

Sermon followed by Service

Romans 8:26-27

October 17, 2021

You're groaning inside. You're in the ICU, or the ER, or some hospital room in between ER and ICU. You're there sitting, standing, at bedside. Your mom, dad, grandpa, or grandma; your husband, wife, or maybe your child is there in the hospital bed. Or maybe it's you in the bed. Tubes up in the nose, maybe down the throat, mask over the face, wires and sensors attached to the chest, IV bags dripping, pumps pumping - food, water, medicine, painkillers - into veins stuck with needles. You don't know if any of it is doing any good or will do any good. You watch the lines on the heart monitor screens and you don't know. You watch your loved one breathe in and breathe out; you hear them moan and groan; and you don't know. You don't know what to pray for. Do you pray for all of it to work? For how long? To what end? Or do you pray for relief and release? Your heart tugs one way and then the other. Your brain thinks one way and then it can't, it just can't think at all. And you sit there, you stand there, you lie there wondering what to pray for.

Or maybe you're not there yet. You're in the ER waiting room, or the doctor office waiting room. Or you're at home waiting, your mind spinning around for hours, for days, for weeks. You're waiting for the test results, the treatment plan. You're waiting for you, your child, your loved one. You're waiting and you know you could be praying, should be praying, but you don't know what to pray for.

You look in the mirror and you see a failure. You look around and you feel alone; your world, your family, your friends, pulling away. You feel a darkness inside you and around you, an emptiness sucking the life out of you. You feel on edge, an uneasiness inside you. You feel like your whole life, your whole world is off, off kilter, off balance; you wish you could just shut it all off - your feelings, your life, your self. You know you shouldn't feel that way, but you do. Someone tells you to pray. You know you should pray, but with all that's going on inside, you just don't know how to pray, what to pray, you wonder: "what good would it do anyway?"

You're groaning inside, hurting inside, crushed inside, afraid inside - and you don't know what you should do; you don't know what you should pray. Maybe it's your mom, your dad, your husband, your wife, a friend, a boss, a co-worker. You want to get along. You try to do the right thing. But it's never good enough; you're never good enough. They make you pay in ways you don't want to say. So you don't know what to pray. They treat you so wrong; you feel so wrong; you

wonder if you even get to pray. And then the thought enters your mind: “God is letting it happen”: so you wonder: “What would I, how could I, why would I pray?”

You’re groaning inside and you know what you should do. You know your sin. You know you should repent and turn back to God. You know you need to stop your _____. But it just seems so impossible, impossible to turn your life around, impossible to make life right, so impossible to get back on track. So impossible you don’t know what to pray.

Which of those scenarios is the worst, the darkest, the most difficult?

Ever feel that way? Groaning inside - hurt, heart-broken. Not knowing what to pray. Not knowing if you get to pray. Sometimes we can be so unsure, so bewildered about what to pray, that we just curl up and quit. Other times, we might be so hurt, so angry at the evil in our lives that we can’t even think of praying. It happens - doesn’t it? - life gets hard, and it gets hard, so hard, to pray.

At those times, “in our groaning times” - and we all have them, don’t we? - God doesn’t leave us on our own waiting for us to pray, waiting for us to come up with the right prayer. No, “in our groaning times,” God the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Greek in that word “help” caught my attention. Paul doesn’t say that the Spirit steps in and takes over for us, but that the Spirit steps in and works together with us. That’s a good reminder for me for when I want to throw up my hands: “I can’t pray; I don’t know what to say.” When we don’t know what to pray, we have the Spirit stepping in to help us.

Agree / Disagree A strong faith is able to say: “I don’t need to pray. I trust that whatever the Father does, it will be good and right for me.”

And how does he help? The Spirit nudges; he reminds; he works faith and trust; he gives wisdom and understanding. And the more we fill ourselves up with the Spirit in here [Bible], the more comfortable, the bolder, the wiser we’ll be in our prayers. But that’s not what’s in our lesson today. In our lesson today, we see the Spirit doing something else for us. He doesn’t just nudge us in our prayers. The Spirit also intercedes for us. The Spirit speaks up to the Father on our behalf.

We might not know what to pray for, but the Holy Spirit living inside us, he does know what to pray for. He knows us better than we know us; he knows what we need better than we know what we need. And he speaks up for us. How? In groans that words cannot express. Just as we groan in our hurt and heartache and weakness, the Spirit groans with us and the Spirit groans for us.

What exactly does that mean? Paul doesn't explain. Instead Paul wants you to know that the Father knows. He knows what's in your heart - your hurt, your hopes, your wants, your needs. And he knows what his Holy Spirit - the Spirit living in you, his Spirit speaking up for you - the Father knows what the Spirit wants for you. The Spirit's groans aren't lost on the Father; their meaning isn't lost to the Father. God knows you and he knows his Spirit living in you.

And you can know that what the Spirit prays for you fits with what the Father wants. We might be reluctant to speak up for ourselves for fear that we might say the wrong thing - that we might cross God, that we might ask for the wrong thing. When the Holy Spirit speaks up for you, he doesn't and he won't say the wrong thing. He will speak up for your hurts and your hopes in a way that touches God's heart and mind, that touches God's love for you as one of his saints.

“One of his saints.” I don't know about you, but in my groaning times, I seldom feel like a saint. I feel small; I feel weak. I might feel like I have it coming. So many of my groaning times are because of self-inflicted hurts, self-inflicted failures. So many of my groaning times are because I am a sinner and not because I am a saint. Even when I'm groaning in here [in my heart] over someone else, their hurts and heartaches, your hurts and heartaches, it's hard to see myself, hear myself, think of myself as a saint. It's hard to imagine God seeing me, hearing me as a saint. It's hard to imagine the Holy Spirit speaking up for me as a saint. And yet, that is what God does for you and for me.

When he hears you groaning and calling to him, even with your self-inflicted hurts and heartaches, he doesn't say: “You had it coming.” When he hears us groaning and calling to him for each other, he doesn't listen to us because we've won his heart with our goodness. In the same way, when the Spirit speaks up for us and the Father listens, it's not because we've won their heart with our goodness. No. They hear you and see you with Jesus, with his cross, with his perfect life covering you. They see our lives, our messed-up hearts and minds, they hear our mixed-up prayers all forgiven and covered over with the perfect life of Jesus. They

see your hearts and minds, the Father hears your prayers all covered and filled with the goodness of Jesus.

What does that get to mean for us? Think about it. What have they - the Father and the Spirit - done for Jesus? They got him through his groaning times; they have him safe with them in heaven! And they will do the same for you - they will get you through your groaning times, for life safe and loved in heaven. Amen.

Think of some of the “groaning times” in Jesus’ life. What did Jesus do in his groaning times? What did the Father and His Spirit do for Jesus in his groaning times? As saints in Jesus, what does that get to mean for us?

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DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are both the victims and the perpetrators of so much missed communication and mis-communication. We assume and presume. We miss and misunderstand. And needs and hurts are missed and mishandled.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see the Holy Spirit step in for us so that our needs and our hurts are clearly communicated to our Father in a way that is best for us and mindful of our Father's better love and wisdom!

OPENING HYMN

"Come, My Soul, with Every Care"

Hymn 409

Come, my soul, with ev'ry care; Jesus loves to answer prayer.
He himself bids you to pray And will never turn away.

You are coming to a king-- Large petitions with you bring,
For his grace and pow'r are such, None can ever ask too much.

With my burden I begin: Lord, remove this load of sin;
Let your blood, for sinners spilt, Set my conscience free from guilt.

Lord, your rest to me impart; Take possession of my heart.
There your blood-bought right maintain And without a rival reign.

While I am a pilgrim here, Let your love my spirit cheer;
As my guide, my guard, my friend, Lead me to my journey's end.

Show me what I am to do; Ev'ry hour my strength renew.
Let me live a life of faith; Let me die your people's death.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, your ears are always open to the prayers of your humble servants, who come to you in Jesus' name. Teach us always to ask according to your will that we may never fail to obtain the blessings you have promised; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 8:26-27

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Alleluia.
(Galatians 4:6)

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 11:1-13

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation. "

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Our Father, who from heav'n above Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say, But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Your name be hallowed. Help us, Lord, In purity to keep your Word,
That to the glory of your name We walk before you free from blame.
Let no false doctrine us pervert; All poor, deluded souls convert.

Your kingdom come, we humbly pray, That Christ may rule in us today
And that your Holy Spirit bring Still more to worship Christ as King.
Break Satan's pow'r, defeat his rage; Preserve your Church from age to age.

Your gracious will on earth be done Just as in heav'n around your throne,
That patiently we may obey Throughout our lives all that you say.
Curb sinful flesh and ev'ry ill That sets itself against your will.

Give us today our daily bread, And let us all be clothed and fed.
From hardship, war, and earthly strife,
From sickness, famine, spare our life.
Let selfishness and worry cease That we may live in godly peace.

Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore, That they may trouble us no more;
We, too, will gladly those forgive Who hurt us by the way they live.
Help us in our community To serve each other willingly.

Into temptation lead us not. When evil foes against us plot
And vex our souls on ev'ry hand, Oh, give us strength that we may stand
Firm in the faith, a mighty host, Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.

From evil, Lord, deliver us; The times and days are perilous.
Redeem us from eternal death, And, when we yield our dying breath,
Console us, grant us calm release, And take our souls to you in peace.

Amen, that is, it shall be so. Make strong our faith that we may know
That we may doubt not but believe What here we ask we shall receive.
Thus in your name and at your Word We say, "Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord!"

HYMN

*“Come, Oh Come, Life-Giving Spirit”***Hymn 181**

Come, oh, come, life-giving Spirit, God from all eternity!
 May your power never fail us; Dwell within us constantly.
 Then shall truth and life and light Banish all the gloom of night.

Show us, Lord, the path of blessing; When we trespass on our way,
 Cast, O Lord, our sins behind you And be with us day by day.
 Should we stray, O Lord, recall; Work repentance when we fall.

With our spirit, Lord, bear witness That we are the saints of God
 Who rely upon him solely When we're chastened by the rod;
 For we know, as children should, That the cross is for our good.

Prompt us, Lord, to come before him With a childlike heart to pray;
 Sigh for us, O Holy Spirit, When we know not what to say.
 Then our prayer is not in vain, And our faith new strength shall gain.

Grant our hearts in fullest measure Wisdom, counsel, purity,
 That we always strive to please you, Working for you willingly.
 Let the gospel spread and grow, Bringing Satan's overthrow.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Christians, While on Earth Abiding”
Hymn 408

Christians, while on earth abiding, Let us never cease to pray,
Firmly in the Lord confiding As our parents in their day.
Be the children’s voices raised To the God their parents praised.
May his blessing, failing never, Rest upon his people ever.

Bless us, Father, and protect us From all harm in all our ways;
Patiently, O Lord, direct us Safely through these fleeting days.
Let your face upon us shine; Fill us with your peace divine.
Praise the Father, Son, and Spirit! Praise him, all who life inherit!

OFFERING

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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help, and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- Children's worship bulletins and "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available in the Narthex Gathering Area.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.