth and make us strong, steady and grateful.

WE PRAY THIS HOUR FOR ALL who across the years have been a part of this Christian fellowship here in the world's greatest city.

For absent friends, now living elsewhere in this land.
For members of our parish - bed-ridden, hospitalized, unable to join us this day...we pray.
For loved ones - no longer with us, but now with You.
For those present who give so much of themselves to make this center of faith so alive, so full of love and warmth.

WE THANK YOU, LORD.

NOW WOULD WE FORGET IN THIS HOUR the needs of others in this city:

Those trapped in jobs or in poverty that slowly eat away their life.
Those who want to change this city, but find it so hard to do.
Those who are trying to live the Sermon on the Mount in these canyons of concrete.

Grant us wisdom, patience, faith and integrity. Guide us in paths of meaningful service and courageous action.

LORD, YOU ARE BUSY with every person in this church - believing in each of us more fully than we dare to believe in ourselves.

GRANT EACH OF US WHAT WE NEED in order to be more like Jesus -

A quiet mind.
A forgiving spirit.
A readiness to pray.
A clearer vision of your purpose.
A humbler estimate of self.
Indifference to wealth and position.
Courage to do the right.

FINALLY - command us and comfort us, O God with your grace. For we need both direction and consolation.

Then shall our ordered lives confess the beauty of your peace.

In the spirit of Christ, we pray.

GREETING TO THE CHILDREN: September 24, 1978

SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS

Sunday School begins today for the boys and girls of our Church.

A good many of them are present here today. How wonderful it is to see them...to see all of you. I trust you had a good Summer. Some of you we haven't seen since June. It's good to have you back and I trust you're "rarin' to go."

TEACHERS

We're almost ready here at the Church...but not quite. I'd like to take a few moments while the boys and girls are here with us to place a great concern on the hearts of all the adults who are present.

The boys and girls have asked me to do this....to talk to you.. not to them....to have a "heart to heart" with all of you who are sitting out there behind these boys and girls.

The children are worried for fear that we won't have a Sunday School this year.

We have five classes ready to begin...but only one teacher for the month of October, and the same is true for the months after that.

We have 61 children who could show up some Sunday morning expecting to learn about their Faith. I think it would be terrible if we have to send them home saying "there are no teachers". The teachers have to come from our membership, from our congregation, from busy people who already are working hard in the Church - from ushers, from choir members, from our committees, from coffee hour hostesses, from the Flower Committee, the Finance Committee, the Adult Fellowship. We have no one else to whom we can turn.

Truman use to say "The Buck Stops Here". And it does. It stops here with our congregation.

The children are worried. Mrs. Nespole's worried. I'm worried. But I have faith to believe that we have some people who care enough about children in this congregation to respond. I have faith that "the Lord will provide". He just hasn't told us yet who it's going to be....

CHILDREN

Please help us. The children are so anxious to help find some teachers that they have volunteered to help recruit. Some of them are going to help right now. We're going to put into your hands some pink flyers which spell out in detail our needs.

I've asked the following boys and girls to do this: Faf, Robb Hageman, Karen Harris, Randy Williams, Caroline...

After they've passed out the flyers, we'll join together in signing Hymn No. 156. "I Would Be true" - both verses.

(9/25/78)

INTRODUCTION

The week of toil has ended.
The day of rest is at hand!

May the rest and the quiet of this hour of worship refresh our inner life. May it renew in all of us a sense of God's holy and abiding Presence.

In silence, let each pray as the heart may prompt.

MEDITATION

We rest our hearts in the Promise of Jesus who said:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light".

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint."

"And as many as touched Him were made whole..."

PRAYERS / LORD'S PRAYER

O Thou who art the source of all peace and power, all hope and healing - hear our prayers - for others as well as for ourselves.

Touch with healing, O God, those whom we mention in our prayers. We call to mind and mention by name:

Ann Day

Ruth Frame

Myra Soper

Allison Irwin

cherished members and friends of this congregation. Comfort the bereaved and the broken hearted among us.

This we ask in the name and spirit of Jesus who taught us to say when we pray:

"Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen"

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, September 24, 1978

GREETING I heard on the radio yesterday afternoon that "Fan Appreciation Day" will be celebrated at Yankee Stadium this coming Saturday, and that all who attend will be given a THERMO-MUG with a picture of the 1978 Yankee heroes on it. I hope to be there...

We have no thermo-mugs with pictures to pass out to you today as we come to celebrate Homecoming Sunday. However, we do have some warm and genuine words of welcome to direct to all of you, both members and friends alike.

