

Nbr. 36 – October, 2021

Prayer and Evangelism

“I tell you the absolute truth, if you ask the Father for anything in My Name, He will give it to you” (John 16:23). Ask anything? Hot dog!

Yet Jesus said a bit more than that. He added: “if you ask . . . for anything *in My Name* . . .”

We can turn into mere namedroppers, thinking that all will be well if we just slip the syllables “Je-sus” into any request we make. But that can’t be all there is to it. After all, the Lord’s Prayer itself does not include the word “Jesus.”

The alternative to that way of namedropping is to be drawn into the Lord’s name. Then we can present our requests from within a relationship with Him.

To ask in Jesus’ name is to ask on the basis of everything He has done for us. It is to ask because of accomplished verities: His life, death, and resurrection. “So far you have not asked for anything in My name,” said Jesus on the night when He was betrayed. He went on: “Ask and you will receive so that your joy might be complete” (John 16:24).

The Lord bothered about the salvation of insignificant and sinful people like us. He put Himself on the line for us. So we ask that His name be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done – all here on earth, as it is in heaven.

No doubt, in our sin we can convince ourselves to ask God for what may seem to be some pretty impressive trinkets and goodies for ourselves. Still, He keeps inviting us to make requests in His Name . . . based on everything He has done and still does for the salvation of sinners.

re:Vitality Utilization

re:Vitality modules currently available are:

- *Connect to Disciple* (outreach; CID continues to have facilitators who can conduct Friday evening-Saturday morning workshops for this)
- *Shepherding our Strays* (inactive members)
- *Serving in God’s Mission* (strategic planning)
- *Members of One Body* (assimilation) is currently available as a pilot 2-day workshop conducted by Office of National Mission personnel. Beta testing of the self-directed module will take place in spring, 2022.

Please let me know if churches in your Circuit are using these resources. Or, ask them to let me know themselves. It helps if I know who might be able to give a “review” on the resources to other interested congregations. And if anyone is interested in *Members of One Body*, contact me.

Ministry after the Pandemic

On Sept. 9, Rev. Steve Schave (now of LAMP) presented an LCMS webinar on post-pandemic ministry. He raised a number of searching questions. Here are just a few notes I made:

- What new outreach opportunities have opened up as a result of COVID – especially among marginalized folks or new people groups?
- How can outreach continue in the future, virtually or in person?
- How to have a time of strengthening, not division?
- How will the world be able to see unity amid diversity in our churches?
- How can our churches help in love to address the results of isolation, loneliness, and economic disruption from the pandemic?



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

**Psalm 67, the Reformation, and Gospel Outreach
Part One**

Martin Luther saw the import of Psalm 67 for widespread outreach with the Gospel. On it he based his great mission hymn, "May God Bestow on Us His Grace" (LSB 823/824). Think Ps. 67 through:

1. It begins with a prayer to receive God's favor. This prayer comes in terms familiar to us from the Aaronic benediction: that "God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us." The prayed-for blessing precedes making God's way known to the nations.
2. What the nations need most, and are above all to get, is not directives from God (Law) but His saving power (Gospel).
3. All the peoples are to praise God, Gentiles too.
4. The psalmist found a good harvest significant, for it would draw the attention of the surrounding peoples to Israel and Israel's God.
5. Psalm 67 expresses the truth that Israel had the gift of being a priestly people, introducing the Lord to the nations and the nations to the Lord.

The modern world has caused problems for Christian mission. Think of the worldliness that set in with modernity. You may have your "values," the modern world says, but they are supposed to have nothing to do with cold hard facts. Pigeon-holing religion as one's private business makes Christians timid or hesitant about speaking of Christ.

Postmodernism has caused its problems too. The idea that there is no absolute truth -- no story that can possibly give an overall explanation for the human condition, let alone provide hope or salvation -- forms no friend for Gospel outreach. It hardly encourages Christians to break their silence.

A lot of theology and piety within Christendom has not been very helpful to the Christian mission, either. On an evangelism call, a friend of mine once spoke with a young lady who said she was a Christian. As they talked, however, it became clear to him that she seemed to know almost nothing about Christ. Finally, he asked why she considered herself a Christian. "I went down the aisle," she said. Then she added, "I think I need to go down that aisle again soon." Her fever-pitch of emotion was beginning to wear off. She was left with doubts and uncertainties, and without any clear Word from God on which she could depend.

The church needs support for mission, the kind of support that would fall right in line with what Psalm 67 was talking about.

1. *We first receive God's gracious blessing, His shining face, before His way can be made known to the nations through us.*
2. *We have the privilege of proclaiming the saving power of a salvation really completed in Jesus, the Christ.*
3. *All the peoples can praise God, which means Gentiles as Gentiles, without becoming Jews. This proclamation entails the message of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith, a message to be kept straight as it is gotten out.*
4. *Available tools for proclamation (even such a thing as a good harvest in ancient Israel) are to be used wisely and well.*
5. *The roles of all Christians in telling the Good News should be recognized.*

Just this kind of help comes from the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation. See next month! -- Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org

