



Mount Calvary Connected April 15, 2021

Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter that will be sent out each Wednesday while the church is pressing "pause" on in-person gatherings. Our goal is to keep you connected to your faith and your church with messages from our pastors, health information, and ways to share Christ's love during our current national crisis.

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A Message from Pastor Scott

As we begin to travel deeper into the season of Easter, it becomes apparent the early Church had spunk and scrap. Initially, the first disciples were frightened, benighted, and astonished to the point of paralysis. But with the help of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit he breathed upon them, those same disciples pulled it together pretty quickly. In this weekend's first reading (Acts 3:12-19), the early Church is no longer huddled and hiding behind closed doors as it was this past weekend. Filled with the Holy Spirit and the peace of Christ, those who once hid from society at large are now out in the open healing the lame and pulling no punches as they condemn their neighbors for killing and murdering Jesus, the Author of Life, and asking for a murderer named Barabbas instead. This is what you call spunk and scrap. It will continue next week when the same disciples refuse to stand down after receiving pressure from authorities to go back into hiding. Again, it's plain enough that the early Church had spunk and scrap. Are these qualities we still possess today?

Before responding to this question as I'm able, allow me to add some greater definition to what I mean by spunk and scrap. When I describe the early Church as having spunk and scrap, I do not mean it conducted itself like some backstreet brawler or fire-mouthed party out to scorch and scar. These are the ways of the world not the way of the Church. The way of the Church is faith active in Christ-like love. When the first disciples pinned the murder of Christ on their neighbors, they weren't looking to settle a score or extract a pound of flesh. The aim was to produce the repentance that leads to forgiveness and eternal life. This was love not vengeance or reprisal at work. After all, what does love seek? Not what's best for one's self, but what's best for others (John 15:13). Like we hopefully are as well thanks to the ongoing presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the first disciples were practitioners of faith active in love. They weren't backstreet brawlers or fire-mouthed parties seeking to draw blood. The first disciples were followers and imitators of the Lamb who before his shearers was silent. But even so, these same disciples had spunk and scrap.

The first disciples held to Christ's way through thick and thin. When they fell down, they got back up and after it again. Again, and again, they lived the reality that when you're preaching and teaching against the grain as followers of Christ are called to do you have to work harder than those who are peddling just what a broken and sinful world wants to hear. In Johnstown, Pennsylvania in the year of our Lord 2021, is this still us? Are we tirelessly working the way of Christ? Do we ourselves have the spunk and the scrap the first disciples did?

Thankfully, in some ways I'm seeing that we do have a spunk and a scrap similar to that possessed by the first disciples. One member's unsolicited challenge that those who are able tithe their stimulus dollars has generated a significant response. Work on projects such as the forthcoming yard sale continues with no let up. Even after months and months away from church, people are coming back to worship as vaccinations increase and as drive-in worship resumes. Those in positions of leadership are placing more of an emphasis on doing it Christ's way rather than the world's way. Even with public health standards still in place visitors are still coming and new members are still being received. When one considers how uncertain things seemed a year ago when the pandemic forced the closure of our church for a time, this is all pretty remarkable. Together and individually, it speaks to the presence of Christian spunk and scrap on our part.

Now as things open up even further in the days and weeks to come, it's my hope that the spunk and the scrap I'm seeing will only grow. Even with our faith in play, ours is very much a time of growing skepticism and disbelief. Living where we do, there's also the reality that we will have to continue to contend with population decline and an aging community. Like the first Christians, we're again in the minority, fighting an uphill battle for all sorts of different reasons. Without spunk and scrap, the hill before us will only continue to grow, making God's job that much harder. Until the strife is completely over and the battle completely won, there can be no breaks when it comes to inviting, welcoming, and including. Until the glory is unquestionably Christ's forever and ever, efforts and initiatives which bear his stamp are going to remain in demand. Until we hopefully hear our Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," Christ's call for faith active in generous and enterprising love is going to remain as relevant and pertinent as ever. In a nutshell, like the early Church, we're going to need plenty of spunk and scrap. With this in mind, may the Holy Spirit maintain the spunk and the scrap we already have and add to it many times over!

