

Column

Aren't you glad that God does not have an automated answering service? My answer is yes, and I will tell you why.

Following the morning service this past Sunday, a group went out to lunch. Present at the table of eight or so was a young 95-year-old (I say 'young' because he still has his eyes on the ladies and remains on the chase!). As we were starting to eat, someone came into the restaurant and informed him that he had a flat tire. He thanked the informant and said something about hitting a curb. He also mentioned he had AAA roadside service.

At this point, I got involved and asked if I could call AAA for him and put in a request for assistance. He handed me his membership card, and I dialed the number. Would you believe, instead of a reassuring voice inquiring if anyone was hurt or if the driver was in any imminent danger, a recorded voice came on advising that the wait time for a representative was around 20 minutes. The message was followed by an advertisement for a new phone 'app'.

Just to see what would happen, I left the phone on and put it in my jacket pocket. From time to time, I would check and see if anyone had come on.

After everyone had finished eating, several men at the table, along with a young man in the parking area, changed the tire and our 95-year-old was able to go on his way. Remembering my phone, I checked once again. Not surprisingly no one had come on.

All ended well, but WHAT IF this senior citizen had been stranded on the roadside with temperatures in the high 90s as they were that day? I'm not sure he would have survived.

The silver lining in all this is a reminder . . . a reminder that the God of heaven does not have an answering service with a wait time and advertisements for apps. His word is: "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

In context, this promise was made to captive Judah and pointed forward to the Age of the Messiah. In Jesus, it has come true. Indeed, this promise is operative for you and me. The God we meet in Jesus is not a God afar off but one who is near at hand.

In Matthew 7:7,8 we hear Him say: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

The tragedy is that we – I include myself in this – are often slow in seeking God’s aid and direction. Instead, we try to figure things out on our own, to deal with situations under our own steam, looking upward and calling out for help only as a last resort. The good news is we have something – actually Someone -- better than AAA or any earthly agency.

Don’t misunderstand me. I am not advocating cancelling one’s roadside assistance plan (though this might be a good time to find out what kind of service is actually provided in the case of a real-life need). Rather, I am suggesting that Matthew 7:7,8 be included in our list of emergency contacts.

Things go better with God. No matter the call volume, He remains on the line, only a prayer away: Seek, pray, find. Last and best still, with God there is no yearly fee!

O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, Book of Common Prayer)

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