

Pentecost 4 – June 20, 2021

Text: Kyrie, Gloria and Collect of the Day

Theme: Worship Series 4 “Hey God, Can We Talk?”

As we continue the worship series, this week we take up the Kyrie, the Gloria and the Prayer of the Day. “Kyrie Ellison” means “Lord have mercy.” It is the next part of the liturgy where we say, “Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.” Before I understood the liturgy, I wondered about this part because we had just finished confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness and suddenly, here we are begging for mercy again. I grew up with two older brothers regularly sitting on me and torturing me in some manner, so the word “mercy” had very specific meaning for me, but begging mercy does not mean saying “I’m sorry”. Begging mercy is a plea for help with any number of situations that overwhelm us, especially help from God. If you’re over 50 and were raised in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, you grew up with The Lutheran Hymnal. In that particular hymnal, there was no context for the Kyrie. It just popped into the service with no introduction or explanation and then we moved on to the Gloria in Excelsis. We went straight from the absolution of our sins to the Kyrie. Pastors who were in search of expediency and didn’t much care about liturgical form replaced the Introit with the Entrance Hymn and moved it to being sung prior to the Confession and Absolution. They were caving in to societal demand for

worship to resemble a movie. In a movie, you have the opening theme music first and then the dialogue starts. But if they had really thought about the liturgy, they would have understood that the dialogue starts with the Kyrie, and the Kyrie is not just a collection of random words. It is our first word to God in Worship. It is our recognition and admission that life is difficult and that we need some help. We are like the disciples in the boat with Jesus in our Gospel for today. "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" We are like Job in the Old Testament who was fed up with all the suffering he had endured and had just let God have it before God answers him in the text we have before us today.

Think it through from the start. We invoke the name of God. That is, we call Him into our presence by ringing the doorbell of the mansion. We confess our sins and receive forgiveness in the words of absolution, thus wiping our feet before entering the mansion. We sing a psalm or a hymn that proclaims the theme of worship for that day while the pastor moves into position at the altar and possibly the choir moves into the transept. Now we are ready to speak to God. From the altar, the throne of God, the pastor says to you and to the Lord, "In peace, let us pray to the Lord!" and you respond "Lord have mercy!" It is the same cry used by the beggars by the city gates when Jesus would walk by. It's the same

sentiment as we hear in the Gospel today when the disciples were in fear of drowning. Here in the Kyrie is a summary of every challenge we face being God's children in a hostile world: for peace, for unity, for comfort for all the things God knows we need to serve Him in this life we pray to the Lord.

Some might think that the Kyrie is more confession, begging God to have mercy on us poor sinners, but the Kyrie is not more confession. It is a summary grocery list of all the things we need. Now that we have established that we are the royal priesthood, the forgiven children of God, the crown of creation, here, Lord, is what your saints need and desire. Here is what we ask of our Father to provide for us out of His merciful goodness and furthermore, it is what we expect because God has promised that if we knock the door will be opened. If we seek, we shall find. If we ask, it shall be given unto us.

To celebrate that we will absolutely receive every good thing for which we ask and even more than we can imagine, the pastor proclaims "Glory be to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth!" Or some Sundays he might proclaim the feast that is to be held with "This is the feast of victory of our God, Alleluia!" Then we sing a song of victory. Recognizing that nothing can stop us

because we are the royal priesthood of God on this earth. We have nothing to fear! We have no worries of substance.

So, now that we have entreated God and celebrated His answer, now we will get specific about our needs with the Collect of the Day. We collect our thoughts and focus the theme here. We specifically ask God for what we want today. This prayer is like a lens through which pours all the hymns, the readings and the sermon. The Collect of the Day focuses everything to a point and once we have that point in our mind, we are ready to hear God speak back to us.

Remembering that we are in the Pentecost section of the Pentecost season, we celebrate the coming of Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church. In the collect for today, we ask God,

“Almighty God, in Your mercy guide the course of this world so that Your Church may joyfully serve You in godly peace and quietness.” That is a big ask. We are asking God to govern the world in such a way that the Church may get her work done. That is why we don’t have to fret and worry when politicians threaten to undo the Church. They may think they are in control but we know they are not. You have heard about legislation that is in the U.S. Senate that will force churches to hire people regardless of whether or not they conform to the beliefs and practices of that

church body. For instance, if the legislation passes, I could theoretically go across the street and apply to be the pastor at St. A's and they could not refuse me based on my marital status or where I went to the seminary as long as I have the required degree. So, as good citizens of this nation, we try to prevent such legislation that will make the work of the Church more difficult, but we also call God in this collect to guide the world for us in ways that allow His Church to thrive, just as the disciples in the boat called on Jesus to rescue them from the storm.

Up until now in worship, the only word that the Lord has spoken to us is through the pastor in the absolution. It is we who have been speaking to Him. Sometimes it can get a little confusing as to who is speaking to whom because much of what we say to God is using His own words. That is wise because the only time we know we are right is when we are speaking His words. But having asked Him for help in this world in the Kyrie, rejoiced in song over His resounding YES to us in the hymn of praise and specifically asked Him what we want to ask Him in the collect of the day, now we settle back and listen to God speak to us. That is where we will begin next week with the readings of the Holy Word.