Pastor Scott

LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

Mt. Calvary hosts live broadcasts of the liturgy at 8:45 AM Sunday mornings. The broadcast can be heard by tuning your radio to 88.3 FM if you are near the church. We can also stream the service live over the internet.

By clicking the following link, you can gain access to the live stream audio. <https://streams.radiomast.io/96172026-6cba-407b-9090-e150b471ae0e>

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship

Flea Market Reminder

The Flea Market is scheduled for May 8, 2021 from 8:00 to 12:00. If you have any donations, you may bring them in any time between 9-3 pm, Monday – Thursday and place them in the hallway by the old lounge next to Sander Hall. PLEASE NO TV'S OR CLOTHES. If you have any questions, please contact either Janis Daily or Joan Bunnell.

Backyard cookie collection will be Thursday, April 15, 2021.

Cookies can be placed in the bin outside the church, or the labeled one inside. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

Stimulus Challenge

A member of our congregation has challenged others to put their economic stimulus money to good use!

One morning in March, a member of the congregation presented Pastor Scott with a check for \$140. She shared that she had received her "economic impact payment" (stimulus check) and since she had not been adversely impacted by the pandemic she was giving a portion of it as a tithe, and wanted to challenge others to do the same.

Since sharing this news, other families in the congregation have come forward and over a thousand dollars has been collected. Soon, we'll poll those who contributed to this challenge and mutually decide on a worthy cause in the community to direct the money toward. But, in the meantime, there is still opportunity to make YOUR tithe!

If you'd like to make a gift, simply write a check to Mount Calvary, with "Stimulus Challenge" in the memo line. Checks can be included in the offering plate during worship, dropped off at the church office during business hours, or mailed to the church at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, 1000 Scalp Ave, Johnstown, PA 15904.

Weekly Wednesday, Drive in Services

Wednesday evening drive-in services have resumed at 6:30 pm. Download a bulletin from: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/>, bring your own bread for communion, and tune your radio to 88.3FM and you are set! See you there!

Church Meetings

All Parish, Youth, and Property committee meeting will be held on
Tuesday, April 20 at 6:30 pm.
Council Meeting will be at **7:30 pm, Tuesday, April 20.**

Church Directory

We would like to update the church directory. Many people going to only cell phones instead of landlines. Please call the church office to update your number and any other information that has changed, address, email etc.

Tuesday Noon Recitals at First Lutheran Church

April 20 - Bruce Schettig. Classical Guitar
April 27 - Henry Davis. Piano. Gospell Improv

Note: Because of Covid-19 restrictions lunch is not served after recitals. Attendees must wear masks and follow social-distance guidelines. Invite family and friends to this weekday gift of music.

Birthdays and Anniversary for the Week April 18 - April 24, 2021.

Apr. 18 - Bryce Bachota, Sara Solarczyk
Apr. 19 - Melynda Berkey, William Coble, Terrie Costlow, Scott Rickley
Apr. 20 - Darius Daily, Gavin Daily, Elijah Marsh, Carol Sauter
Apr. 21 - Corey Glessner, Catherine Prisk, Justin Reed, Patricia Urban
Apr. 23 - Linda Barnhart. Sally Hessler, Brittany Spangler, Kirsty Vivis,
Leonard Warmkessel Jason Wiley
Apr. 24- Joseph Berkey, Brett Morgenstern
April 20 - Tim and Becky Boyce (36 years)

About Our Members:

Bill McMullen passed away on April 13, 2021.

Reminder to please pray for our members and their families that are affected by COVID 19.

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Joyce Morgenstern, Kadence, Jack, Denny, Gina, Rick, Linda & Dick, Colley Family, Jose and Family, Irene, Midge, Vic, Felix Family, Miller Family, Kevin, Kinzey Family, Anita, Claudia, Bill, Liam, Brown Family, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Patti Sliko, Pat, and McMullen Family.

Financial Update through February

Mount Calvary went into the red during the month of February. Two factors were largely responsible for this development.

On the expense side, approximately \$1300 was required to repair a water leak and weather-related expenses exceeded expectation, with the difference hopefully resolving itself over time once warmer weather arrives.

On the income side, we continue to reckon with the relocation of one of our largest donors, the varied timing of once-a-year gifts, and the reduced giving caused by the disruption of our normal worship schedule. With much of it already expected, none of this represents an impassable hurdle for us. For our current plan to work, everyone simply needs to repeat their 2020 giving, regardless of the form of worship they are using at present and regardless of how often they choose to worship. Where possible, increases in excess of 2020 giving or a return to generally higher levels of 2019 giving would also be most helpful. If we all do our part, we can very easily overcome a sluggish start to the new year without breaking the bank. Because we live in an aging community where retirees and younger professionals regularly relocate, our giving patterns and histories are always going to require vigilance on our part. It's just part of doing mission in Johnstown; the place we call home.

If it helps, credit card donations can be made through our website at mt-calvarylutheran.org and non-credit card donations can be mailed to our church at 1000 Scalp Avenue, Johnstown, PA 15904.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of mercy, we give you thanks that Jesus is no longer dead, but alive and the Lord of life for all. Increase in us the risen life we share with Christ, and help us grow into the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING: ACTS 4:32-35

While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

SECOND READING: 1 JOHN 1:1--2:2

The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.

¹We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and

truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

^{2:1}My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

GOSPEL: JOHN 20:19-31

The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

SERMON BY PASTOR JONATHAN

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our risen Lord who fills our every need. Amen.

If you've ever taken a psychology course, in college, or maybe even in high school, you probably learned about something called Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Even if you haven't heard of it before just now, it's really pretty straightforward, and probably common-sense once you hear it explained and really think about it.

Basically, Maslow came up with this theory that all humans have the same needs. Obviously, we all need air, water, and food to survive, but he went further than that. He said those sorts of things are physiological needs, things that our bodies literally need to function. And once we've taken care of those lowest level needs, we can start working our way up a pyramid of other needs.

His theory said that after physiological needs are met, then we start working on the need for safety and security, after that, the need for a sense of belonging and love, then the need for a sense of esteem, and finally a need for self-actualization, for personal growth and discovery, for being all that you can be.

Now, one of the most important things to realize about Maslow's hierarchy, is that he saw it as a pyramid, and just like any pyramid, or any structure at all, you can't build unless your foundation is solid. If you truly don't know where your next meal is going to come from, you certainly don't have a sense of safety and security, and you're not interested in big pie in the sky questions like the meaning of life. The lower level needs are the most important, and you can't move your way to the top unless they're squared away. Just like it's hard to focus on your work when you really need to go to the bathroom.

Now I don't want to take for granted that there are undoubtedly people within this congregation who are in situations that cause them to be stuck in those lower levels, worried about their physiological needs, or their health, safety, and security. But, for the most part, most of us spend a good chunk of our lives dealing with those third and fourth levels, the need for love and belonging, and the need for esteem.

Now, throughout his life, Jesus seemed to recognize these needs in the people he met. And even moreso, he seemed to understand the foundational concept that it would take Abraham Maslow another two thousand years to put into writing: someone who's hungry, someone who's sick, who's thirsty, who's afraid, they're not living their fullest lives, they can't take care of those higher level needs when they're constantly focused on scraping by to live.

Jesus wanted people to be able to experience the fullness of community and the fullness of life with God, and that's why so many of his miracles, healing and feeding, were focused on taking care of people's lower level needs, allowing them to seek out those higher ideals.

And even after his death and resurrection, taking care of the needs of others was crucial to the ongoing ministry of the early church.

