

First Trinity Lutheran Church
John 17:13-23
May 22, 2012
Pastor Tom Knoll

Someone is Praying for You

A few years ago there was a Peanuts cartoon that seems to fit our lives from time to time. In this cartoon Charlie Brown just could not get his act together. Life to Charlie Brown just didn't have any purpose or meaning to it. So he went over to talk to Lucy about his dilemma. Now anyone who has read Peanuts knows you have to be pretty desperate to ask Lucy for advice. In the cartoon Lucy had her psychiatric booth set up and was charging the fee of ten cents for advice that day. Charlie Brown lays down his ten cents and says to Lucy, Lucy you have to help me out. I don't have any meaning and purpose in my life you are just going to have to help me put my act together. And she looked at him in her know it all, sarcastic way and she said, Charlie Brown, life is like a deck chair on a ship. Some people take their deck chair to the back of the ship, and they unfold it and they sit there looking at where they have been. She said other people take their deck chair, and they unfold it, and they put it on the front of the ship to look and see where they are going. Now she said, Charlie Brown, life is simple, where is your deck chair? Frustration fills Charlie Brown's face and he scratches his head and he says I don't know because I have never been able to get my deck chair unfolded.

All of us, I think, find ourselves at some point in our life feeling that just can't get our act together; we just can't get that deck chair unfolded. How would you feel at that moment if someone said to you that they are praying for you? Have you ever had someone tell you they are praying for you? Most likely we all have had people pray for us, but it is different when someone tells you face to face that they are praying for you. It might happen when you are going through a difficult time with health or family. It might make you feel uneasy or a

bit vulnerable. But there is also a feeling of well-being that flows over you because you know you are not alone, that someone cares for you and you know that God is there in the midst of it all.

Sometime it comes unexpected. I have had emails telling me that someone thought of me and is praying for me. It gives me a lift even if there is nothing particularly weighing on me at the time. But it is especially encouraging when I feel weighed down and need those prayers.

The story is told of a person driving past a church on a busy street in a city. On the sign was the simple message, “Pray for Ellen Smith”, or whatever her name was. The driver didn’t know Mrs. Smith, they didn’t know the source of her concern but he said he found himself thinking about Mrs. Smith at different times during the day, imagining how old she was, what her concern might have been and during the whole time lifting her up in prayer. I suspect he was not alone.

Just this past week I called my mother on Mother’s Day and we were exchanging pleasantries like the weather and what she was doing on mother’s day when she said to me, “Tom I really need to have a conversation with you some time. I said well Mom we are having a conversation right now, and she said I know but I need to talk to you about something serious. I said Ok what’s on your mind. She went on to say, “Well for a long time I have felt very discouraged because I’m physically unable be active at church. I just can’t move around much anymore and I have to spend most of my time at home.” I realized this was a big issue because my Mom was very active in many church events especially around those things that required food. She loves to cook. One suggestion I had was for her to get out the church directory each day and look at the pictures and pray for the people. She

may not know if they had a particular concern, and that wasn't important. She could find herself imagining the kids at school, the parents about their work. Some were widows, some were single, and some were married. Her heart could go out to each of them as she lifted up their situations in prayer.

There are also those times when the person you are praying for is in your very presence. Offering prayers in the hospital or prayers around the life cycle like birth, marriage, graduation, even near the time of death is one of the wonderful opportunities that I have been given in my daily work. We all have this opportunity for prayer. When someone comes to mind, pray for them, it might just be what they need at that time and we don't know it.

Some years ago a Seminary professor son was killed in a violent way. He found it impossible to pray and went about his teaching and his work feeling empty and without anything to give. Sharing his pain with a colleague, he revealed his apparent loss of faith and inability to pray. His friend told him, "The seminary community will pray for you until you can pray for yourself again." As his healing took place, he was not abandoned and eventually he was able to pray again.

In today's gospel Jesus knows he is about to leave his disciples and they are being sent out into the world. Jesus prays for them, asking for protection; asking that God would "sanctify" them, make them holy, and protect their souls. With that prayer comes all the wonder of Jesus praying for us. This is the Son of God; this is the one who came to save the world. This is the one who died for us, and he is praying for you and me. Praying for our safety, praying for our souls. Jesus is the one who sends us out to carry on that which was important to him, the release of captives, to bind up the sick, to pray for those in need.

The message today is to remember Jesus is praying for us. Jesus wants us to live as children of God and promises to give us the strength to face whatever comes. We should also remember to pray for those around us and far away. Remember as Jesus is praying for us all the power of God is with us. As this Easter Season comes to a close and next week we enter into the season of Pentecost we are reminded by Jesus himself though the power of his prayer that we are never alone even when we struggle, even when we are unable to open the deck chairs in our life. Jesus not only prays for us by name but sends to us the Holy Spirit who is our helper and comforter. **Amen**