

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Savior and Lord,  
Jesus Christ, amen.

This has been a hard week for lots of people. PJ's unit at the hospital was converted to a Covid patient floor. She doesn't actually go into rooms with Covid patients, but they are on her floor. She told me yesterday that they have now opened yet another Covid unit. They're up to 4 Covid floors now. The sad part is that we need so many Covid units after all these months of fighting this disease. Then, early in the week I found out my niece Shelly's husband, in Illinois, was diagnosed with Covid. On Friday my son-in-law, Jake was tested for Covid because he started developing the symptoms. We're still waiting for his results. Lutheran Churches in Clark and Greene Counties have stopped all in person activities. This week I thought long and hard and prayed long and hard about how we're worshipping and the risks we take in coming to worship. As I prayed and pondered, I imagined how Elijah might have felt as he prayed, not once, not twice, but three times for the life of the widow's son. Elijah covered the him with his prayers, but he also physically covered him with his own body. Maybe that was to warm the dead corpse of the widow's son or to simply try to give the dead boy some of his own life's energy, I can't say... The point I got from the story of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath, is that even during the darkest of times God sustains you and keeps the witness to his power and glory alive. In the end the

Widow confesses her faith in the Word of the Lord. The life and times of the widow aren't much different from the times we're going through today.

So, with the Covid up-tick, All Saints Day being one of the oldest high church Sundays, and the added time consideration of our annual meeting bearing down I debated with myself about keeping or cutting various parts of our All Saints Day Worship service. As I did, those beautiful words of the Kyrie kept coming back into my mind. I did a little research on Google and discovered it's one of the oldest parts of the Christian Worship Service. We know this because the earliest copies of the prayer are in the Greek language. Sometime between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries the Roman Catholic Church translated everything into Latin, so we know, if it was being used in worship in Greek, it must have been prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century. The Kyrie is a prayer the earliest followers of Jesus uttered because it spoke to the greatest need of their heart, for the peace of God which passes all human understanding to come to them. This was also a time of despair as the followers of Jesus faced a literal death sentence, just for claiming Jesus is Lord. Today we're living through a dark time called a Pandemic. We've already lost over 220,000 of our fellow citizens. So, I ask you, the Body of Christ on earth today, do we still need to pray for that kind of peace in our lives, in our culture, and for our Church and our country? Does our world still cry out desperately for the peace which comes down from heaven?

I opened this homily with my complaints about this pandemic, but the week didn't get any better. I watched the news in horror as a person in a pick-up truck ran over a protestor in the street of one of our biggest cities. That same day I heard news of terrorist beheadings inside a church in France. The answer God seemed to be pushing me toward all week was that now is the time to pray for peace and yes, our world still needs God's peace more and more every day. At that point I knew the power of praying these words, as the body of Christ here on earth, far outweighed the risk of spreading Covid-19 and the risk of wasting precious worship time it would take to pray them.

Our world does still need that peace, but it also needs the witness of all the saints. I tell you all this, so you know how seriously I take our precious worship time. When I'm at home or out and about, I feel I can talk to Jesus about anything and He always listens, but there must be more to following Jesus than me and my personal time with Him. The truth the earliest Christians discovered was the unity of faith and purpose God created as they gathered together in Worship. That's when they received the peace from above. That's how God sustained them during their darkest times. That same Holy Spirit still encourages and sustains us as we witness our faith to the world. When we join our voices together, we speak a witness loud and clear to Satan and to his powers at work in this world, that we are still trusting in God to come here and be with us and to sustain us. God sustained

Elijah, the widow and her son through the drought, God gave the early Church His peace and sustained it through the great persecutions, and God continues to sustain us through this pandemic. I can't promise when we pray the Kyrie or any prayer together, God will raise the 220,000 dead from Corona, but I can promise God's peace will come and God's people will be blessed. I know one thing for certain, the chaos in the streets and the chaos in our hearts can only be tamed by the peace from our God above and God's people need to be praying for that peace.

A seemingly endless line of Saints has gone before us and these ancient words of our Liturgical Worship Service have been handed down to us as our Christian Heritage. We should always be asking ourselves, "How is this prayer or praise or song relevant to our world today?" If it's not, we have the opportunity, no, the responsibility, as the Body of Christ on earth ensure our Worship services are relevant and that we're making a difference in the world today. On the other hand, if a prayer, like the Kyrie asks for the one thing our world and our individual lives need the most, then perhaps we should consider making it a more prominent part of the time we spend as Christ's Body on earth.

This week, I ask you to re-read the prayer we call the Kyrie and join your voice to the Billions of Christians who have cried out to God, "Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! ... Amen.