



Third Sunday after Pentecost  
29 June 2025

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Rev. Christian W. Marien

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

A daughter complained to her father about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved a new one arose. Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In one he placed carrots, in the second he placed eggs, and the last he placed ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil, without saying a word. The daughter sucked her teeth and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing. In about twenty minutes he and turned off the burners. He fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them a bowl. Then he ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl.

Turning to her he asked. "Darling, what do you see." "Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied. He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. She smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. A little frustrated, the daughter asked. "What does it mean Father?" He explained that each of them had faced the same adversity, boiling water, but each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. But after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water. "Which are you," he asked his daughter. "When God calls your name? How do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean? It's not your ability –it's your availability.

When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? (Here is one place where it may be all about your ability.) But Jesus turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord first let me go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God. Another said, I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home. Jesus said to him, No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. It's not your ability –It's your availability. Let me go and bury my father. Let me first say farewell to those at my home. They are not unreasonable requests and yet Jesus seems to have no time for either of the people who wish to follow if only to take a moment to say goodbye.

I am not sure if the Holy Spirit is working overtime this week or what. My wife is in California. My father-in-law died yesterday. It was unexpected though we had enough time to get my wife on a plane in time to see him one last time. There were stories, laughter, questions about hospice, tears, and long moments waiting and watching for the next breath until his last breath. I am unsure of what to do with Jesus today. I understand his commitment to what will come in Jerusalem. I am grateful for his willingness to walk the road all the way to the cross. But, in light of yesterday, the requests of those who wish to follow are not unreasonable. Should we not honor the dead? Give thanks to God for their life, their example of faithfulness. Jesus – I have a little ability and a lot of availability – but can I just have this one moment to grieve? It is where I am at. The only thing worse than being a pastor to your own family, is being a pastor who cannot be present to be pastor to their own family. My in-laws have a wonderful pastor, he is attentive, faithful, full-of-life. But my in-laws were present on the day of my ordination long before I knew they had an eligible daughter to marry. They have always respected my role as pastor. Long after I took their daughter from California and moved here to "Waukeesha" as my mother-in-law referenced Waukesha for at least the first year we lived here, still my in-laws visited often and



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watched worship online. What I have come to learn, I believe, is that Jesus so completely aware of the joy of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, could not imagine why people would waste their time grieving the death of someone they love when the promise of eternal life and the reunion in heaven would be more than we can possibly imagine. Apparently, it is not my ability to understand – it is my availability to trust the promise I already know to be true.

We are just a full week back from Adventure Camp. The week was full of adventure. It started on Tuesday, when fifteen minutes into our first adventure at the outdoor water park one of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students showed up and said he jumped into the lake and lost his glasses. One might ask, “why one was wearing their glasses in the lake in the first place?” But that is an adult question that no 6<sup>th</sup> grader should be forced to answer. He spent the rest of the day squinting everywhere he went. Up and down water slides and climbing inflatable pyramids. We came home, changed clothes, and headed out for the zipline. Again, at every zipline, he squinted down the cable – as if he could see anything past the 6 feet in front of his face. It might have made the zipline easier since he could not see where he was going anyway. What I appreciated most about this 6<sup>th</sup> grader is that he jumped in with both feet – no fear, no questions, just adventure seeking – mostly blind mind you – but still adventure. I mean, I don’t want him leading the people down the mountain or driving to the pool – but this 6<sup>th</sup> grader was committed. It’s not your ability, to see, in this case– it’s your availability, to trust.

Our friend, Pastor Edwin, celebrated the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his ordination this past week. Talk about a singular focus. Get Married. Learn English. Raise children. Work full-time. Go to seminary. Suffer under Pastor Chris’ training. Hear the call from God to serve the people of Ascension. Find out seminary did not provide half the training you actually need to lead a church in 2025. Keep going anyway. In Pastor Edwin’s case it is both his ability and his availability to serve the One who has called him by name. Pastor Tony and I are grateful for his partnership and his example of faithfulness. The next time you see him, celebrate him. We are a stronger, more committed, more courageous community of faith for his presence among us. In Pastor Edwin’s case, it is both his ability and his availability. Pastor Edwin is definitely the coffee bean in boiling water.

My friends, God invites us all. Our response is up to us. Carrot, egg, or coffee bean? Of course, coffee bean. It is not your ability that God needs, it is your availability that God would celebrate in order to change the world around you, through you – always for the better. When God calls your name? How will you respond? The days, my friends, are short and God’s promises are forever. Thanks be to God! Amen.