

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 7/31/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 1 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, continue to pray for children around the world and for their quality of life. Ask GOD to provide healthy resources and caring mentors to help them as they grow. Pray that they might have the opportunities that will allow them to develop into loving individuals who seek to make GOD'S world more and more what GOD wants it to be.*

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During the different seasons of the church year, we make minor changes to some of the portions of the Order of Worship. One of the places that changes are made is in the call and response at the end of each of the petitions during the Prayer of the Church. Currently, at the end of each intercession, the leader says, "Hear us, O LORD." Then we respond with the words, "YOUR mercy is great." When using this response to the prayers, I often find myself thinking about where do I put the emphasis? What part of the response do I want to stress? There are three key words in this response, and each is significant in its own way.

"YOUR" – This word acknowledges that we are speaking to GOD. Emphasizing this word suggests putting GOD first in our lives. It recognizes our need for GOD, especially in reference to each prayer petition just made. And stress on this word seems to say that GOD is the most important part of our lives, so we say this word with meaning. "GOD, YOU are the one who can heal and accomplish that for which we pray. We know that YOU work through us and that we should be active in working for the results for which we are praying, but it is YOU, LORD, to whom we turn and whose intervention we most of all seek."

"Mercy" – Mercy and grace are front and center among the blessings we have received from GOD. For many, GOD'S mercy is what has brought them to the LORD and what sustains them in life. Mercy is what we received from JESUS on the cross, and mercy is what frees us serve in the world today without having to try to earn a place with GOD. Putting the emphasis on this word recognizes that there are so many things in life that need GOD'S unconditional love and care to help things improve. Mercy is tremendously meaningful as we ask for GOD to be involved in the areas for which we pray.

"Great" – There is no limitation on what GOD can and will do. Sometimes the things that bring us before the LORD in prayer are so immense that it seems like there is no hope to bring about the needed change. This word helps us to remember that even the greatest barrier can be overcome by GOD. Stressing this word allows us to claim the unlimited and unending possibilities to what GOD can do. Philippians 4:13 says, "*I can do all things through GOD who gives me strength.*" This verse is not about the potential for us to successfully do whatever we want. Rather it recognizes that when we seek to do GOD'S will, GOD'S strength will empower us and help us to do what GOD needs us to do. GOD'S mercy is offered to the world, in part through us, but it is not done for our recognition or acclaim. It is for GOD who is indeed great—great enough to help us do what is needed. More than that, GOD is active in the world also working to carry out GOD'S will. That's a powerful combination—GOD and all who seek to do GOD'S will. So, stressing this word names the unlimited potential there is with and through GOD, who indeed is great.

When giving this response to each prayer, I sometimes will focus on one of the words throughout the whole of the Prayer of the Church. At other times I shift my stress to one or another of the words based on what is being asked in the petition. Each word says so much about our faith in GOD and what we believe GOD can, will, and is doing in our world. How we speak this response can be a wonderful blessing for growing our faith as reflect on who GOD is and what GOD promises.

In CHIRST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey