

Zion Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA /October 25, 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 The Puritans: Meditation in Writing

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:

Numbers 33:1-3

These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. ² Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their

starting places. ³ They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians...

Psalm 45:1

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

Romans 13:13-14

Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Readings from John Beadle, "The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian"

Now in the next place, I shall speak of the manner of how such a Journall is to be used.

For observation take notice of these three Rules:

1. Labour by faith to see and observe God in all things that are bestowed on you. ...
2. Labour by faith to see and observe all these good things in God

Thirdly, observe well the *mediums*, the choyce ways and means by which all good things are conveyed to us.

If your Honors will be pleased to throw away an hour or two in the persusall of these lines, you may be hence encouraged more and more to observe God in the wayes of his providence, and keep some memorials by you of his goodnesse to you and yours, which may encrease your faith in him, enlarge your love to him, and fortifie your hearts against the evils of these times... In the tenth place, when you have read over your Journall, ... ask your owne hearts these three questions: ... What honor to I bring to God for all this? ... What good do I to my neighbor? Ask your own hearts often what good you your selves get by all that God hath done for you.

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 Meditation in Writing

From Kneeling with Giants by Gary Neal Hansen (with adaptations)

Beadle lists a number of topics to write about in our journals: ...

“Let every man keep an account of his effectual calling.” “Effectual calling” is the Puritan term for the way God got through and made you a Christian. Beadle is suggesting that we write out our spiritual autobiography. We can start with the bare chronology of our Christian journey, whether we were nurtured gently to faith or had a radical conversion. Beyond that, though, we need to fill in the story and look for what God did at each stage to help us believe and then grow. ...

“Take special notice of all divine assistance ... either in the performance of duties that are required of us, or in bearing those evils that are afflicted upon us.” ... Here Beadle asks us to take note of how God is active in the present ... How is God helping us to be faithful in relationships and at work? How is God supporting us in the midst of challenges? In listing how God has assisted us in the past week, in the past year; we are more likely to take notice and give thanks. ...

“All the instruments, all the men and means that God hath in providence at any time used for our good, must not be forgotten.” ... Beadle lists parents, teachers, benefactors and ministers, as well as people in working life. If we make a record of people who have helped us, it is only a short step to see God’s hand. And if we think about the “problem people” in our lives, we may find that God has used them to shape us as well, prompting a whole new kind of thanksgiving.

“And finally, mark what returns, what answers God gives to your prayers, and set them down ... as most remarkable pledges of his love.” Keep a list of what you pray for and how God answers. ... [prayers for yourself and for others] When someone asks you to pray, rather than simply saying the words and moving on (or worse, forgetting to pray at all), journaling reminds us to pray and to watch for God in action. In the process, we build faith and gratitude.

*It is hard to find the actual journals of Puritans; many were consigned to the flames by their authors. On the other hand, the best role model for this kind of written prayer lived long before the Puritans, and his book can be found in any bookstore: the **Confessions of St. Augustine (354-430)**.* This North African professor of rhetoric sowed a lot of wild oats before he became a Christian at thirty-two. Shortly after that he became a bishop, so he had some explaining to do. He defended the integrity of his conversion in a spiritual autobiography written directly to God as a prayer. For fifteen centuries, people have eagerly listened in. Readers often say that Augustine could be telling their own stories. Partly because he was such a careful observer of his emotional and spiritual experience. ... Though he never formally taught the practice of written prayer, ... *his book gives examples of the Puritans’ teaching:* he tells his own life story, trying to discern God’s hand in his journey to conversion. He practices self-examination, admitting his sins and temptations. And he meditates on Scripture and the mysteries of living. Pen in hand, he tries to tell God the truth.

Prayer Journal Page