

Proper 6/Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Series C)

“Today Your Mercy Calls Us” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #915)

These words from Isaiah:

“Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.”

Isaiah 1:18 NRSV

Other translations say it this way: “Come, let us settle it” or “Come, and let us reason together.”

Whether the translation is “argue” or “settle” or “reason”, it is clear that Isaiah is using covenant language. The language of relationship, God calling his chosen ones, the people of Israel, in mercy, in lovingkindness; *because* they are his chosen people. God chooses them and chooses to be in relationship with them.

Covenants are between two people and involve promises made by each to each other. Covenant implies a “between-ness”, a mutual relationship involving the two. This covenant between God (a divine superior) and Israel (inferior human beings) and between God (a divine superior) and us (inferior human beings) is a promise of God’s merciful and faithful call to us—to be our God and for us to be his people, to live in relationship with him. God calls us today, and keeps calling today, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

God’s covenant with us is of the utmost importance because the covenants that God initiates are everlasting. From the first covenant with Abraham and with the Jewish people to the covenants of the New Testament (the New Covenant), God’s covenants are everlasting, merciful and faithful. We don’t need a skill for this (that’s a contract)—all we need is to listen to God’s voice calling us—no matter what we have done, no matter where we have been, no matter how far and how long we have wandered. God calls—and welcomes us with robe, and calf, and ring—and the promises of the covenant.

God’s covenants have signs, from the rainbow to Noah to the divine Son, Jesus, who has risen into the future and who goes ahead to prepare a place for us with God. God’s total being is wrapped up in relationship with his chosen people—with you, with me, with the world.

Today God calls us in mercy through the Holy Spirit. He calls us all into relationship, into faithfulness. God calls and shows mercy to us, not once, not twice, but every morning, every day, with mercies ever new. God’s mercy rescues us from sin and

bestows salvation. We too are called to show God's mercy to the world, to the other, to proclaim the time of jubilee, and to be channels of God's mercy in the church and the world. God's mercy calls us to become living signs of his perfect mercy shown to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. God grant that our words, our actions, and our songs live "mercy". May God's faithfulness to us be so reflected in our lives that we may truly be known as "the faithful people" —showing God's mercy to the world.

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Linda Kempke
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Today Your Mercy Calls Us

Text: Oswald Allen, 1816—78 alt

Tune: ANTHES – Friedrich K Anthes, 1812—after 1857

[Both are in the public domain.]

1. Today your mercy calls us to wash away our sin.
However great our trespass, whatever we have been,
however long from mercy our hearts have turned away,
your precious blood can wash us and make us clean today.
2. Today your gate is open, and all who enter in
shall find a Father's welcome and pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten, a present joy be given,
a future grace be promised, a glorious crown in heaven.
3. Today our Father calls us; his Holy Spirit waits;
his blessed angels gather around the heavenly gates.
No question will be asked us how often we have come;
although we oft have wandered, it is our Father's home.
4. O all-embracing Mercy, O ever-open Door,
what should we do without you when heart and eye run o'er?

When all things seem against us, to drive us to despair,
we know one gate is open, one ear will hear our prayer.

[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music. It may be downloaded and duplicated for local use.]