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August, 2020

ADAPTABILITY IN THE PRESENCE OF AN UNCHANGING GOD

“Adaptability may be your most essential skill in the covid-19 world.” This is the title of an article I read this past week. I read it because I was thinking through all the changes we have had to endure, just as a church, over the last 5 months and I know it has been tough. I thank you for your patience and understanding during this time. I can’t predict the future, but there could be more changes in the future, based on what happens with the virus. A question we can ask then is “How do we work through all these changes in the face of these difficult times?” The answer is we adapt.



Now in the article I mentioned by Elizabeth Heath she writes this about adaptability, “I define adaptability as the ability to be creative and flexible in the face of new situations,” says Laurie Leinwand, a licensed professional counselor based in Denville, N.J. Most of us “have a tendency to shut down in the face of new things,” she says. But change, Leinwand says, is like a rip current — if you swim against it, you’ll never reach the shore. “I advise people to ride change like a wave. If you’re in a fall, a rise will follow.”

And she goes on to write this, “Accepting the uncertainty of the future means planning one step at a time, says Leinwand, which is especially important when the landscape is changing so rapidly. “We have to let go of the need to plan from A to Z,” she says, “and learn to be okay with planning from A to B.” After all, by the time we get to B, things already may have changed.”

We see this happen in the Biblical narrative as well. The people of Israel had to adapt time and time again. Glancing through the Old Testament, we see them having to endure slavery in Egypt. Then once they walk through the Red Sea, in the Exodus, they must adapt to life in the wilderness for 40 years. Going on, once they finally reach the Promise Land, they must adapt to that. Even the land filled with milk and honey has changes, as they endure different judges and good and bad kings. Finally, because of their wayward ways they are exiled to Babylon in 587 BC. When this happens, they must adapt to an entirely different place and routine of living for over another 60 years. Even when they return, after the exile, it takes time to set the Temple back up. Fast forward to the time of Jesus, and we see they are having to adapt under Roman rule.

Things were changing for the people of Israel, but one thing was not. Their God. As He proclaims through His prophet Malachi in 3:6, “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.” Yes, the people had to adapt, but in the faithful love of the Lord they were not consumed and swallowed up by the world, because his loving ways did not change toward them. Isaiah prophesies similarly in 40:8, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” And the author of the Hebrews writes this of the Anointed Messiah in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Through all the changes going on we can adapt because we have a God who is on our side and will be faithful to us! He will not abandon nor forsake us! Today, and every day, go forward and just make a small plan from A to B, taking small steps forward, and leaning on the unchanging Lord in moments it is hard to adapt. To encourage you, I leave with words of Paul who speaks about adaptability, or as he puts it being content in every circumstance, from Philippians 4:11-13, “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Go and do all things, adapting through Him who strengthens you every day!

In the Unchanging Love of the Lord,
Pastor Matt

P.S. For those reading the electronic version of the newsletter here is a link to the article I mentioned: https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/adaptability-coronavirus-skills/2020/05/26/8bd17522-9c4b-11ea-ad09-8da7ec214672_story.html

LCMS STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY AUGUST 2020 ARTICLE



Winston Churchill reportedly said, “we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” According to Churchill then, our lives are defined less by what we have gotten and more by what we give away.

Our Lord’s life is defined in this way. He gave completely of Himself for us. He became man for us. He taught the truth of God’s Word. He healed those with many and various diseases. He died the death that we deserve because of sin. He gave of Himself in order to save us from sin, death, and hell. So it is that by giving completely of Himself, He got us for Himself, making us citizens of His eternal kingdom by grace.

As it was for Jesus, so it is also for us. We get more from giving than we do from simply getting. Giving softens our hearts and frees us from the worries of this world and making a living. For when we are singularly focused on making a living, we are singularly focused on what we get.

That mindset begins to bleed into all areas of our lives – our relationships with friends and family, with neighbors and coworkers, and with the Lord. It shifts our focus from asking “How can I be a friend, family member, neighbor, and servant to others?” to “What have they done for me lately?” We become more selfish instead of selfless.

But, when we give, we do not have less, and we do not become less. We have more and become more. Because when we give, we join in the bond of friendship and family, the bond of service to those around us out of love for them. And love is the fulfillment of the Law. It is the nature of God Himself, for God is Love. Thus, we are participating in the divine nature. As Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY? By Bob Hiller ([1517.org/articles/how-should-we-pray](https://www.1517.org/articles/how-should-we-pray))

I’m not sure if you’ve checked the news lately, but things are getting a little crazy out there! A pandemic, a quarantine, national protests and riots, and now Kanye’s running for president. Just when you thought this year couldn’t get more nuts, you remember it is an election year. I don’t think it is going too far to say that it feels like things are spiraling out of control. Yes, you can give me all of your theological truisms to remind me that God is in control and that we have nothing to fear. I know that. As much as I tell that to my fears, my fears stick around like an unwelcome guest who won’t take a hint. Fear and uncertainty seem to be the air we breathe these days.

It is at times like these that the Christian finds herself in prayer. The Lord certainly does remind us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:16), but there are times such as these where the prayers seem more urgent. The Lord promises, “Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you” (Ps 50:15). We are certainly in that day of trouble, and we are certainly in need of that deliverance. But how are we to do it? That we should pray is obvious, but what to say in the day of trouble? This doesn’t come as easy.

I was struck recently by how Paul prays in his epistles and how unlike my prayers sound. When I pray, say, for my kids, I pray for their health, for their well-being, for their ability one day to get jobs and support healthy families. In times of crisis, such as the one we find ourselves in, I pray for God to ease the strife, bring about reconciliation, and speed along the process of finding a cure for COVID. These are not bad prayers. I think they are what we might call “daily-bread” prayers. I’m asking our Father, at the directing of Jesus himself, to provide all that is necessary for this God-created, God-blessed bodily life. This is good. But it is also incomplete. It is one prayer among seven total petitions Jesus has gifted to his baptized people.

Compare this with how St. Paul prays in his opening prayer for the Ephesian brothers and sisters:

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Eph 1:16-21).

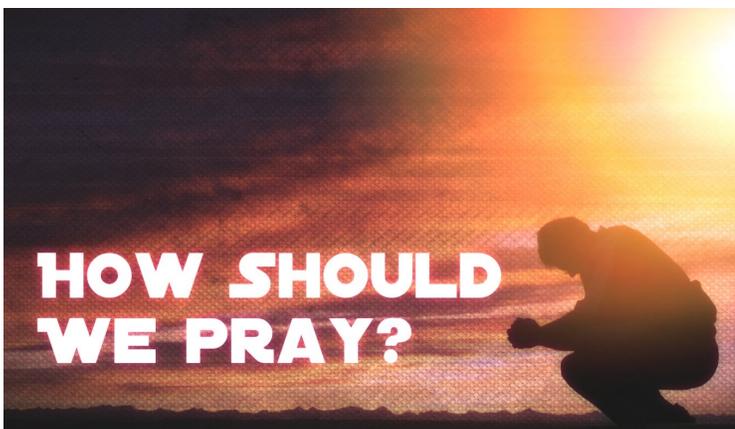
Paul's prayer is much wordier than mine tend to be (The above five verses are made up of only one sentence, friends!). But more importantly, notice how Paul doesn't just pray for the bodily needs of the saints, but for their faith. He prays that in whatever circumstances they may find themselves, God the Holy Spirit would give the saints eyes to see Jesus. He is praying that their faith and hope would be fixed on the Son whom God raised from the dead and now has authority over all things. He prays what we might want to call "hallowed-be-thy-name" prayers wherein he knows God's name is holy in itself but asks that it would be holy in the lives of the saints also, no matter what their circumstances.

