In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer.

Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" (bāqash) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
Rev. Mark Lampley  
November 17, 2019  

“Thirst for Facial Recognition”  
Psalm 27:7-14 and Acts 1:6-11  

In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; 
be merciful to me and answer me. 
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' 
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God's presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O L ORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer.

Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).*

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
Rev. Mark Lampley  
November 17, 2019  

“Thirst for Facial Recognition”  
Psalm 27:7-14 and Acts 1:6-11

In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O L ORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence.
But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful. Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy "Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborn’s face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” ([Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study](#), page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7–8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" (bāqash) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborn’s face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
“Thirst for Facial Recognition”
Psalm 27:7-14 and Acts 1:6-11

In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray:* “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; 
be merciful to me and answer me. 
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' 
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).*

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord.  "Seek" ( bâqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in *A Cry for Mercy* “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s *A Cry for Mercy*).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" (bāqash) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful. Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives?

Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face… in those early days… no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in *A Cry for Mercy* “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s *A Cry for Mercy*).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).*

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

*Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer”* (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God's presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;  
be merciful to me and answer me.  
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'  
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentimnet, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer.

Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits… in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person’s earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved- like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so… “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing payer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)
In our sermon series of thirsting for God, we have learned about at least two people of the NT: the unnamed woman at the well and a man named Zacchaeus in a tree.

There is a part of us much like them, with a deep thirst for God. Though we try to be satisfied by things other than God, they are not lasting things. The woman at the well and the man in the tree are only content and filled when with God. They and we have thirst and, with futility, fill our time and attention with false gods and idols.

Today, we add to these two “thirsting” NT characters, an OT character, a ruler named King David. David had a little of that woman with shame and avoidance of others. David also had a little of that sycamore tree-climber who wanted to turn from his sin.

This morning whether we feel: unnamed, have some misgivings about where we belong, feel like a prominent leader, or repentant before God, we know at our core, we need prayer. Today’s Psalm reading offers guidance in prayer.

Let us pray: “May the words of my mouths and meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:4).

Many, including myself, are challenged in focusing. Our minds wander. We lose our train of thoughts and forget many things. In my case, teacher’s red-ink critiques have regularly come back with comments saying: “disjointed” or “needs focus.” Whether writing in school, in my devotional journals, or endless love letters for my beautiful forever roommate, it’s been evident that my thoughts get off track quickly. Maybe others can relate to such fleeting thoughts. This impairment can manifest itself in prayer life, discerning how much to pledge to SHPC, or small group contemplation and discussion. When we experience this, we need the guidance found in the Bible.

As you know, the Psalms mirror human emotions. They are meant to be used in corporate worship (originally a prayer book in the synagogue.) During a time when the Jews were conquered by invaders then scattered throughout the known world, these prayers truly helped Jews keep their faith and tradition alive. Prayers like Psalm 27 directed them in searching times. Likewise, it can speak to our feeling lost (individually & corporately). It steers us when we focus, and do not focus on God; when we thirst and do not thirst for God.

When we get distracted, let me share a few anecdotes to consider. They involve breaking, seeing, and dying.
David breaks down walls when he pleads for God not to be angry at him/ not to reject him. As seen in this Psalm, and many others, King David’s fickle walk with the Lord reveals times of great focus in faith, and times of selfish ambitious with grave consequences. Part of his biography includes a “heart for God” with hunger and thirst for righteousness, and part includes a thirst for: lust, murder, lies, and many other ungodly traits... in other words, someone you would not want your (grand) daughter to be affiliated with!

Let’s hone in on David’s better days, though. Days, which may parallel ours, when we see deep trust in God- God to be our: salvation, stronghold, and light.

Psalm 27 shares an honest plea for God’s help.

"Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek." (27:7-8)

Notice this great expression of devotion, to "seek the face" of the Lord. "Seek" ( bāqash ) comes from a root that connotes a person's earnest looking for something or someone. Its intention is that its object be found or acquired; (Dt. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; Mal. 3:1) to search for God’s presence, that is, a yearning for personal intimacy with the Almighty.

Let me put this seeking in contemporary terms. Did you realize most of the smart phones, in our pockets and purses right now, have Face ID? These facial recognition sensors consist of 2 parts: the “Romeo” module projecting over 30,000 infrared dots onto user’s face, and a “Juliet” module that reads the patterns. O, to seek God with that intensity!!!

Catholic priest and author, Henri Nouwen, writes about a similar thirsting sentiment, albeit- he admits- sometimes inconsistent, but offers a petition we might find helpful.

Nouwen says in A Cry for Mercy “Listen, O Lord, to my prayers. Listen to my desire to be with you, to dwell in your house, and to let my whole being be filled with your presence. But none of this possible without you. When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Even thoughts about you, good spiritual thoughts, can be little more than distractions when you are not their author. But Lord, let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will break through all the walls I have erected” (Henri Nouwen’s A Cry for Mercy).

Nouwen insightfully, courageously prays for a solution to our problem of not focusing. He prays for God to break him. I wonder what walls need to be broken in our lives? Does there seem to be an impasse with our sibling, spouse, addiction? There may be walls keeping us from: opening up, or letting go of a grudge, or starting over. It’s no wonder, then, we can’t focus on God’s face if we keep walls up between us! I frankly would like to set my eyes on our Precious Lord like that of my wife when she first gazed at our newborns face-to-face... in those early days... no barriers! Just enamored. Utterly giving into the relationship.
In addition to praying God break down our walls when we’re distracted, there’s another thing that can help. That is to gaze at Jesus, the Light in our darkness. Jesus is our helper. He will not reject us or forsake us. Even if our family doesn’t treat us well or live up to our expectations, Jesus is our hope!

In the account of Acts, which I read earlier, the disciples stared into the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven. Their eyes were fixed upon Jesus. Our eyes can be fixed on him even without seeing his body because the indwelling Spirit allows us to. We have been taught his ways and are blessed to know his healing words. We know what He looks like! Many of us have known Him our whole lives!

Out of what he has done, we can seek his face and pray that we (and others) see it more frequently. If we don’t, we can lose sight of being loved—like that poor delusional 16-year-old who shot his school friends outside of L.A. this week. God’s heart has been weeping for that teen’s suffering that led up to that heinous act. God obviously mourns for those innocent victims that he traumatized and murdered. It’s oversimplifying, but he got severely distracted from the right priorities. His eyes had dark scales on them.

Followers of Christ “accept the consequences of sin, seek forgiveness, and look for healing and new opportunities for faithfulness. Disciples choose to serve rather than despair when suffer the consequences of sin.” (Disciple: Becoming Disciples through Bible Study, page 84). Jesus saves us from our waywardness and looking elsewhere for attention or love. With his death on the CROSS [pointing] and resurrection, we can be freed from sin which so easily entangles us.

In Philippians, Paul describes an inspiring flat-out, earnest seeking, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain the resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:10-11)

So, to keep our focus, we’ve learned to pray God break down walls, and learned to gaze at Jesus.

Finally, we invite the Spirit to put to death those things which: weigh us down and need to be taken off of our weary shoulders. In our dying with Christ, we are raised with Christ. In our plea for the Spirit to take off our scales which prevent us from seeing God, we can find that our sovereign God is more than capable. We don’t have to pretend to be in charge as He should be. In submitting ourselves and trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we find God wants nothing more than for us to die to self and live for Christ!

Friends, we can thirst for God because God first thirst for us. Hope in the Lord. Take heart for He is so very merciful when we go off track, neglect him, or take our eyes off of Him.

As we: pray for God to break down walls, gaze Jesus’ ways, and have the Spirit lead us, God will quench our deep thirst for Him. We know because the Bible tells us so... “Abide in me and I will abide in you.”

(Closing prayer of St. Augustine inserted in bulletin)