Let's start with our Gospel reading:

It was evening on the first day of the week. John tells us that earlier that day Mary Magdalene had gone and found the empty tomb, that she had run and brought back Simon Peter and the beloved disciple and shown them. And that later, she was alone in the tomb when Jesus appeared to her.

And so that evening the disciples are locked away, hiding in the upper room. They're still terrified over the whirlwind of activities that have happened over the past few days, and now especially afraid at what the empty tomb might mean for them, even though Mary claims to have seen Jesus himself.

So their physiological needs may be met, they have shelter, they presumably have food and drink, but they're lacking in safety and security. You can practically imagine the tense conversations and arguments that are happening behind those closed doors, the anxiety that gets cranked up by every new sound outside.

And Jesus comes to them, inside those closed doors, and says "Peace be with you." He calms their anxieties, he gives them a new mission, he breathes the Holy Spirit into them and sends them out to proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

He builds them up, he takes care of their fear, he gives them a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, he involves them in the larger mission of God.

But, Thomas wasn't there. This is the story we hear each year on this week after Easter. Thomas had missed the show, and he was unconvinced by the story his brothers told. He wanted to see for himself. He doubted.

And I can't help but think what a blessing it is that Thomas felt comfortable enough to share his doubts, to share his insecurity. One of the things I always hope for as a Pastor is to create a community where people feel safe asking questions, where people feel comfortable sharing doubts. Some of my favorite theological conversations have started when someone came up to me after worship and said, "Pastor, I'm not sure I understand that passage the same way you do."

Thomas needed the community of his fellow disciples, he needed that place of love and belonging, in order to share his vulnerability, and in order to grow in his faith. And when he did finally have his own experience, supported by his fellow disciples, he was ready to join them in their mission of serving God.

Jesus helped people in their time of need. The disciples helped *one another* in their time of need. And as we heard in the reading from Acts, the early church followed in that same example, sharing things in common, helping anyone who had any need.

And that is exactly what a church is supposed to be...

Helping people with their needs. Their physiological needs, their safety and security needs, their needs for love and belonging, their needs for esteem, and their needs for self-actualization: for personal growth and discovery.

A healthy church can do all that and more, because a healthy church is a true community of faith, and a true community of love. A community where people can feel comfortable sharing their doubts, where people can feel safe asking for what they need, whether that need is food, or prayer, or maybe needing to be able to see the wounds of Jesus first hand.

The church is not a place for perfect people, as John tells us today, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves..." All of us are in need of something, including and especially the forgiveness of our sins, the very first thing that the risen Jesus sent the disciples to offer.

But the church is the place for regular, broken, sinful, doubtful, hurting people. For those who need to see and hear more about this Jesus fellow, for people who need to be gathered together with like-minded souls, for people who need to hear that they are loved unconditional. It's a place for us to gather when we're strong AND when we're doubting.

That is what the church is for. That is what THIS church is for. So that even if today is a rough day in our story of faith, tomorrow we might believe more fully that Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

You shower your church with grace, O God. Unite the whole church on earth, so that with one heart it testifies to the resurrection of Jesus Christ with power and love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You proclaim the blessing of life forevermore. Like dew upon the mountains, refresh your creation. Restore waters, cleanse the air, and provide revitalizing moisture to parched land. Give your whole creation the promise of new life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You direct the nations, O God. Guide all in authority, that they shepherd their peoples in the ways of your love. Defeat in us our impulse to war. Bestow the peace of Christ upon those in authority and breathe upon them the Holy Spirit. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You place within the heart of the church a spirit of sharing. Give us the power of your generous Spirit, that we provide for the needs of others (*specific needs may be named*). Announce your peace to those who are lonely, hurting, suffering, or afraid. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You give us fellowship with one another in this faith community (*name*). Shine the light of the risen Christ in our life together, so that we live in love for one another and our joy may be complete. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You share the gift of eternal life. In thanksgiving and remembrance, we recall the lives and gifts of those who now live in endless joy (*especially*). Unite us with them in resurrection hope. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.