

P R A Y E R



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

LEARNING to PRAY

Many years ago I was talking to a Christian that I deeply admire and respect. This person, in my eyes, was a giant in the Christian faith. This person seemed to practice all the disciplines, show all the fruits of the Spirit, and was well respected in the church. (Do you know anyone like this?) I was talking to this person about prayer and they gave me some common yet profound advice that has stuck with me. They said, "If you are going to spend eternity with God, you might as well get to know Him now." Is that common sense? Absolutely. But did it describe prayer in a profound way to me that day? Yes, yes it did.

You might have heard prayer described as a conversation with God. While I wholeheartedly agree with that definition, I have found it lacking at times. For us, a conversation is a back and forth exercise. I say something, then the person I am talking with responds (audibly) to what I say. Prayer, very often, seems like a one sided conversation. We are conversing with a God who cannot be seen and whose voice is not like that of a "normal" conversation. This Lenten season, I do not want you to abandon the definition of prayer that is above. For Jesus Himself teaches us to pray to God our Father who is in heaven. Jesus Himself teaches us to ask for things from our Heavenly Father. Prayer is most assuredly a conversation. But that definition is only part of what prayer is. Prayer is also God's greatest agent of change.

What if I told you that prayer was less about God's heart and more about your own? To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will most certainly abandon prayer as a consistent characteristic in our lives. But if we are willing to change, then prayer will be our closest friend. We change through prayer because we are getting to know our Heavenly Father. And as we get to know Him, our desires, our motives, and our yearnings will change. In prayer we will come to ask for God's will to happen. In prayer, God aligns our heart with His. So if you are going to spend eternity with God, you might as well get to know Him now.

This Lenten season, learn to pray... and be ready for change.

-Pastor Adam

Jesus and Prayer Introduction

If we are going to spend Lent looking at prayer, it would make sense that we would start with Jesus and His prayer life. Jesus really only teaches and preaches on prayer once, which a majority of that preaching we will look at in a later section of this devotional. Rather, Jesus takes on more of a hands-on approach to teaching prayer. Or, you could say, Jesus hopes that prayer is more caught than taught. He goes up to desolate places, He gets up early in the morning, He offers prayers at meals, and His prayer laid the groundwork for His Transfiguration. So, as we start this devotion series, we hope that this section of prayer is more caught than taught.

P R A Y E R

Jesus: Don't Do This

AUTHOR: Hannah Sabotin

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: MATTHEW 6:5, 7-8**

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full...And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Prayer is such an amazing gift God has given us. Many of us were never formally taught how to pray. We simply picked up pieces from pastors, family members, and mentors around us and grew in our ability. Prayer was scary for me when I was younger. I didn't want to say the wrong thing or, perhaps even worse, forget to pray for someone close to me. However, as I have gotten older, prayer has become one of the most comforting and important aspects of my faith life.

As I have gone through the peaks and valleys of life, prayer, like a good friend, has always been consistently there. It has been incredibly impactful to have a place where I can be open and honest with God, knowing that He will always care for me. In fact, some of the hardest times in my life have been where I have seen prayer work in the most profound ways.

Prayer is the opportunity to address God with adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (ACTS). Unlike the hypocrites in this passage, prayer was given as a conversation tool between us and God where we keep Him at the center. Prayer is not a way to display your faith for worldly gain like the Pharisees in this passage; it is an opportunity to invite God into your daily life. It is so easy to pray in a way that we think gets God's attention, especially if there is something that is difficult going on in our lives or something that we think we need. Instead we should focus on prayer being a conversation that gives us the ability to be personal and raw with God, with no expectation of reward. By keeping God at the center of prayer we are better able to keep His will at heart and be open to His voice and vision for our lives.

This may not always be easy to do and we may not always know what to say, however as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing”. In every instance, invite God into your life through the ups and downs, through the hardest times and the best times keep God at the center. He ultimately knows what's best for you and knows what is in your heart.

Hi God, Thank you for the gift of prayer and for the opportunity to have a conversation with you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Jesus: Do This

AUTHOR: Becky Luenebrink

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: MATTHEW 6:6**

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Have you ever heard of the Common Table Prayer? It goes like this: “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest; and let Thy (these, if you’re from the south) gifts to us be blessed. Amen.” This prayer is usually said before most meals, especially if it is a gathering of Lutherans. Maybe you have it memorized and use it as a tradition. But do you pay attention to the words or are you on autopilot? Do you recognize the meaning behind these words that you pray?

In Matthew 6:6, Jesus is instructing us to pray with meaning and not for show. The focus should be on God and not how eloquently we can speak. If prayer is intended to impress others, then it removes God from the prayer and puts us in the spotlight. Rather, He tells us to go into a room and close the door. He does not want us to be distracted. He wants our undivided attention. We have His undivided attention at all times. He just wants to hear from us.

Our most heartfelt, intentional prayers are often times when we are alone. Maybe for you, you are on your knees, pouring out your heart to God? Maybe you are more of a sitting in the car pray-er? Maybe in a medical facility? In bed at night? How are those times of prayer different than when you are in church or at a Bible study? How about with a group of friends or before a meal? Do we become more guarded or self-conscious in front of others? Maybe we are putting ourselves in the spotlight again.

A conversation with God can be intentional and simple, like a child speaking with their parents. If a child tells a parent they need to talk to them, the parent will stop whatever they are doing so they can listen. Parents crave to hear their child's concerns, fears, joys and praises. God our Father craves for us to share the same with Him. The reward of prayer may not always be getting exactly what we want. God is not a vending machine for requests. Rather, the reward is being aligned to His will. The reward is growing closer to Him and building our trust in Him. The reward is open access to our Creator and King. The reward is divine companionship. So come, Lord Jesus, and be our guest. Let Your gifts to us be blessed. Amen.

Heavenly Father, You are the Giver of all good gifts. Burn in my heart a passion to know prayer as one of those good gifts. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus: Alone

AUTHOR: Kiersten Collins

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: LUKE 5:16**

“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

We can learn many things through Jesus’ actions; Jesus often took time for Himself to pray. Just like us, He was a busy man, there was a lot going on in His life, and He had to struggle to prioritize things. At the time of this verse, Jesus had just healed a man with leprosy, so there was a new buzz floating around about His healing. Many large crowds came to Him to be healed from their sicknesses, but what did Jesus do? He went off by Himself and prayed. Even though there might have been things that may have seemed more important, perhaps even like healing the sick, He prioritized time with His Heavenly Father.