Paul knows that there is something more important for those he loves than their bodily well-being. It is their faith. It is their hope and confidence in Jesus Christ. It is one thing to pray against death's slow and aggressive assault on God's creation. It is another to trust in the one who has conquered the grave. Paul knows the promise of Jesus that in this world, you will have trouble. So he doesn't pray that no trouble may come. Instead, he prays that no matter what may come, we do not lose heart and that we would know, "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe," because he knows Jesus' promise continues. "Take heart! I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33).

So, how do we pray? Jesus answers this question very clearly for his disciples and for you in Luke 11:1-7. He delivers to you the gift of seven petitions (prayerful requests), which he promises the Father will answer. We have called these petitions the Lord's Prayer. So we are given to pray:

- that his name would be hallowed in our lives whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, be they good or bad, evil or righteous;
- that his kingdom would continue to come to us in Word and sacrament;
- that his will would override the devil's schemes which seem to surround us at every turn;
- that we would daily receive our bread from his gracious hand and that our work would continue to provide for others;
- that we would not allow that foothold of the devil, bitterness, to prevent us from carrying out loving actions (especially towards our enemies);
- that he would forgive us our sins and cause that forgiveness to burst forth from our mouths for others and drive our actions;
- that we who are prone to sin would be kept from following our flesh and the devil's enticements;
- and finally, that God would deliver us now and completely from our daily experiences of Satan's destructive work on this creation.

It is these prayers that shaped Paul's prayers for the saints. It is these prayers that Jesus has promised that our Father will answer (Luke 11:8-13). How does he know? Because in his dying and his rising, Jesus has opened the Father's ear to your prayers! Jesus has jumped out of the grave, grabbed the ear of your Father, and pulled it down to earth to hear your cries. It may seem like during times like these that God is not listening to your prayers (Ps 44:23). But don't lose heart! (Luke 18:1-8). Your whispered prayers echo through the halls of heaven and fill the ears of the Father. Pray that God would keep your faith firm in Jesus Christ. He will not be long in answering



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Bob Hiller is the senior pastor of Community Lutheran Church in Escondido, CA. He is a baptized husband, father, and pastor. He is the content editor for The Craft of Preaching, a preacher on You Are Forgiven Radio, and a contributor to 1517.



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Resurrection Lutheran Church Balance Sheet 06/30/2020

Assets

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Assets | | \$185,552.67 |
| Current Assets | | \$84,368.54 |
| Checking Account | \$58,984.99 | |
| Savings Account | \$21,471.79 | |
| Facilities Account | \$3,305.49 | |
| PayPal | \$606.27 | |
| Investments | | \$101,184.13 |
| LCEF Steward Account | \$95,692.33 | |
| LCEF Supplemental | \$5,491.70 | |
| Schwab Account | \$0.10 | |

Total Assets **\$185,552.67**

Liabilities

Total Liabilities **\$0.00**

Equity

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Operating Accounts | | \$178,751.71 |
| Operating Accounts | | \$178,751.71 |
| General Fund | \$53,241.44 | |
| Sinking Funds | | \$103,581.18 |
| Local Impact Giving | \$(1,018.94) | |
| Workers Comp | \$1,790.11 | |
| Piano Organ Maint | \$1,777.67 | |
| District Conv | \$624.02 | |
| Short-Term Maint | \$7,680.79 | |
| Landscape | \$872.59 | |
| Long-Term Maint | \$36,246.85 | |
| Surface Water Mgmt | \$636.82 | |
| Property Insurance | \$871.92 | |
| Parsonage Maint | \$7,736.02 | |
| Emergency Fund | \$46,363.33 | |
| Special Funds | | \$21,929.09 |
| Congregational Emergency Fund | \$1,818.89 | |
| Kitchen Fund | \$4,760.60 | |
| Memorial Fund | \$13,446.54 | |
| Concordia Publishing | \$(31.92) | |
| Social Action Fund | \$1,934.98 | |

Retained Earnings **\$6,800.96**

Total Equity **\$185,552.67**

Total Liabilities & Equity **\$185,552.67**