



**A Sermon for the 11th Sunday After Pentecost
August 13, 2023**

New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH



**Guest Lay Preacher
Pete Iole**

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Preamble: Come Holy Spirit come, come as the wind that blows, come as the fire that burns, come to guide the meditations of my mind, the feelings of my heart and the words from my lips as I attempt to understand God's holy word and deliver that message for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today our Genesis story arrives at Joseph, still living in his father's house in the land of Canaan and sporting a rather spiffy wardrobe. Joseph is handsome, intelligent, dutiful and, as the last born, came late in Jacob's life. All qualities that made him his father's favorite but alienated him from his many brothers. Joseph's story will be full of action and adventure, tragedy and triumph, a true epic in every sense, but that story begins with a seemingly simple commission to check on his brothers who are herding the flock away from home pasture. When given this task, Joseph responds "Here I am". Not only indicating his willingness to obey his father but also accepting any associated risk because he had the faith necessary to believe everything would be well.

Having faith is the central theme of our second reading, today's Gospel and even the Psalm. In particular, these passages expand on faith by asserting the importance of actually calling on God, by name, to intercede on our behalf. You can call on God when you are sick or lonely or fearful. Call on him when you struggle with the challenges and frustrations of daily life or face major life changing events. Just knowing that you will be heard provides a peace of mind and peace of heart that will give you the strength to cross that obstacle, accept the condition or remove the anxiety that is troubling you.

Peter finds himself in a precarious position. He had sufficient faith to get out of the boat and step onto the water however as his faith wavered his fear grew, and he began to sink. Crying out “Lord, save me!” was all that it took to bring aid and restore calm seas. The first verse of today’s Psalm tells us to give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name. In Paul’s letter to the Romans we’re told “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” This message was designed to bolster the faith of the second generation of Christians, those that did not have a first-hand frame of reference with Christ’s sacrifice. With all these references to calling on God by name it’s a wonder that more people don’t pray. One of my favorite Taize songs is “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful”. Within this short repetitive piece of music are the words “Look to God, do not be afraid. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.” To me, this song speaks to the faith necessary to call upon God, to believe that my prayers will be heard and that all will be well, whatever the outcome.

Fortunately, prayer is one of the things we do exceptionally well here at New Life. We pray for each other. We pray for friends, family, those who impact our lives and even those we do not know personally but believe would benefit from intervention. Please, also take the time to pray for yourself. Call upon God to remove your anxiety and settle your fears. You will be heard. We will see as the Joseph story continues that faith in God can produce miraculous changes in our lives. As beneficiaries of Christ’s sacrifice, having the faith of knowing that you will be saved is sufficient to carry us from this life into the next.

Amen.