Like Jesus, many people find themselves in situations where they are juggling many different plates, hoping that one won’t drop and shatter. God always has time for us and wants to hear from us. Being alone to pray is something that we can do to focus on our conversation with God, and not on our worries. A couple times I’ve heard about people trying to out-give God, and they always find that they get more back. I’ve found that it is the same with time. I’ve been trying to make a set time out of my day to do a devotion and talk to God. I’ve noticed that the days when I put God at the top of my list, as my highest priority, there always seems to be a little extra time to do all the other things. I’m not going to lie, sometimes it’s hard to just tell myself that I’ll do it later, but every time I go to God’s Word, He doesn’t disappoint.

It’s difficult to stay focused with what seems like a million other things going on around us, but being alone, just you and God, makes it feel like everything else is disappearing. Psalm 68:19 says, “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.” Don’t think about your time alone to pray to God as another thing to add to your to-do list. Think of your to-do list as an opportunity to pray. Do you have coffee with someone that day? Pray about it. Do you have chores you need to accomplish? Pray about it. It can even be when you hear bad news at work or school, or when you just need a break from the stress of everyday life. Prayers can definitely be praises too. When you hear something that you know is a gift from God, in prayer, thank Him for it. We can learn a lot from Jesus’ example to be alone when we pray, and truly give our time to God.

Dear God, please remind us to talk to You all the time, and let it be something to rejoice about. Thank You for giving us the opportunity to talk to You through prayer and teaching us the best ways to do it. Thank you for sending Your Son Jesus to walk this earth and set a path for us to pray. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Jesus: Calling His Disciples

AUTHOR: Parker Ballard

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: LUKE 6:12-13**

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.”

When do you usually pray? When you're struggling? When you have a big decision coming up? I find praying during times like these to be the one of the best opportunities to talk with my God. My late teens were a very difficult time in my life. I had so many decisions to make. I was figuring out what career I wanted to pursue, whether or not I wanted to go to college, and most importantly what kind of man I wanted to be. How could I possibly make so many important decisions on my own? As I would later come to find out, I couldn't.

In this passage Jesus also had a huge decision to make, as He was about to choose His disciples, who would be responsible for spreading His Word and His works to the rest of the world after His death. With Jesus being the Son of God, one might think this would be a relatively easy decision for Him to make. Yet He still spent the night before this decision praying to God. One question that keeps popping up in my head when I read this passage is why would Jesus need to ask God for guidance when He is God Himself? It is a question I don't think I will ever be able to fully understand the answer to, for the inner workings of the Trinity will always ultimately remain a mystery, but there are a couple of explanations that make sense to me. Even though Jesus is 100% God, He is also 100% human and still had to seek out the Father for guidance. I also think He did this to give an example to all who would later come to learn about Him, like you and I. He understood that if people saw/read about Him praying to God during times like these, they would know the importance of prayer. They would see this and say “even Jesus, the Son of Man, the Savior of us all, the Immanuel, the very image of God, prays and seeks out God for guidance!” If Jesus relied on God for guidance, then shouldn't we? Because what are we without God? Where would we be without His guidance?

During my late teen years I didn't do a whole lot of praying. My pride and selfishness had caused me to stray away from God's path, and the more I tried to do things my own way, the more lost and uncertain I became. Eventually I had become so overwhelmed that the only thing I could think to do was pray to God for guidance and forgiveness. The more I continued to seek out God, the more peace He brought me. I want whoever may be reading this to know that God can and will do the same for you. All He wants is for you to believe in Jesus, and let Him do the rest. If you have anything troubling you, whether that is a big decision coming up, or a hardship you are going through, take it to the Lord in prayer, just like Jesus did.

Heavenly Father, give me guidance in my big decisions and give me wisdom in daily decisions. And let all of my decisions, guided by Your Spirit, bring glory to Your name. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus: Transfiguration

AUTHOR: Tony Luenebrink

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: LUKE 9:28**

“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.”

During His ministry, Jesus regularly took Peter, John, and James along for specific experiences. Maybe He brought them along because they needed a little extra help or maybe He was preparing them for the leadership roles that they would hold in the early church. Regardless of why they were invited, they were able to experience some pretty remarkable events.

For example, in Mark 5 Jesus took these three men with the other disciples to the region of the Gerasenes. There they met a man that was possessed by many demons. Jesus ordered the demons to leave the man and they asked to enter a herd of pigs nearby instead. Two thousand pigs ran away and off a cliff into the sea. What a remarkable experience for them to witness. Jesus has authority even over His worst enemies!

Peter, John, and James also experienced Jesus' Transfiguration. Not only did they hear the voice of God with the command “Listen to Him”, they also witnessed the change of Jesus' face, and His clothes becoming as bright as a flash of lightning. Truly remarkable! But did you catch the detail prior to all of this? Jesus' Transfiguration started with something pretty simple: a prayer. Jesus took Peter, John, and James to the top of the mountain to pray. Jesus' “transformation” started with prayer.

We too can change and be transformed with prayer, though certainly not the way Jesus was. Change is one of the primary goals of prayer. There have been times in my life that I have prayed and asked God for help. And you know what? He has always kept His promise of being with me. Now God's answer may not be my will but it always turns out according to His will. It is amazing to see God's little provisions in my life. These little provisions help me grow in my prayer life. And if I stray from my prayer life, He is still with me and will forgive me.

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Transfiguration of Your Son and thank You for transforming our hearts in prayer. Keep Your promise to be with us always. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Jesus: Feeding 5,000

AUTHOR: Allison Smith

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: MATTHEW 14:19**

“And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.”

During this account Jesus was trying to find a place to be alone. Even so, the crowd of 5,000 found Him and followed Him. Jesus was “moved with compassion” and took time to heal every sick person. As it was nearing nightfall, the disciples approached Jesus, suggesting He send the crowd to town to get a meal. This background leads us to our verse where Jesus took what little food He had and multiplied it. The Scriptures note that it was 5,000 men not including women and children. Can you imagine the magnitude? After everyone was done eating, the disciples collected twelve baskets filled with everyone’s favorite: leftovers.

When I read this passage, I am reminded of times when I have been in difficult situations, and it has been hard to have gratitude. When I was 23 years old, I became very sick. Up until this point, I took my health for granted. I went from having the physical ability of a 23-year-old who was doing P90X and walking one to three miles a day to having the physical ability of what I would imagine someone that is 100 years old feels.

It took me ten minutes to climb a flight of stairs, and by the end of it, I had tears running down my face. My joints were swollen and pain pulsed throughout my body. I could no longer open a two-liter bottle and I was pregnant with my daughter at the time. Worst of all, I had a toddler that I could no longer get on the floor and play with. My world was crashing around me. I went to countless doctors trying to get answers but was met with little help and diagnosed as “you’re just depressed.” Perhaps I was depressed, but more than that, I was hopeless; there was no visible light at the end of the tunnel.

