

August 2022 – Pastoral Message

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the people praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.” – Psalm 67:1-3

Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace be with you all, my beloved family and friends. Welcome to the beautiful month of August. Soon we'll be enjoying the great taste of sweet corn, football returns to our weekend schedules, and a new academic year looms on the horizon. With that return also comes a regular schedule...again. I look forward to a normalized schedule because it allows me to settle back into the week with what needs to get taken care of; then I can build off of the open time in and through the parish. I don't know about you, but I have been very busy this summer. My family has done some travelling, the twins were introduced to swimming lessons, tee ball, and soccer, we've introduced Emma to dance, continue with gymnastics, and are preparing for Kindergarten. (Yeah, they start school soon – where did the time go?) Oh...and I've also had a full schedule as pastor, husband, and beloved child of God too. I'm ready for a normal schedule again.

Recently I sat down with some beloved saints and shared with them the prophetic words from Psalm 67. This prayer, or song, was written so long ago and it reminds us of a loving God who is merciful to God's people. It calls upon us to remember to praise our heavenly Creator for what has been provided for us as a loved people and that we are called to rejoice in these gifts. What gifts, you may ask? Well...how about you close your eyes, clear your mind, and see what pops into your head. Some of these gifts may be the tassels on the corn, a smile from a family or friend, a call or message from someone you did not expect, a hymn that takes you back to a wonderful memory, a beautiful view from the dock on the lake you are relaxing from, a great cup of coffee, or something that just makes you smile. This is what God has given us and the words from Psalm 67 reminds us to give thanks and praise.

The psalmist further tells us that these gifts that are provided shall increase as well. That is, they will be even greater in the future. To me, that is some good news. Not only the good news of Jesus Christ but also of something even better coming in the future. When I sat down with these saints and shared with them this prayer, I told them that things would be better and would continue doing so for them.

You see, these saints were at the Good Samaritan nursing home in Winthrop. By now, Good Sam has closed it's doors and the remaining residents have already been transferred to new rehabilitation facilities or nursing homes. They were scared about what was going to happen next and where they were going to end up. I gave them this prayer as a way of trusting in the hope and love from a loving God who is always by their side, even when they didn't know where they were heading to or what future was coming. I reminded them of the mystery of

what God may have in store for them and that ultimately their journey would be even better on the other side of not knowing what was next.

I am happy to report that a few of the remaining residents ended up being closer to their original homes and family as a result of the closing; they put their trust in God and they were rewarded with something even better on the other side. The scared and anxious witnessed the power of prayer and the absolute power of Psalm 67. It got better for them, and this makes me smile.

I encourage you to meditate and pray Psalm 57 in your own life. Pick a word or phrase from the prayer and let it guide you for the day, or week. Use this mantra as a way of letting loose the schedules of our lives that take up our time and maybe it can help you forward. I'll try to do it too and we'll see where we end up. We do not know what tomorrow brings or what will happen next, but know that you are loved, and your God wants it to be better for you too.

Let all the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you.

I look forward to seeing you soon and God bless you all!

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish