

Zion Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA /October 18, 2023
WOW (Worship On Wednesday) – FALL SERIES - 12:10pm Service of the Word
“KNEELING WITH GIANTS – Learning to Pray with History’s Best Teachers”
Based on the book of the same name by Gary Neal Hansen
Praying with St. Teresa of Avila: Recollection of the Presence of God

Welcome & Announcements

Opening Versicles

L O Lord, open my lips.

C **and my mouth shall declare Your praise.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

L Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for self-examination

C **I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed; wherefore I pray to God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

L The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins. Amen.

Prayer

L The Lord be with you,

C **And also with you.**

L Let us pray: Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may never forget you, but remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

Scripture Readings:

Song of Songs 2:16

My beloved is mine, and I am his

1 Timothy 6:11-16

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

John 15:14-15

You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Readings from The Way of Perfection

Take my advice, then, and let none mislead you by showing you any other road than that of prayer...

Speak to Him as with a Father, a Brother, a Lord and a Spouse – sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, He will teach you what you must do to please Him...

Who can say that it is wrong if, before we begin reciting the Hours or the Rosary, we think of Whom we are going to address, and who we are that are addressing Him, so that we may do so in the way we should? ... For we cannot approach a prince and address him in the same careless way that we should adopt in speaking to a peasant or to some poor woman like ourselves, whom we may address however we like...

When you approach God, then, try to think and realize Whom you are about to address and continue to do so while you are addressing Him ... Why, God save us, when a woman in this world is about to marry, she knows beforehand whom she is to marry, what sort of person he is and what property he possesses. Shall not we, then, who are already betrothed, think about our Spouse, before we are wedded to Him and He takes us home to be with Him?

Homily

The Prayers

L Show us your mercy, O Lord,

C and grant us your salvation.

L Clothe your ministers with righteousness.

C Let your people sing with joy.

L Give peace, O Lord, in all the world,

C for only in you can we live in safety.

L Lord, keep this nation under your care.

C and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

L Let your way be known upon the earth;

C your saving health among all nations.

L Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten,

C nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

L Create in us clean hearts, O God,

C and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

L *Additional petitions offered...*

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

L Lord, remember us in your kingdom and reach us to pray:

C 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 and ever. Amen.

Benediction

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord almighty bless us and direct our days and our deeds in his peace.

C Amen.

Additional Teaching & Resources on Recollection of the Presence of God

From Kneeling with Giants by Gary Neal Hansen

The best way to make sense of this practice is to look at Teresa's advice, then consider her examples and try them out. First, the advice. When she suggests that we look at a biblical portrait of God or Jesus, she is not suggesting we study and analyze. As she puts it, "I am not asking you now to think of Him or make long and subtle meditations with your understanding. I am asking you only to look at Him." Teresa's distinction between thinking and looking is key. She is trying to spark intimacy, not scientific description...

Teresa is a contemplative, and contemplation is about looking toward God with what she calls "the eyes of your soul." We look at the One who loves us, and this draws us into relationship... Her examples include prominent and traditional New Testament portrayals of God and Christ, as well as some that are a bit less familiar.

King. One prominent image is that of lord or king. ... This leads her to ponder the respect and honor one must show to people in high office. But she also takes courage, because this great King has bent low and invited us to speak. ...

Father. ... Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father," inviting us into his own relationship with the first person of the Trinity, ...

She does not want us to think of a faraway, austere Father. ... As we cast our gaze toward God as Father, we remember that he is right here with us: "However quietly we speak, He is so near that He will hear us: we ... have only to find a place where we can be alone and look upon Him present with us."

Spouse. Jesus described himself as the Bridegroom and his people as the waiting bride. From early centuries, Christians looked at the Song of Songs in the Old Testament through these roles, hearing the metaphor of Christ and the believer in King Solomon's poem. ... *Teresa's* recollection of Christ as Spouse carries particular intensity: "Your Spouse never takes His eyes off you, ... See, He is only waiting for us to look at Him, as He says to the Bride."

Friend. ... *Teresa* recollects the image of Christ as friend. ... The idea fills *Teresa* with wonder. Affection makes us want to stay with our friends and makes us want to know them better, so we take every opportunity to be together. She wants friendship with Jesus to motivate us to stay in a state of prayer, where we can speak to him and know him. ...

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, she might say, look full in his wonderful face. ...

But the physical eyes can help, too, if you have an icon or a portrait that reminds you of the One to whom you are speaking: "it is something to use regularly whenever you talk to Him, and He will tell you what to say." It becomes a tool for recollection, a conversation starter: "If words do not fail you when you talk to people on earth, why should they do so when you talk to God?"

Texts: *The Interior Castle* and *The Way of Perfection* by St. Teresa of Avila
 The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

<https://sdcason.com/christ-the-saviour-pantokrator-550-public-domain-orthodox-icons/> This is the oldest known icon of Christ Pantocrator, encaustic on panel (Saint Catherine's Monastery). [next page]