After countless nights of pleading with God, I received a phone call from a doctor that I had been on a waitlist to see. She saw me the next day and that same day called me with the results of my blood work. I was diagnosed with Lupus and Rheumatoid Arthritis. Since this day, my faith grew stronger, and over the years I have been able to regain a large amount of my mobility and physical abilities.

Like the crowd that day sitting on the grass, I had no idea what God had in store for me. While I was looking for a way out, God was showing me the way through. I never thought I would be able to work or even play on the floor with my children, perhaps just like the disciples never thought Jesus would be feeding 5,000+ people that day. But here I am, a single mom of two beautiful children with a job that comfortably supports us. I never would have imagined it. But that is the beautiful thing about Jesus, He has a way of taking five loaves of bread and two fish and giving you exactly what you need.

Heavenly Father, remind us that even in our times of trouble, You are our Provider. Thank You for all Your blessings, but especially for our salvation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Jesus: Lazarus

AUTHOR: Kloe Thompson

**JESUS and PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: JOHN 11:41-42**

“So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

God heard your giggles and squeals as a child and He will hear your final sigh of relief at the end of your life. He has heard your mumblings and babbling and whispering and jabbering. He has heard every inhale and exhale you've ever taken. He's heard all the words you've ever sang (whether on or off-key), your shouts of praise, and your yelps of acclamation. So do you not think that God will hear you now when you call for Him?

Do you not think the God who listens to the birds sing their song of old every morning will not listen to His beloved creation whom He made in His very image when they cry out for Him? Do you not think the God who hears every tree's groan, every cricket's chirp, every bee's hum will not hear the prayers of the one who calls Him Father?

Because this is true, now let others hear you too. Let them hear the kind word and the gentle “amen” at the end of your prayers. Let others do more than just see that you are a child of God, let them hear and feel and know. You can greet them with a cheery “Good morning!” even though you know chaos is ahead. When they ask why you are so happy on a day like today, you can reply with a great big smile, “Because my God has robbed the grave! Oh how I am blessed!” Let them hear you speak life to every stranger and every neighbor. Let not a soul be able to claim you to be a gossip or a liar because all you do is speak of the goodness and love of the Lord.

Have the same confidence that Jesus did when He called Lazarus from the grave so you can exclaim the same as Jesus did, “Father, I knew that you always hear me!” God will hear the call of His servants. He may not always give back the reply that we wanted but seldom do we even know what that is.

Dear God, Thank You for giving us the tongue and mouth to call Your name. Thank You for giving us the ability to be able to praise You and cry out to You whenever we need You. We know You will listen to us. You hear all our weeping, groaning, and the trivial mortal problems we bring to You daily as well as our songs, praises, and thanksgivings. Most importantly let us be able to hear our Savior lovingly say at the end of our lives, “Well done, good and faithful servant”. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer Introduction

Perhaps the most well-known prayer in all of Scripture is when Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. In this prayer Jesus brings us to the heart of the Christian faith. In this prayer Jesus teaches us our relationship to God the Creator. Jesus teaches us to call His Father "Our Father". So in some ways, this prayer could be renamed, "The Disciples' Prayer" because we are the ones who have received the privilege and honor of addressing the Father of Jesus, the Son, as our own Father. For only Jesus' disciples have come to believe that the reign of God, for which this prayer teaches them to pray, has manifested itself in history through Jesus and through Jesus alone. So we will take the next several days to pray through the Lord's Prayer together, breaking it apart petition by petition to see what is at the heart of calling God the Creator, our Father. In these devotions meditate not just on the rote memorized words, but the heart of prayer behind them.

P R A Y E R

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

AUTHOR: Darin Wettschurack

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: LUKE 15:20**

“So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”

What a feeling of joy the young son must have experienced when he was so eagerly and quickly shown love by his father. After the son realized he could not make it on his own, he humbled himself, “got up and went to his father.” The rest of the action was all from the father.

Each one of us desires to be blessed by our earthly fathers. We want their approval and we want them to be proud of us and love us for who we are. We sometimes receive these blessings from our earthly fathers, but many times they fail us. There are times when we reject our earthly fathers' love and blessing and other instances when our earthly fathers are not even present.

But in Ephesians 1:3-4 we read, “Praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms, with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world.” This tells us that before creation, Jesus' Father, who the Lord's Prayer teaches us to call “our Father” wants to bless us with every spiritual blessing. Our Father wants to bless us with love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and so much more. So what keeps us from receiving these blessings? At times it may be guilt or shame that keeps us from running to the Father. But for me it is usually my self centeredness and apathy that keeps me from running toward God. I get so content with the “pig pen” of my life that I ignore the blessings that I could be receiving from my Father and Creator. But don't miss the crux of this message, who does the running? The Father! The Father is the one running to greet you!

Our Father would love nothing more than to throw His arms around us and welcome us back home to receive all the spiritual blessings – more than we can ever imagine. Our earthly fathers will fail us. But our heavenly Father is always right there to restore and bless us. Even when we seem a long way off from our heavenly Father, He sees us and will be there to meet us. Whether we need restoration, forgiveness, or simply need to be filled because our tank of life has emptied us, we have a heavenly Father that chose us before He laid the foundation of the world. So join me, and sit at the best seat at the table, at our Father's feet in prayer.

1 John 3:1 says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called Children of God. And that is what we are!”

Our Father Who art in heaven we humbly come before You in prayer to receive Your blessings. Thank You for receiving us with open arms even when we don't deserve it. Forgive us for being self-centered and trying to do life on our own. Thank You for being our life and salvation. In You there is Joy! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

AUTHOR: Bob Middendorf

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: ISAIAH 42:8**

"I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."

When I was a kid growing up at St. Peter's, we learned the Lord's Prayer. It starts out with "Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." OK, we all know God is in heaven, that's easy, but what about "Hallowed be Thy name"? I thought I knew what hallowed means. But when I googled "Hallowed be Thy name", guess what it told me? It told me that *Hallowed be thy Name* is also the name of a song by Iron Maiden describing a man's march to the gallows.

Hallowed be Thy name means to ask God to make His name holy and to be worshiped above all else in our lives and in the lives of all people. What do you hallow, worship, or glorify more than God in your life? Is it your family, a new house, new boat, new car, your position at work, sports, money, vacations? What do you make holy in your life more than God?

We all have things we are passionate about, and that's OK, but first and foremost, the love, worship, and holiness of God's name should be on our hearts, souls, and minds at all times. God's name is misused all the time: for cursing and swearing, casual "oh my god" oaths, "God strike me down if I am not telling the truth", etc. We hear God's name misused all the time and we are all guilty of it one way or the other. What we say says a lot.

Remember the Iron Maiden song? That song describing a man's march to the gallows. Well, that's not a bad description of our lives if God's hallowed name was not upon us. If it wasn't for God's name being branded upon us in the waters of Baptism, we would certainly be marching toward the gallows of eternal death. But thanks be to God that He has chosen us to bear His hallowed name in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son.

So how can we hallow God's name in our lives? Believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and living a life that honors God. Put your hope and trust in God, and obey His commandments. Share the love of Christ, by blessing the people God brings into your lives every day, by giving them the love, honor and respect that Jesus gives to us every day. Tell them the story of when God planted His hallowed name in your life.

Holy and powerful Lord, Your name is holy. Forgive us for when we have not honored Your name properly but have used it in vain. Help us to call upon You in love and respect. Help us share Your name to all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thy Kingdom Come

AUTHOR: Brian Voyles

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 18:36**

“But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

If you're anything like me you've prayed “Thy kingdom come...” within the Lord's Prayer without fully understanding the request that you're making: prayerfully longing for Christ's Second Coming. But to me, Christ's return can, at times, seem distant, somewhere in the future and disconnected from the here and now.

As Christians, what are we to be doing in the meantime? There are times in the Bible that God tells us to “be still” and wait, but more often than not Scripture calls for a more active approach. It's not simply praying for God's will to be done, but actively working towards it in your daily life. Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, He taught about the kingdom of God and then demonstrated God's kingdom in action.

So as we pray “Thy kingdom come...” we are not only yearning for God's kingdom to be fully realized on earth as it is in heaven, but we are also making a prayerful plea for His kingdom to be manifested within us and for others today. In His kingdom, we are to seek opportunities to spread its rule and reign in our families, workplace, and relationships, by showing everyone who God is through His Word. Taking on the character of Christ, we can show those far from God His righteousness, love, and peace through the Holy Spirit.

Where do we begin? Start right where you are, and with whatever God's given you. Whether you're a professional church worker, electrician, teacher, or retail clerk, we all have an important role in furthering His kingdom. Remain faithful and leave the results to God. In all our work and prayer today, the desire for God's kingdom should be in our hearts and on our lips as we pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Don't see it only as something in the distant future. View it in the here and now and let it shape the way we live our lives because our Father has been pleased to give it to us.

Heavenly Father, we ask for Your kingdom to come, both here and now and fully at Your second coming. We are looking forward to being with You forever in heaven. Help us to use every opportunity to share Your Kingdom with those around us. Keep us faithful to You and always living in expectation of the kingdom to come. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thy Will Be Done

AUTHOR: Maddisyn Jenkins



The LORD'S PRAYER

VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 6:40

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

We are starting with a pop quiz! Are you ready?

Have I ever worried about the future?

Does the unknown scare me?

Is my faith/forgiveness dependent on my actions?

Will God really be with me...FOREVER?

Check, check, I hope not, and will He?

For some, faith may seem like a pop quiz: confusing, unsure of the correct answers, and leaving us more anxiety ridden than when we started. More often than not, we go through our daily lives worrying that we don't have all the answers to life. However, here is a wonderful truth: we don't have to know all of the answers because God IS the answer.

Our redemption may feel like it depends on if we pass the test or not. But good news for us, Christ took the pop quiz for us, and His perfect score is ours! A key component in the Lord's Prayer states, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". The Lord is a forgiving and merciful Father (Yay for us). While our actions may fail the test, God doesn't. His will is not contingent on our faith-based accomplishments. We are promised His protection from Satan, on this earth AND heaven.

But what exactly is "His will"? We pray in the Lord's prayer "Thy will" be done. What does it even mean? And how can we even pretend to know, let alone discern God's will? Just like the Lord's love: it is simple, but also expansive. But ultimately, God's will is for us to believe in His Son as our Savior. Where do we learn this? In the best study guide, Scripture! Our Verse of the Day, John 6:40 says, "For my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." No matter the subject, period, or class type - our Father's will is everlasting.

Congratulations, no detention (temporal or eternal)! Because of your Father's will, you are free! Satan cannot grasp us on earth, nor heaven. So no need to show up to class shaky, sweaty, and worried that you will fail because Christ has taken the test for you. He is the only answer, and He will raise you on the Last Day!

Mighty Lord, thank You for Your goodness and compassion. Thank You for the hope of eternal life with You because of Jesus. May Your will be done in our lives and in our actions. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

AUTHOR: Lizzie Redding

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: MATTHEW 6:25-26**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

All of us, even on our best of days, are filled with false beliefs, shame, and vice. How we crave to be free of all blemishes and physical imperfections; or succumb to self-righteousness without even a second thought. We spend hours a week standing in front of the mirror asking ourselves: “if only I didn’t have stretch marks”, “if only I had straight teeth”, “if only I was skinnier”, “if only my skin was clear”, “if only *insert your blemish here*”. But at the same time we find ourselves filled with impatience for others, believing that we know better than those around us, engaging in gossip, judging others for their mess-ups, sins, or simply losing their way. “Oh my gosh we are seriously going 25 mph in a 30 mph zone? You’ve got to be kidding me. Learn to drive!”; “Well I heard she only got the promotion because she’s friends with the boss. She’s not even nearly as qualified as I am. She’s so annoying.”; “Did you know that he used to be an alcoholic? I could not imagine ever living that way.” It is so easy to not only be hypercritical of ourselves, but also others. We are a fallen people.

As humans, we must realize these thoughts and actions are Satan whispering into our ear and pulling us further and further away from our Father. However, regardless of our countless faults and sinful nature, God graciously provides us with mercy, grace, forgiveness, and yes, even our daily bread. That’s what we pray for in the Lord’s Prayer when we ask God for our daily bread.

We are praying for God to rid us of our false beliefs, shame, vice and sin, for we certainly don’t need those things. In this petition we exchange them for everything we need to support this body and life such as: food, drink, clothing, house, home, self-control, and the like. God is our heavenly Father that graciously cares for our every need, even when we fail to care for the most basic needs of our neighbor.

So today, follow the command of our Lord to pray. For in prayer He gifts us with a life much more bountiful than the worries and desires encountered in this earthly world.

Our Father, forgive us for not valuing ourselves and others as Your beloved children. Help us to resist the temptation of Satan. Thank You for Your abundant provision for our every need. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

And Forgive Us Our Trespases

AUTHOR: Lexi Denny

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: PROVERBS 28:13**

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

Whether you have been involved in a Bible study, a small group, or the congregation of a church, there has been a time when you have heard the message that God forgives all your sins, and one step further...you were also taught to forgive others. (And if you've never been told this, today is your lucky day!)

For most people forgiving others is a great challenge in life. Why would I forgive a person who did something to me that I couldn't imagine doing to them? Why would I need to humble myself to forgive someone who in the moment of hate and anger is not humble themselves? Am I not better than them?

The act of forgiveness is one of the biggest struggles a person will ever encounter because it takes thought, prayer, and self-reflection, not to mention, putting our own ego aside. This is usually the peril of us all! Forgiveness should be an important pillar in our lives; despite it being unnatural and extremely difficult at times.

No matter how perfect someone may think they are, everyone is a sinner. In 1 John 1:8 it says that when we don't ask for forgiveness, “we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”. Denying that you are sinful is denying what the Gospel says about you. How can one be a dearly and loved forgiven child of God if they didn't need forgiveness to begin with? Asking for forgiveness acknowledges that you are a sinner and the only way to heaven is through the One Who died so you may be forgiven.

In the Lord's Prayer, we not only ask for forgiveness, but we tell Jesus that we give forgiveness. As Christians we are taught to show others the same gifts God has shown us. Ephesians 4:32 puts it this way, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Our Father, thank You for the gift of forgiveness through Jesus. Forgive us for all the times when we have withheld that forgiveness from others. Enable us to share the news of forgiveness through Jesus with all those around us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

And Lead Us Not into Temptation

AUTHOR: Courtney Lienhoop

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: MARK 14:38**

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Are you tired? Feeling tired is a common theme in our household, well...for the grown-ups at least. If you ask the kids in our family if they are tired, you will receive a resounding “no!” each and every time. Fatigue and adulthood just seem to go hand in hand. Whether the exhaustion is from being up at night with an infant, difficulty sleeping due to job stress, or caring for an aging parent, such things can make life physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting.

This isn't news to God. He knows we are tired. His disciples have always been tired. In Mark 14, we see that Jesus finds Peter, James, and John sleeping three separate times when He had instructed them to keep watch and pray. I empathize with the disciples here in the Garden of Gethsemane. How many times have I wanted to end the day in prayer and ended up falling asleep instead? How often has my spirit been willing but my flesh been weak? Although our exhaustion can become an obstacle in having a rich prayer life, we take comfort that God's will is done with or without our prayers, just like the Garden of Gethsemane.

Prayer is also essential to us resisting temptation. God does not tempt us (James 1:13) but He does allow times of testing. Unfortunately, in our world, we live in a constant state of spiritual warfare. Although we may desire to do good, we are naturally inclined towards evil. God desires us to bring our weaknesses and temptations to Him in prayer. When we do this, we become dependent on His provision to guide us away from temptation and consequently, strengthening our faith in Him. We see in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that He will always provide a way for us to endure such trials: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

When it came to prayer, I found myself having this idealistic picture of what I desired my prayer time to look like, however for my current season of life, it wasn't realistic. I soon came to the realization that prayer time can and will look different at various stages of life. I have found that I can have quiet moments with God while in the car, driving to and from school or practices, while listening to Christian music or podcasts, or through a short prayer when I am quickly losing patience with my kids and need help and forgiveness. It is with these imperfect but intentional moments with God, in prayer and worship throughout the day, that can provide us with strength and faithful endurance for not only our spirit but our flesh as well.

Our Father, forgive us for letting our weariness and earthly cares get in the way of our prayer life. Help us to resist the temptation to try to do it all on our own. Help us to see the various times during our day when we can lift up a word of prayer to You as You always listen. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

But Deliver Us From Evil

AUTHOR: Brooklyn Donner

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: DANIEL 3:16-18**

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

What do we do with evil and sin in the world? There have been so many displays of evil throughout our history. Evil can be as big as murder or as small as thinking sinful things about someone. No matter what the sin is, we are still disobeying God even if we don’t realize it. Have you ever wondered why do we still sin and fall short of God even if we should know better? I know I have.

The truth is we will never be perfect and stop sinning and falling into the world's evil schemes. The great thing is that God loves us and doesn’t punish us even when we choose evil. How is that so? Because Jesus took all of the Father’s punishment for us on the cross. God has forgiven us in Jesus. He loves us so deeply that for any sin, big or small, He died for us to cleanse us.

Unfortunately, we can’t just get rid of evil; however we can stand against evil by looking to the Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer we pray “but deliver us from evil”. We pray this prayer asking for His help to show us the path against evil. In order to help combat evil we need to **BOLDLY** make a stand whenever evil is displayed. We need to be like Shadrach, Messchach, and Abednego who boldly told the king that they would go in the furnace instead of walking the path of evil.

They told the king their faith in God’s goodness exceeded their desire to sin. They knew that God was with them. And guess what?! God was with them and not even a hair on their head was burned. Can you imagine how much easier it would be to stand up to evil if we remembered that God was always on our side? God is always in our corner protecting us with His plan, so whenever there is evil, take a moment to remember this and take a leap of faith knowing that God will always keep His promises. I challenge you the next time you are presented with an evil opportunity, pray the Lord’s Prayer, specifically, “deliver us from evil”.

Our Father, forgive us for seeing the evil in this world more than we see Your power over that evil. Protect us from the evil in this world, but also make us bold to stand up for our faith. Help us not to fear what is in this world, but to trust that You are above all things. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

For Thine Is the Kingdom

AUTHOR: Pastor Mike Malinsky

**The LORD'S PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-11**

“David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, “Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.”

Appearances can be deceiving. The Lord warned His followers that the day would come when God's kingdom and power and glory would look like a false hope. There was a day when it looked like the kingdom of Satan had the power and the glory. As Jesus hung on that cross and bled out for our sins, He looked like a powerless victim who had no appearance of glory.

Remember what Jesus told Pilate when he asked Him, “So are You the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world”. He would prove that truth without a doubt three days later when He rose from the dead in His glorified body. His resurrection showed His disciples, and us, that the kingdom and power and glory of God is beyond all time and space. It is the very real realm of eternity, and all of it is Jesus'.

John Burke has written a book called *Imagine Heaven*. It contains hundreds of stories of people from around the world who have experienced an NDE, or near death experience. Medical and spiritual people debate what exactly these NDEs are: whether actual events or just the working of the mind such as in our dreams. Whatever they are, they can, at times, certainly be powerful tools that remind us of God's kingdom, power, and glory.

When my father was fifty-two, he had a massive heart attack. After surviving, he related his near death experience. He went on to live another thirteen years until he fully experienced Jesus' kingdom, power, and glory in heaven.

I know that some people take comfort in hearing these NDE stories, but we can all take comfort in what we know is Truth: God's Word. God gives us the clear promise of life eternal with Him through Jesus. That is the kingdom and the power and the glory that we pray for in the Lord's Prayer! All of it was earned through Jesus' cross and resurrection. As we continue our journey through Lent, we remember to say about the coming of Holy Week: “It's Friday, but Sunday's Coming”.

Dear Jesus, We give You thanks for leaving the realms of glory to live among us and to pay the price for our sins and foolishness. Use our earthly lives to call people far and near, to prepare for Your coming again, whether for us as individuals or at the end of time. Help us not to put our trust and hope in the kingdoms and power and glory of men, but in Your true promise of eternal life forevermore. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Psalms Introduction

The Psalms have long been recognized as the "prayer book of the Bible," a title that has echoed through church history. Early church fathers like Athanasius and Augustine referred to the Psalms as a profound expression of prayer and devotion, highlighting their central role in both private and communal worship. The Reformers, including Martin Luther, emphasized the Psalms as a model for Christian prayer, seeing them as a direct means of speaking to God, encompassing the full range of human emotions and experiences. Even in the life of Jesus, the Psalms played a crucial role. Jesus quoted them frequently, demonstrating their deep connection to His life and mission. For example, He quoted Psalm 22 on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—a cry of anguish that echoed the Psalmist's words, identifying with humanity's suffering and calling out to God. In His triumph, He also quoted Psalm 118, saying, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," a statement that pointed to His role as the foundation of God's kingdom. We see that Psalms are not merely ancient poems but living prayers that bridge the gap between God and His people. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "If you don't know what to pray, read the Psalms."

P R A Y E R

Creation

AUTHOR: Ethan Lovell

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 8:1-4**

“LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?”

One of the most incredible ways God reveals Himself to us is through the beauty of creation, from the towering mountains to the intricate details on a flower; every part tells His name. Psalm 8 invites us to come and stop, and marvel at the works of God's hands. It reminds us that the Creator of the universe is not only omnipotent (all powerful) but also personal; He's a God who cares for His creation, including us, ESPECIALLY US. As Matthew 6:26 says, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" When we think about the heavens, as did David, the greatness and the beauty overwhelm us. This reminds us through the moon and the stars, set in place by God's fingers, of His great power.

The Rocky Mountains amaze us with their towering peaks, while even the cornfields of Indiana remind us of His faithfulness and how He provides for us. Every part of creation reflects a different part of God's character: His strength, creativity, and most of all, His care. And yet, amidst it all, comes Psalm 8:4, asking in amazement, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?". And here lies something just incredible, that God, Who placed the planets in perfect position, Who painted the sunsets in splendor, Who shaped the seas and sculpted the stars has intimate knowledge about every one of us. He knows our needs, our sorrows, and our delights. More than that, He chose to enter into His creation through Jesus Christ, walking among us to redeem and restore what was broken in the beginning.

Creation not only speaks of God's power but also His faithfulness. The rising sun reminds us that His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). The shifting seasons show His supreme sovereignty and perfect power. Creation is the one thing, even when life is not stable, that reminds us God is in control.

As we take in God's creation all around us, let us notice all He's done for us, and let that cause immense gratitude. We thank God for the beauty that surrounds us, mountains that take our breath away, and fields that have given us abundant food. But, more than this, we praise Him for the revelation of Himself through His Word and for loving each of us so deeply. Take a moment today to step outside and notice the world around you. Let these moments remind you of God's goodness and faithfulness and join with creation by saying: "LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1)

Almighty Creator, thank You for this great world created for us to enjoy. Praise You for its beauty, majesty, and the way You use it to provide for us. You are so awesome. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Law

AUTHOR: James Deaton

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 119:17-20**

“Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word. Open my eyes to see the wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on this earth; do not hide your commands from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.”

To live by God’s Word is something I often pray for: that He might bless me with the wisdom to recognize, and the courage to act in His will rather than my own. Reading these verses I can’t help but feel like the Psalmist and I have been praying for the same thing.

One of my earliest memories is a shopping trip with my mother. It wasn't anything special, just a quick trip to get some groceries. It was near Halloween and the entire store was decorated with all kinds of spooky things. Ghosts and skeletons were stationed at the ends of the aisles, plastic pumpkins were stacked up high in places, and every aisle had spider webs with little plastic spiders on them. I found one of those plastic spiders on the floor and put it in my pocket. We finished our shopping and walked across the parking lot. I pulled that spider out of my pocket and began to play with it. The second my mother noticed it, she stopped walking. “Where did you get that?” she asked me. I knew I was in trouble. With tears rolling down my cheeks she marched me right back into that store to return it and apologize for stealing it. I’m not sure she realized what it was: not a toy off the shelf, just a broken decoration waiting to get swept up and thrown out. I imagine the cashier just threw it away after we left. I remember thinking at the time that it wasn't a big deal. It was just a plastic spider on the floor, I didn't do anything “wrong”, right? Looking back now I know that it was. I realize that I knew it then too. If I had truly thought it was okay, why did I put it in my pocket until we were out of the store?

Even as a small child I knew something so trivial, so small, was wrong. This wouldn't be the last time I ignored that feeling inside. As I grew so did my list of sins. Some were greater than others. Some were so shameful it keeps me up at night. We’ve all done things we aren't proud of, things we will always regret which is exactly why God’s Word is such a blessing. When the Psalms (and most other Old Testament books) use the word “law”, they are referring to God’s Word as a whole. Jeremiah 31:33 prophesied a new covenant. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.” Jeremiah is not referring to a law that is a chain that binds us to a set of rules. Rather he is talking about God’s full path to freedom and life through Jesus! God’s Word includes the message of forgiveness by which we sleep easy at night. His Way lightens our soul and keeps us unburdened. His Word contains two elements: the Law which protects us from ourselves and tells us how to treat others and the Gospel which reminds us that we are forgiven when we fall short. Thank You God for Your “law” - your Word which speaks both Truth & Grace. Please God “Open my eyes to see the wonderful things in your law.”

Lord, Your Word nurtures us and guides us. Forgive us for when we look at Your Word as tedious or restrictive. Guide us in Your way so that our lives glorify You and witness to others of Your love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Holy History

AUTHOR: Marty Chemnitz

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 105:1-4**

“Give praise to the Lord; proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts. Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always.”

It’s an event I think of often. My family and I are traveling southbound on an interstate when all of a sudden, late at night, in a snowstorm, we realize that there is a car driving northbound. This car was driving in the opposite direction, and we were both tracking towards a head on collision. I know that if I jerked the car, we would slide everywhere because of the snow. So I tried to slowly and methodically get over to the other side of the road.

As slow and methodical as I thought I was, it wasn’t slow enough. Our car started to fishtail, and then the fishtail turned into a 360. I think in total we probably did an 820, but we didn’t crash, no one else hit us. The car heading northbound kept moving past us. We landed three quarters of the way down the exit ramp. It is one of those moments that you can only thank God for His providence.

People say hindsight is 20/20. There is certainly a lot of truth in that statement. But why is that true? Because when we look back, we are able to see God at work. I look back on that snowy evening and I have no one to thank but God.

That’s kind of what the Psalmist is getting at. The Psalmist wants us to remember another one of those moments that we should think of often. The Psalmist is referring back to the mighty act of God in the Exodus of His people out of the land of Egypt. But on this side of history, we look back to the second exodus, when He took His people out of the land of slavery of sin. We should certainly look to make His wonderful acts known, both large and small. Tell everyone of God’s goodness: His goodness on snowy evenings, and His goodness 2,000 years ago during that dark evening.

When you look to pray, be sure to remember, proclaim, and thank God for His faithfulness. And let that faithfulness stir in you a passion to seek His face always.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your goodness. Thank You for Your goodness through Jesus 2,000 years ago and thank You for Your goodness in Jesus during my lifetime. Thank You for my Baptism, which connects Your life to mine. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

The Messiah

AUTHOR: Jane Littmann



PSALMS

VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 22:16-18

“Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.”

Psalm 22 is a Psalm that carries the highest of importance. Why? Because when David wrote this prophecy, not only was it a picture of Jesus, our Messiah, on the cross, but it also was some of the last words on the lips of Jesus as He was crucified. The beginning of this Psalm starts with the words quoted by Jesus, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”.

As you continue through the Psalm, you read of anguish, pain, and loneliness. The imagery shows how devastated Jesus was upon the cross. When I read verses 16-18, I immediately think of *The Lion King*. It's a movie that is on frequently at our house these days because our daughter loves it; except for a few scenes, and I must agree with her. If you haven't seen it by now, you probably already know the story, but beware, spoilers ahead! The first intense scene is when Simba and Nala are trying to escape from the hyenas (a pack of wild dogs), and the second is when Simba finds himself in the middle of a wildebeest stampede, only for Mufasa to come to his rescue.

These moments are filled with tension, danger, and a sense of being utterly trapped. That's the image we see in Psalm 22; not of a conquering king in glory, but of the Messiah, surrounded and powerless, encircled by villains with no way out. This is a shocking and unexpected portrait of the Savior of the world. And yet, this is exactly what Jesus endured for us.

At the cross, Jesus was mocked, His hands and feet pierced, His garment taken and lots cast for it. He was surrounded by enemies, just as David described in this Psalm, centuries before it came to pass. And yet, unlike Simba, who was rescued by his father, Jesus was not rescued; He willingly bore the full weight of suffering in our place. He did not escape. He chose to stay. He chose to endure. He was forsaken so that we would be redeemed. This was not simply an act of courage, but the very fulfillment of God's promise to save us and a fulfillment of this prophecy. By His suffering and death, He took on our sin, bore our punishment, and won for us the righteousness we could never achieve on our own. His sacrifice was not just an example of love, but the means by which grace is freely given to us.

The glory of Jesus is not in avoiding suffering but in embracing it for our sake. His majesty is not found in earthly triumph but in His sacrificial love. Because of His suffering, we are free. Because of His sacrifice, we are saved.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Jesus, our Messiah. Thank You that He did not turn away from suffering but faced it head-on for our sake. Help us to never take for granted the price of our salvation. May we live with gratitude, love, and a heart that reflects the sacrifice of our Savior. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Church

AUTHOR: Heather Riegle



PSALMS

VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 84:1, 10-11

“How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty!...Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”

I love the word dwell and its unique meanings. I yearn to create a safe, happy home where our family dwells. In my quest for daily quiet time with God, I tend to dwell on the circumstances of my life. Instead of using this time to connect and grow, I am oftentimes distracted by trying to control and manipulate situations. How will I ever fix this person? How will I manage this schedule? What if someone gets sick? By spending my time contemplating these things, I miss the work of God all around me.

Matt Redman released his song *Better is One Day* in 1997. If you have been in a church service over the last 25 years, you have probably heard it. The beginning goes like this:

How lovely is Your dwelling place	
Oh Lord Almighty	Better is one day in Your courts
My soul longs and even faints for You	Better is one day in Your house
For here my heart is satisfied	Better is one day in Your courts
Within' Your presence	Than thousands elsewhere
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings	

This song is a beautiful picture of a simple prayer that can bring us back to where our heart truly longs to dwell. Psalm 84 is celebrating and preparing the hearts of God's people as they travel to worship Him at the temple. These words also examine our hearts' natural desire for worship. With a slight change of focus, we remember the pure joy and privilege it is to be a child of God. There is peace that comes from knowing that we will be a guest in God's own house where we can truly reside or dwell. The world offers no reward that can compare to the promise of eternity given to us by God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The bottom line is that I want to live in the physical and spiritual presence of the Lord, while recalling the promises He has made.

This Lenten season, take time to dwell in the courts of God. When life's circumstances make it too hard to pray or you start to dwell on all the wrong things, pray Psalm 84. The smallest role in God's house is better than anything the world has to offer.

Lord, help my heart to dwell in Your presence. I long for the peace and stability that only You can provide through Your Son Jesus. I rejoice in the promise that I will one day stand before You in Your courts. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Lament

AUTHOR: Roger Watters

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 13:1-3, 5**

“How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, Lord my God. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

God has an interesting way of working sometimes. When asked if I would write a devotion, I was excited. After saying yes, I received the topic for my devotion. There it was, the word lament. I thought, do they even know me? They have the wrong guy. I am an optimistic, hopeful, glass half-full kind of guy. I even considered asking for another topic, but I felt God nudging me to move forward. Lament is a prayer that expresses deep sorrow, pain, or confusion. Lament comes from feelings deep in our soul. In some cases, it can even involve weeping and wailing. For some believers, like myself, who live their lives relatively free of tragedy, lament seems unnecessary. But in this definition of lament, I realized why God gave me this topic to write about.

A little over eight months ago in June of 2024, my mom was diagnosed with Rapid Progressing Dementia (RPD). The doctors said it could move quickly, so my family decided to have a reunion in August. While we had a great time, most of the family members realized it would be the last time to see her. At this point my prayers were for great care, protection of her heart and mind, and strength for my stepdad.

