

Sunday, October 18, 2020
Pentecost 20
Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf
“God Calls Us By Name”



I remember doing this idea that Sunday's and Seasons suggested for this Sunday...Paul tells the Thessalonians that he prays for them by name, and the Prophet Isaiah shares that God calls people by name. Names are an important part of our identity. They suggest, "Have everyone who is at worship write their name on a piece of paper and place it in a basket on their way to worship. Then have them draw a name (not your own) on their way out. Invite the assembly to commit to

pray by name throughout the week for the person whose name they drew." Because of Covid-19, I suggest you pick a name unfamiliar to you in the names listed on our worship bulletin first inside page under "In our hearts and Prayers." Who knows how you will meet and connect in person. I did this in St. David, and Doris came up to me years later saying, "I am still calling the person I picked from the basket."

St. Paul says in First Thessalonians, "We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and Labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Joy, my cousin, located me here at Grace Lutheran Church, Somers Point, NJ. I think she searched me out on the internet and asked Diana to contact me. She was glad I responded and told me her concern for our cousin Ann in the hospital. She is close to her and texts her. Because of Covid-19 she cannot visit the hospital in Wisconsin. "Would you pray for her?" Joy asked. I not only prayed for Ann but for Joy as well, asking God not only for healing and patience but strength for them both and the medical staff.

I try to remember names and sometimes I ask you to spell it out even if your name is Tom; you still need to spell it T-O-M, Tom. This helps me to remember your name as it sticks in my mind. Prophet Isaiah tells us that God Called Cyrus and anointed him to deliver God's people

from exile to Jerusalem. What is surprising about this call from God to Cyrus is that Cyrus did not know God, yet served God's purpose. Cyrus is like a tool fulfilling God's promise to Israel, God's chosen.

Before God's name was revealed to Moses, God was known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. People called by name to serve God's promises. I recall a song that I learned from a Methodist's hymnal, "Jesus name above all names, Beautiful Savior, Glorious Lord, Emmanuel-God is with Us, Blessed Redeemer, Eternal Word." Another one by Amy Grant, which I'm practicing, "Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Wonderful Counselor, Lord of life, Lord of all, He is the Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Holy One." Prayers and Praise go together in my devotions. Daniel Taylor said, "We show what we love by that to which we most happily devote our attention." St. Paul loves the Thessalonians, "We always give thanks to God for you and mention you in our prayers...remembering...your work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

I was at a Seminary gathering with dad and I introduced my dad, Roland, to the Academic Dean Father John Damm. After sharing a few words we moved on to mingle. As we were leaving, Father Damm gave my dad a blessing remembering his name. My amazed dad said, "He remembered my name!" I continue calling you members of Grace. I recently called Dot Progin at Royal Suites. We prayed and shared remembrances. One was a childhood German prayer she shared, and translated it for me. Then we closed together with the Lord's Prayer. Come to think of it, you all have a new name to pray for as your new pastor prepares to lead Grace in the work of God for God's Glory and for the advancement of God's kingdom!

"We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers..." said St. Paul.

Amen.