Words of appreciation, too, for all you do for and mean to this Church...for your faithfulness and support across the Summer weeks.

Words of invitation as well - to share in a spiritual adventure which begins today as we enter a new season of work and worship.

It's good to be back together again in our Church home which means so very much to us. Some are not able to be with us today, nevertheless, they are in our thoughts as we trust we are in their thoughts and affections.

COFFEE HOUR No thermo mugs to distribute, but coffee and tea will be served downstairs....all are invited...we greet the visitors with us. We're delighted to have you with us and hope the opportunity will be ours to greet you personally. Guest Book. Free in sharing of your name.

CONCERNS We are distributing copies of the sermons preached last June by four of our lay persons. Our Associate Lay Leader, Jan Harayda, made it possible for us to bring the sermons together...had them typed up and copies made. Be sure to pick up a copy of those four sermons....how excellent they were! Also, be sure to pick up a copy of the September issue of "A Word In Edgeways"

We have another busy week coming up with some important meetings "in the works". Officers of the UMW meet today at 12:45 in the rear of the CR. Tuesday night, the Vietnamese Friends Committee will meet. Thursday night the PPR Committee and next Sunday, the Membership Committee will meet.

Last Sunday we had a brief report from Jan Harayda regarding the Vietnamese Friends Committee concerns and present this hour to bring you another report is a member of that Committee, as well as Head Usher, Mr. Kenneth Barclay.

FRIENDS / PASTORAL NEEDS

Linda Pembroke Avgerinos

Theodore Michael / 8 lbs, 2 oz. / Friday

OFFERING Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In this spirit, let us worship God with our morning offering

RETREAT: October 6 - 8th / Warwick / \$35.00 "Close Encounters of a Christian Kind"

He was not just a great moral teacher; he lived out what he taught. As His followers came to know Him in His personhood they only gradually began to be aware that He was also something more, as the story of Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi illustrates so well for us. But whatever else He is, He was like us. He was what we ought to be. His first name was Jesus.

LORD His friends called Him Lord. This was a title of respect and honor. It was a recognition of the quality of His life. They were aware that He carried an authority far beyond the common sort. In ancient England, the Lord of the Manor carried the responsibility for all those who lived in the land he owned. Each year they came to place their hands in his and swear allegiance to their Lord. Regardless of the sort of Person the Lord was, he held his position and all others defined themselves in relation to Him.

But in the case of Jesus, his authority comes not from an inherited title but from a recognition of His worth. Jesus held no position which conferred status upon Him. The people He spoke to were constantly surprised because He spoke as one having authority. This was in great contrast to the scribes and pharisees whose authority was derived from the religious institution of their day. His authority rested in who He was and in what He did and He continually kept pointing to this as evidence for belief in Him.

He was called Lord as a title both of respect and obedience. What it means for us to call Him Lord is that we recognize that He has some right over us - we are His to command.

To call Him Lord is to affirm that we are seeking to live a life in which those commands have validity. For example: we are not free to treat other people as means to our ends, because we are commanded to love and respect them. We are not free to live a life centered on ourselves, for Jesus reminds us that the central loyalty of our lives belongs only to God. We are not free to live uncaring in a world of need, because Jesus has commanded us to complete the ministry which He began among us.

When we call Him Lord, we are saying that we want to follow His commands. Or at least we are committed to try. We may not do it very well. We may not follow Him commands as we ought, but calling Him Lord reminds me that this is what I am trying to do. We are brought up short by the rebuke which Jesus gave His followers,

"Why do you call me Lord, and do not do
the things which I say?"

CHRIST He became the Christ. His name was Jesus...of Nazareth. His friends called Him Lord, and gradually they came to recognize that His life was not explainable in merely human terms. He was something special in the world.

When the Verezanno Bridge was built between Staten Island and Brooklyn, the chief engineer told a reporter, "To us she's just the Bridge...THE BRIDGE"... "She stands alone". This is what Christians came to understand about Jesus. He is like us, but He is also something very special. He stands alone. This is how they felt and the only way that the people of His time could express this was to say that He was the Christ, the Messiah. "Yes" as Peter put it, "The Son of the Living God".

As soon as we make this statement we begin to encounter difficulties with explanations and understandings. Theologians have written thousands of books explaining how the Jesus of History became the Christ of Faith. Anything that we are going to say here in a few moments will leave so much unanswered.

The term of Christ is not a second name, as many think - His first name was Jesus, His second name Christ. It is a title. When we call Jesus of Nazareth the Christ, we are not talking about who He was - a man named Jesus... nor about the honors he earned. People call Him Lord...but we are saying that He occupies or fulfills a position. The term "Christ" is the title of that position. It means really "Messiah" and that title was, for Jesus' people, a very explicit position in relation to God and to God's people. The Messiah was God's representative to human beings in a special way. He is the link, the bridge between God and people. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is, in short, an extension of God himself.

MORE / CHRIST It doesn't take very much imagination to understand why Jesus was not thought of as the Messiah by the people of His day. He was literally everything that they thought the Messiah would not be. He did not come in power and in judgement. He was not a great public hero sweeping the Roman's out of the land and establishing God's kingdom for His people. He was poor; He was humble. He was among the people not as one who commanded but as one who served. Most important, He was not a success, but a failure in His mission - or so it seemed. He had been crucified, given the miserable death of a criminal. How was God's power revealed in Him?

But from the vantage point of history we can see that the truth is exactly the other way around. For even death could not keep His presence from being among His people. And because of that, His friends learned that something new had happened in our world. They came to believe that in this one life God was acting to show His nature to the world.

The Biblical writers described it by saying that "God was in Christ.... reconciling the world unto Himself". The claim is that in Jesus, the Christ, we are shown the nature, the heart, the very meaning of God Himself.

DELIVERER / SAVIOUR At times I feel that the term Christ no longer has the meaning it once had. We do not have expectations of the kind that the term "Messiah" fulfills. What can we translate this into which will make it take on more meaning, deeper meaning for us?

The nearest I can come is the term "Deliverer" or Savior, and each of these has troubles in semantics as well. Most of us do not have much of a sense of being in need of deliverance or of being saved from anything. What can these terms say to us? Let me offer an illustration that speaks to me.

The late Theodore Parker Ferris of Trinity Church, Boston used to tell of an event which happened on one of his crossing of the Atlantic on an ocean liner. He woke one night to realize that the ship was listing. It went on and on and he could not imagine what was happening. What was going on, of course, was that the great ship was making a complete turn. He looked out the porthole and saw a small sailboat, only 20 or 30 feet long. The captain was speaking to them and he could not hear his word, but he could hear the men from the boat and the first thing they said was "We don't know where we are."

They went on to tell the captain that they had lost their rudder, their compass, their chart, their sail. "We're lost. We have no idea where we are". The captain invited them to come on board, but they didn't want to lose their boat, so they agreed that the captain would let the Coast Guard know where they were and they would come to help take them in. As the huge line~~r~~ pulled away, they waved and shouted, "Thanks, greatly".

Dr. Ferris says that they did not know where they were, but they had drifted into the lane of the great transatlantic ships, and that if they had drifted for another hour they would have been out of the lane and probably lost forever. And then he says,

"What the big ship did, you see, was to put the little ship in communication with the source of life. It could not give them back the rudder and the sail; it could not change any of the mistakes which the men may have made. What it could do, by taking the time and pains to do it, was to re-establish its relationship with the mainland. It saved it."

To me this is an illustration of what it means to talk about Jesus as the Christ, the Deliverer, the Savior. He saves us. He does not save us from the consequences of our sins, but what He does is to put us into communication with God. He takes us back to the mainland, if you will. He puts us in touch with the power which is at the center of the universe, the heart of it all. He is the Christ, the Savior, the Deliverer.

CLOSING "Do you believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ?" When you respond affirmatively to that question, it means you are affirming three very important things. First, that you believe in a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who showed us what real personhood could be...what it's all about. Second, that you believe He is worthy to be called "Lord" and that you are willing to accept His right to make serious demands upon your life. Third, in giving Him the title, "Christ", it affirms that in Him, God's seeking love is uniquely shown. "Do you believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ?"

Let me leave this thought with you. Friends, the hard part of the Christian faith is not believing in Jesus so much as it is in being like Him. What I mean is something like this:

"It is far easier to believe than to be. Easier to believe that Jesus was the Son of God than to act like a Son of God. It's easier to believe that Jesus is one's Savior than to save someone else from loneliness or futility. Easier to believe that Jesus rose from the dead than to be a resurrected person - raised from the death of selfishness and life-giving to others. It is easier to believe in the Kingdom of God he preached than to live as a citizen of that kingdom - putting it first and others last. It is easier to believe that Jesus will come again than it is to be one in whom others see Him here and now." Think about it...

We begin another Season together today. And as we do I remind you that you are persons who have confessed and acknowledged Him as Lord and Christ. I challenge each of you to live a life which makes clear that this is what you believe and this is who you are!