

# THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 24th, 2022



Lord, listen to Your children praying...!

## CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294  
[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon  
**Bulletin Announcements:** Please send to [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca).  
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
**Parish Assistant:** Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) [parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Business Manager:** Karen McCumber [business.manager@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:business.manager@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Secretary:** Pat Kimpel [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Facebook:** Lisa Gall [www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC](http://www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC)  
**Bulletin by email:** Judy Mason [chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca)

**Prayer:** Grant Lord, that the course of this world may be so governed by Your direction that Your Church may rejoice in serving You in godly peace and quietness through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: Titus 3: 3-7                      Wed.: Gal. 3: 26-29                      Friday: Matt. 3: 13-17  
Tuesday: 1 Pet. 3: 18-22                      Thurs: Mark 16: 14-18                      Saturday: Eph. 3: 14-21

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY MOMENTS:** A fun way to help with memorization is to use ‘**sign language**’.

This week’s focus is on learning to ‘sign’ the Lord’s Prayer. There are 3 separate videos to help you learn it step by step. PART 1: <https://youtu.be/I92GlnwSPOs>  
PART 2: <https://youtu.be/k8vy2IPuQGg>  
PART 3: <https://youtu.be/u2OoDacXTsw>

**Musician:** 10 a.m. – Heaven Help Us Band

**Reader:** 10 a.m. – Lorraine Kaija

<b><u>Last Sunday Attendance: July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022      Attn: 10 a.m. – 82</u></b>					
	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Weekly Need</u></b>	<b><u>Last Sunday</u></b>	<b><u>Year To Date</u></b>	<b><u>+ or – (--)</u></b>
Current:	283,291.00	5,554.73	2,016.40	119,750.16	(38,239.05)
LCC Missions	20,000.00	392.16	342.50	8,632.00	( 2,521.85)
Property Improvement:			146.50	3,977.00	

**FLOWERS** have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Twila Gall in loving memory of her husband, Steve Gall Sr.

**2022 NYG:** GOD IS INDEED SO VERY GOOD TO US!! Thank You to our church family for your prayers as we travelled to Winnipeg! Although we had vehicle problems we ALL arrived safely and were able to stay an extended day until all repairs were done. We are excited to share with you all about our trip to and from as well as the Youth Gathering itself. Stay tuned!!

**SILVER SPIRE UNITED CHURCH Donations for the Homeless:** We have finished collecting for this special mission. Judy Mason would like to thank everyone who donated.

**A PRINTED UPDATE** about Kareem's situation in Greece is available for anyone who wishes on the narthex table. Thank you for your prayers and concern.

**Notice to Church Extension Fund Depositors:** The Church Extension Fund (CEF) is winding down its operations and as of now all depositors with current addresses have received their deposited funds plus the interest owing. However, we have a number of unclaimed savings accounts and savings certificates as we do not have current contact information for these. If you or someone you know thinks they may have a CEF account which has not been redeemed, please contact Darryll Holland at: 800-465-8179 ext4 or [dholland@lceast.ca](mailto:dholland@lceast.ca). Also if you are in possession of God Bank Savings Stamps or Tracky Stamps, these too can be redeemed by returning the books or stamps to: Lutheran East District, 275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3.

## **COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION NOTICE**

Thank you to all who shared their concerns and encouragement while attempting to return to communing at the rail on July 10.

A significant majority of our people communicated interest in receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Pilgrim style we grew accustomed to using since the Pandemic began.

Holy Communion will resume distribution in Pilgrim style [single file, at the base of the chancel steps] and offer the common cup in addition to individual glasses.

The following were the reasons shared for keeping Pilgrim style:

- 1) The time for the overall distribution was lengthy;
- 2) Worshippers visibly experienced a physical struggle going up and down the chancel stairs;
- 3) Worshippers displayed difficulty physically kneeling at the railing and then having difficulty rising back up again;
- 4) The voice levels in the pews with conversations during the distribution was distracting as this is also a time for prayer and reflection before receiving the Sacrament;
- 5) The former Pilgrim style may be preferred.
- 6) A free-flowing method may be more inviting due to its simplicity and post-Covid sensitivity.

Please share any other concerns with either Pastor Todd or Judy Slingerland at any time. As always, the building up of the Body of Christ is our primary concern and motivation as we give Glory to God and serve His people. Thank you.

# CREATIVE LUTHERAN COMMUNION

THE 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 24, 2022 + 10 AM

FIRST HYMN:

“Seek Ye First, The Kingdom”

LSB # 712



Seek Ye first, the King--dom of God, and His right - ous-



ness -- And all these things shall be add-ed un-to you;



Al -- le --- lu— Al - le -- lu --- ia!

Ask and it shall be giv-en unt-to you, seek and ye shall find,  
Knock and the door shall be op-ened unt-to you; Allelu - Alle—lu—ia.

Man does not live by bread—alone, but by ev-ry Word—  
That pro-ceeds from the mouth—of God; Allelu - Alle—lu—ia.

Words: Matthew 6:3 Music: Karen Lafferty © 1972 Maranatha Pub. www. Hymnary.org

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Almighty God, to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid;

**Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the blessed work of Your Holy Spirit,**

That we may perfectly love You,

**And worthily proclaim Your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Let us draw near to the altar of our God, to Him, Who is our joy and delight:

*[Brief prayerful silence]*

**Almighty God, merciful Father: I, a troubled and sorrowful sinner, confess to You all my sins and wrongdoing with which I have offended You and for which I justly deserve Your punishment. But I am sincerely sorry for them, and repent of them, and pray for Your boundless mercy. For the sake of the suffering and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being; forgive my sins, give me Your Holy Spirit for the renewal and changing of my sinful life, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

With mercy and compassion, our God blesses you. By the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, forgive you all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## HYMN OF PRAISE

[Tune: Ode To Joy]



- 1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.  
 2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.  
 3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:  
 Son of God and gra-cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;  
 Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.  
 on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.  
 Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.  
 Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.  
 For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

## GREETING &amp; PRAYER OF THE DAY:

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

We pray: Let Your merciful ears, O Lord God, be open to the prayers of Your humble servants; and help us ask for whatever pleases You, so that You may give us what we most truly need and desire; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## THE SCRIPTURES

### **The Old Testament:** *Genesis 18: 20-32*

Then the Lord said, 'How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know.' So the men turned from there, and went towards Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, 'Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?' And the Lord said, 'If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.' Abraham answered, 'Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?' And he said, 'I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.' Again he spoke to him, 'Suppose forty are found there.' He answered, 'For the sake of forty I will not do it.' Then he said, 'Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there.' He answered, 'I will not do it, if I find thirty there.' He said, 'Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there.' He answered, 'For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.' Then he said, 'Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.' He answered, 'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.'

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **The Epistle:** *Colossians 2: 6-19*

[St. Paul writes:] Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### SPOKEN GOSPEL VERSE:

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Word of Life, Jesus Christ, glory be to You. Our hearts burn as You open up the Scriptures to us. Alleluia!**

**The Holy Gospel:**     *St. Luke 11:1-13*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.' And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. 'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

**THE NICENE CREED:**

**I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life + of the world to come. Amen.**



1. Chil - dren of the heaven - ly Fa - ther safe - ly
2. God his own doth tend and nour - ish; in his
3. Nei - ther life nor death shall ev - er from the
4. Though he giv - eth or he tak - eth, God his



in his bo - som gath - er; nest - ling bird or star in  
 ho - ly courts they flour - ish. From all e - vil things he  
 Lord his chil - dren sev - er; un - to them his grace he  
 chil - dren ne'er for - sak - eth; his the lov - ing pur - pose



heav - en such a re - fuge e'er was giv - en.  
 spares them; in his might - y arms he bears them.  
 show - eth, and their sor - rows all he know - eth.  
 sole - ly to pre - serve them pure and ho - ly.

*The Worshipping Church 84*

WORDS: Carolina Sandell Berg, 1885; tr. Ernst W. Olson, 1925, alt.

