

Morning Prayer
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 11, Tract A
Ephesians 3:14-21
July 28, 2024

Let the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

I struggled to write this homily. I began thinking about it as soon as Louis ask me to lead Morning Prayer. I first looked at the passage from John but the Holy Spirit didn't encourage me to speak about that. How many sermons have we heard on the feeding of the 5000 and I'm not a theologian or a Biblical scholar. The same lack of communication from the Holy Spirit happened when I looked at the Psalm.

That left the reading from Ephesians. I read and re-read the passage again and again. I prayed and read it some more. The Holy Spirit finally got through to me, reminding me that Ephesians is my favorite epistle.

Ephesians 3:14-21 is a prayer. In some ways it was the prayer I had been praying but was much more eloquently written than my prayers. We all pray (I hope) but our prayers do not need to be as well expressed as Paul's.

Prayer can be communal like this service or as individual as each of us. Our prayers are conversations with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the Ephesians passage and how Paul approaches prayer.

Paul first takes a position of reverence – on his knees. He then goes on to an intercessory prayer. That is, he prays for others, for his audience, the recipients of this letter. He prays that those reading his letter will be strengthened in their inner being with the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that helped me write this homily and our search process prayer. He prays that Christ will dwell in their hearts through

faith, as they are being rooted and grounded in love, that they may know the love of Christ and that they be filled with all the fullness of God.

When I wrote the prayer for our search process, the opening line, “Come Holy Spirit” was and is the sum of that prayer and this one. The Holy Spirit guided me with words for the rest of that prayer. I could have stopped after “Come Holy Spirit” because God already knew what we needed to pray for. The extra words are there for us his mortal children. I would not have been able to write that prayer with only my thoughts. The presence of the Holy Spirit in my life gives me an inner strength and knowledge that at times I don’t think I have.

For those of you who don’t know, my day job is being a 911 paramedic here in the City of Petersburg. I have been in EMS for 37 years. Some of you may want to call me a hero. Some of you say, “I don’t know how you can do that job”. Some of you think what I do is just like on TV. But let tell you about my job. At times it is a heart wrenching job, a job where I see things I hope others never have to see. It is a rewarding job when you know you have made a difference or saved a life. It is a boring job doing station chores and checking your truck after every call just so you know you are ready for the next call. It is a dangerous job (especially in this city) when you may have to walk into unknown situations or stand out on the interstate with traffic speeding by.

I’m going to pause for a moment to remind you ... it is the law to move over or slow down if you see flashing lights on the interstate or any other road. For the safety of 1st responders, victims, and bystanders – please slow down and move over.

It is an ever-evolving job with new equipment, more training, and updated and changing patient care protocols. I could never have been a paramedic without God’s help, and I certainly could not have stayed in EMS all these years without knowing that the Holy Spirit is present all the time.

When it comes to prayer, it is constant with me. Not a formal prayer like that Paul shares with the Ephesians, but usually simple hurried prayers. There are 5 essential aspects of prayer. They are confession (admitting a wrongdoing and asking for forgiveness), Petition – praying for ourselves, Intercession – praying for others, Thanksgiving – giving thanks to God, and Praise – giving God the glory He deserves.

An easy way to remember the 5 types of prayer is by the hand method. Pinky – confession, ring finger – petition, middle finger – intercession, index finger – thanksgiving and thumb – praise.

I may be a temporary hero to a patient or 2 but I certainly don't identify myself as a hero. I am a child of God, who does the job God has given me to do. Paul ends his prayer by giving praise to God. I, too, give praise to God that I can still physically, mentally and emotionally work as a paramedic being the hands of Christ when those in need call 911.

Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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