MUSIC (TRYGGARE KAN INGEN VARA L.M.): Traditional Swedish melody

[www. Hymnary.org](http://www.Hymnary.org)

## MESSAGE

OFFERINGS *are gathered.*

## PRAYERS

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people as they have needs: For the faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel, that we may never depart from the eternal truth of Christ crucified, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For Christ's Holy Church here and throughout the world, for all who hear the Word of God and are brought to renewal and faith, and for grace that God's people may be sustained in His Word, drawing strength in times of persecution, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this congregation; for the work of God's kingdom that goes forth from this baptismal font, altar and pulpit; and for those who serve us in Christ's name here and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For a faithful and fruitful life of prayer, praying not only for our needs but praying His promises that our hearts may rest in His perfect peace, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the government of our land, for leaders of our nation, for godly lives as citizens, and for those who protect and defend our country both here and abroad, and for good government and secure people everywhere: let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**



For honest labour, for all worthy occupations, and for the culture and enrichment of the arts in service to God, that He may prosper them for our benefit and allow us to share of their fruits, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those in any need, especially that the sick may be healed, the grieving comforted and the dying consoled, [*and especially for \_\_\_\_\_,*] and that God may give them all things good and necessary to them in their time of need, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For a long memory of the mercies God has shown to us and for a short memory of those who have wronged us, that our bitterness may give way to love and peace, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

And finally gracious God, bring us at last through all trials and deliver us into Your Kingdom without end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

## THE SACRAMENT

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts!

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good, right and joyful that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who on this day overcame death and the grave and by His glorious resurrection, opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and all the company of Heaven, we praise Your name and join their un-ending hymn:

## SANCTUS

*[Tune: Holy, Holy, Holy]*



**Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho -- ly, Lord God Al - migh - ty,**



**Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout glo-ries of Your name.**



**Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho -- ly, sing -- ing Ho - san -- na!**



**Bles -- sed is He Who comes in our Lord's name.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

## THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat; This is My + Body which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying "Drink of it all of you, this cup is the New Testament in My + Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

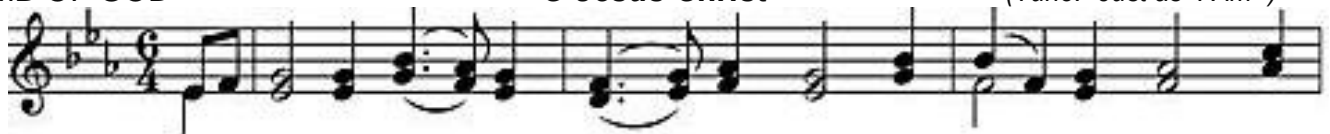
The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

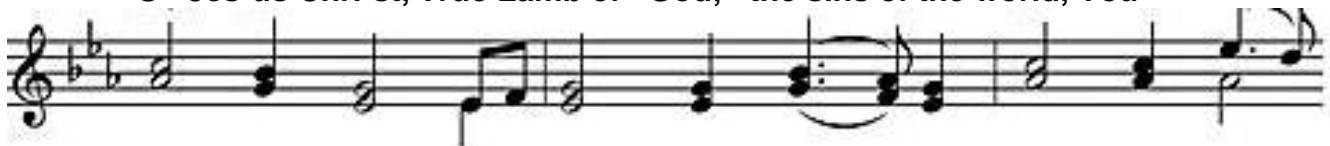
## LAMB OF GOD

### "O Jesus Christ"

(Tune: "Just as I Am")



O Jes-us Chri-st, True Lamb of God; the sins of the world, You



Take a -- way. Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray;



And bless us with Your peace; A -- men.

## COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

### COMMUNION HYMN

### "Let Us Break Bread Together"

1. Let us break bread together on our knees,  
let us break bread together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees with my face  
to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.

2. Let us drink wine together on our knees,  
let us drink wine together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees with my face  
to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.

3. Let us praise God together on our knees,  
let us praise God together on our knees.  
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.

**Words:** African-American spiritual (Acts 2:42) **Music:** Afro-American spiritual; adapt. and arr. by William Farley Smith, 1986 **Tune:** LET US BREAK BREAD, **Meter:** 10 10 with Refrain. Reprinted from [www.hymnsite.com](http://www.hymnsite.com)

POST COMMUNION SONG

“Free Now To Go”

[Tune: “This is the Day”]

Free now to go; free now to go, in Your prom-ised, peace, in Your  
 Prom-ised, peace; my eyes have seen, my eyes have seen, Your  
 Sav-ing grace, Your sav - ing grace! Peo-ple can see from the  
 Light You shine, Is-rael's true glo-ry-- now is mine;  
 Free now to go , free now to go, in Your peace, O Lord.

Words: Russell Schulz-Widmar, alt © 2006 Augsburg -- Music: Les Garrett, © 1967 [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

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POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy God, You bless creation and abide with Your Church in every place and time. In Christ Jesus, Your Son, we gather together as One at His table. Just as Jesus stayed with the disciples in the Breaking of the Bread at their meal, so may He now stay with us in the gifts of Bread and Wine we have received and may His Body and Blood open us to share Him with all we meet, in the abiding love of Jesus Christ we pray, Who with the Holy Spirit You live and reign as One, O Lord God, now and always. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord upon you with favour, + and give you peace. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN:

“What A Friend We Have In Jesus”

SB # 770

1. **What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!  
 What a privilege to carry, ev'rything to God in prayer!  
 Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
 All because we do not carry, ev'rything to God in prayer!**
  
2. **Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
 We should never be discouraged—Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
 Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?  
 Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.**

**3. Are we weak and heavy-laden, Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge— Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.**

*Words: Joseph Scriven, 1855; Tune: Charles Converse, 1868 public domain*  
[What a Friend We Have in Jesus > Lyrics | Joseph M. Scriven \(timelesstruths.org\)](http://timelesstruths.org)

**REV. TODD HOFFS**

**PENTECOST 7 (series C)**

**Scripture: Genesis 18: 20-32 & Luke 11 Lord's Prayer**

**July 24, 2022.**

Sometimes a name says a lot more than is intended. Take Sodom for instance. There are only 10 different places in the world named Sodom. In Niagara Falls we have SODOM ROAD. A little history digging led me to find SODOM ROAD. Got it's name around 1851 when two taverns were built on each end of this road. Alcohol consumption was viewed as highly sinful, during the tea-totalling era, So the name stuck.

Sodom is almost always synonymous with bad news.

Abraham wants to keep Sodom around, and its neighbouring city Gomorrah. He's begging God, negotiating to get them off the hook.

Abraham just got the news from God Himself that Sarah will have a son and he will keep alive the lineage for the promised Saviour!

What good news of hope! And in the next divine breath, God tells Abraham Sodom and Gomorrah are doomed! So He's hoping to have God NOT rain down fire on them. Abraham is negotiating not for his life but for Lot, his family and the lives of all the people who populate Sodom.

We hear that Sodom and Gomorrah are rotten to the core, evil with a capital E, so why shouldn't God destroy them? In the story lines of movie and novels, it makes complete sense. Yet we have Abraham here talking God down, desperately trying to save these towns. Maybe these people ARE nasty. We also know from our own experience that even our enemies have some humanity. Even the worst people we can think of can be kind to their elderly parents and take care of their dogs. People must be trained to destroy human beings by turning them from people into objects for killing. Considering them anything but people worthy of life. Like enemy towns reduced to bomb targets. In actuality, this is precisely the kind of evil, wicked activity Sodom and Gomorrah conducted. They overpowered their people with violent abusive control. Genesis uses 2 Hebrew phrases to describe Sodom's problems: a unique pair of words for the cities' wickedness.

The 1<sup>st</sup> illustrates their offence toward God and his people over and over and over again.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> describes the heaviness of their sinful activity. It weighs them down, infects their community and entire city.

They're pushing themselves away from God. Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel later on describe their actions As what we know as violent rape and prostitution. Sodom lived selfishly. God was no longer their god.

Yet, even in the midst of all of that, Abraham sees something worth saving...It's a lot like when you learn to paint a portrait. You make a few mistakes, You don't throw away the paper or canvas. You scrape away the paint or let it dry and re-touch, re-paint, re-shape what's wrong. [like the good bones of an old house] Abraham is a person of great compassion, care, love, who speaks up, who, in the face of the awesome, destructive power of God, trusts in the promise of mercy and answer to prayer. He is persistent almost to the point of absurdity. And it shows God to be a great and patient listener. Abraham even resembles the heart of the promised Saviour. Jesus our Saviour so loved the world that He risked angering the religious leaders Whom He said were far worse than those in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham's compassion will be fulfilled in Jesus. Abraham's own FAITH & TRUST keeps him going, He knows God is good & merciful. His patience is amazing! God truly desires our own relentless bold praying. It means we're taking Him seriously. That He is actually One Who CAN and WILL help. Abraham begs for Sodom's saving if 50 righteous people are found, Then down to 40 and then all the way down to 10, 5, then 1. Even ONE person who is righteous and Sodom lives. Only Abraham's nephew Lot, his wife and 2 daughters are saved. No one else. God knows this --But He needs Abraham to plead for them, To offer sacrifice on their behalf --Revealing his heart of faith and God's desire to save. We, too, have such faith filled hearts and voices to speak up. How often do we pray like that? Who do we include (or exclude) from prayer and concern? Most of us either don't know about the terrible things going on or don't know what to do and shield ourselves from it, going about our lives with blinders. That's not how the church of our Lord is called to be. We are called to care about our brothers and sisters suffering from all kinds of problems...our hearts may break for those in Ukraine and Russia in seemingly endless conflict. We go about our daily lives much the way we always do because we can't possibly do anything about any of this, can we? But the church on earth, the Body of Christ, is not motionless or voiceless. We have eyes, ears, and what do they tell us? There is a world out there who needs us. Because we have been saved for a purpose. We have much to learn For all are worthy of our help and prayers. We begin to see that the roads of life leading to various Sodom's Will be transformed by our witness and the way we live our lives so that no one will be constantly overpowered on the journey forward. This is our work in the world as Jesus' Body. It means not seeing anyone unlike us as a threat. We don't need to have certain individuals or people groups Or cities Or neighbourhoods Be culturally accepted enemies, or bad people. The only REAL enemy is Satan And he's doomed. Christ has sealed his fate with a bloodied cross. Jesus died to defeat all that stands to harm us. We have absolutely NOTHING to be afraid of. We can walk not only down

Sodom-like roads But all roads paying attention to the people around us, whether we know them or not, sharing the Gospel light of Jesus shining through our actions. Even taking time to listen is a simple yet much needed gift. Praying for such things is a given and a mark of who we are as God's children. Like Jesus' disciples when He teaches them to pray. They wish to speak as confidently to God as Abraham did. Jesus gives us His Prayer to remind us of whose we are. Taking His words into our own lives – making them our words, giving us courage to meet anything that lies ahead. His Prayer remind us of our purpose, our purpose as His Body in the world, to shift our brains away from "me, me, me" and on to "us, them, all." For we are the baptized Body of Jesus. Who laid down the way for us. With prayer He pleaded with the Father that night of His betrayal  
IF IT BE SO Have the cup of suffering pass...Not to spare Himself, but the condemnation of the world. God heard His prayer, freed us all from any condemnation, And by raising Him up from the death, victory is secured!  
All are saved in Jesus. All are forgiven. All have the promise of eternal life through faith in Him. Nothing you do or say or think is so bad that God can't embrace you in Jesus' cross. All are valued by God and redeemable in the costly grace of total and complete forgiveness. No more retribution. In Jesus IT IS FINISHED. ALL OF IT.  
Now God gives lots of time for people to come back to His embrace. We no longer think "oh, Canadian culture is so bad, looking like S & G, that God's gonna strike us all down..."no. not so. We also don't fear caring for perceived enemies or questionable people because of the way it looks to others...as if caring is bad.... Rather we view all as redeemed by Christ; We know every era has problems, yet Jesus comes to us through His grace to restore and make whole; We treasure the power of Christ in us to change lives in big and small ways. So we reach out, listen, help, encourage, pray and disciple. Once I sat in a Starbucks editing one of my sermons, a few years ago. I was wearing a pastor shirt, too. An older fellow sat near me, trying to get my attention. He asked me about the church I was pastoring. "Oh, I hope you're one of the 'good Lutherans'?" I said, "I'm not so sure, I haven't met many 'good Lutherans...' "LOL He giggled, but then turning serious faced responded, "oh, you know what I mean, THOSE Lutherans who welcome/.....INTERUPTED him "all the people JESUS HIMSELF always welcomed...." He was speechless. Not what he expected at all. His face turned red, part embarrassment, part anger. He knew I was right. No believer is in trouble for welcoming people into their embrace. We are all on the front lines of life. We're the ones living off of our daily bread so as to help feed those in need and lead them to the Lord's Table for the Bread of Life. Prayerfully trusting that God will keep His Word like Abraham trusted. Don't worry if this makes you look strange to others. It's Ok to be relentless, asking over and over, trusting that your prayers are heard and answered in God's good time.

You're in good company.  
If it's OK for old Abraham, it's truly OK for you.  
Amen.