Soon after, my mom had a severe fall and was admitted into a hospital, then a rehab facility, followed quickly by hospice. I went to see her the week before Thanksgiving. No longer eating and barely drinking, she had lost a lot of weight. While she knew me, stories and made-up details of her life were the topics of conversation. Then her face changed and a moment of reality entered as she looked at me and asked, “How much longer do I have?” Then her face changed back and went into another story. My prayer then became a lament. No longer was there anything I could do. I had to turn it over and completely trust as I asked God to take her home. It was a plea full of emotion and tears.

On December 22, God answered my lament, and took Mom home! My lament quickly turned to celebration. She was finally full restored and was with Jesus. With Easter now approaching, I realize lament and celebration would not be possible without the sacrifice of our Christ Jesus. There would be no one to turn our grief into joy and our mourning into dancing.

So my challenge to you this Lent season is to put your heartfelt emotion in your prayers. Ask God, “How long must I have sorrow in my heart” while your “heart rejoices in your salvation.”

Heavenly Father, we cry out, Lord, how long until you return and right all wrongs? How long until you come and dementia and all diseases are no more? As we mourn, lift up our eyes to You. As we suffer, comfort our hearts with your assurance. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Guilt

AUTHOR: Jesse Smith

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 28:1-4, 21-22**

“Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear... Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.”

God is disciplining David through illness. And David is begging God to end His anger towards him. David isn't asking God to stop because he believes God is being unjust. David understands his guilt and recognizes that he has been foolish. And David openly acknowledges his wrongdoing. He asks God to cease because he can no longer endure it. David realizes he doesn't deserve God's compassion, yet he pleads for God to rescue him regardless. David felt that God's "arrows" had "sunk deep into" him. These were close to the exact words that Job had expressed during his hardships: "The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me." (Job 6:4).

Though we are unaware of the sin that prompted this psalm, God did discipline David for his transgressions. The most notable instance was his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11:4-24). Due to David's adultery and murder, God warned that conflict would persist within his household: "Now then, the sword shall never leave your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." (2 Sam. 12:10). David subsequently expressed gratitude to God that His harsh discipline did not include the death he deserved: "The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death." (Ps. 118:18). Out of love, God may also correct you when you sin. His goal is always to guide you back to Him.

That guilt that you feel is an emotion that God has given you to return to God. When we confess our transgressions and believe that God has addressed them through Jesus, we are not humiliating ourselves or exposing ourselves to attack. Instead, we are invoking the resurrecting power of God to be gracious and to deliver. And if someone questions whether God will indeed do this, the answer is: yes (2 Corinthians 1:20)! Jesus was buried and rose again so that your forgiveness will be more assured than your death. And if you're feeling that guilt and calling out in need today as David did, saying, "Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior" (Psalm 38:22), take comfort in Jesus' last words in Scripture: "Yes, I am coming soon" (Revelation 22:20)!

My Lord and Savior, I grieve deeply over all the times that I have sinned against You. Please forgive me, but also take away my guilt and shame. Thank You for the forgiveness that comes through You! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Imprecatory

AUTHOR: Christine Gibiser

**PSALMS****VERSES OF THE DAY: PSALM 109:6-15**

“Appoint someone evil to oppose my enemy; let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is tried, let him be found guilty, and may his prayers condemn him. May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership. May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes. May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his fatherless children. May his descendants be cut off, their names blotted out from the next generation. May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord; may the sin of his mother never be blotted out. May their sins always remain before the Lord, that he may blot out their name from the earth.”

Well that just took a turn down a very dark and dangerous path! What in the world? Is David seriously issuing curse after curse with true vengeance in mind? I guess I'm shocked, probably just like you, at the level of hatred in these words and the fact that it is coming directly from the Bible! Welcome to the Imprecatory Psalms. (Yep, I had to look that one up too.) Imprecatory means to impose a curse. When I'm thinking about praying the Psalms, these are not the first words that come to my mind. What am I supposed to do with this level of hatred?

The Imprecatory Psalms have beautiful meaning and purpose when you realize that these prayers are all prayed in and through Jesus. We have a God that is more mighty, powerful, loving, and merciful than we can possibly understand. David knew this when he wrote Psalm 109. Our God...Our Father...has told us to bring our true feelings and desires to Him...all of them. The thoughts expressed in this Psalm aren't about us and whatever something/someone has done to us. It's not about getting revenge on who we perceive our enemy to be. In fact, Jesus makes a point to scold His disciples James and John as they offer to “call down fire from Heaven” to consume Samaria for how poorly they welcomed Jesus (Luke 9:54).

The Imprecatory Psalms are solely about God and God's enemies. Psalm 109 is venting to God about all kinds of evil David could think of to curse God's enemies, but in the end, it's really a brilliant way of turning the worst over to God and letting Him handle all of it in His way and in His timing.

In some ways, praying this Psalm is even a way of taking the worst in me and turning it over to God and letting God handle all my sins. And handle all of them He did! Jesus Christ took every curse in the Imprecatory Psalms straight to the cross and crushed every enemy of God. Remember the words of Paul when praying the Imprecatory Psalms, “Do not take revenge my dear friends... ‘It is mine to avenge.’” Romans 12:19

God, I yearn for you to destroy Your enemies: sin, death, and the devil. Help me to control my anger by sharing it with You. Help me to release all my spiteful emotions and live in love toward others. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The End of All Things

AUTHOR: Keith Luken

**PSALMS****VERSE OF THE DAY: PSALM 23:6**

“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Psalm 23, what a great promise God has given us. Not only are we promised provision and protection, but we also receive goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. God is our provider and will give everything we need; we lack nothing. And although we may not get everything we want, He does give us everything we need!

I like to exercise by taking a morning walk while listening to my daily devotions. One of our family's favorite vacation spots is Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. While on the island my morning walk is typically on the beach where I can't help but notice and be in awe of the magnificent oceanfront homes. I imagine what these homes look like on the inside and then wonder what it will be like when we dwell in God's house forever. If mankind can make houses this beautiful, how much more beautiful and magnificent will my home in heaven be that Jesus is preparing for me? John 14:2 says, “My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?”

On this side of heaven, ocean homes are at risk of hurricanes, flooding, and erosion. All of these things can make these beautiful homes crumble. But Your house in heaven will be forever. No hurricanes, no erosion, no sin. Just goodness and love, all the days of your life.

This eternal home is purchased and paid for through the life of Christ. What an awesome God we have who not only sent His Son to die for us and take away our sin but also has prepared a place for us to spend eternity with Him!

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for all the blessings You have bestowed upon us. You have graciously provided for all our needs. We are so thankful that You sent Your Son to die for us so that our sins may be forgiven. We wait in anticipation of joining You one day in the House of the Lord forever! In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The High Priestly Prayer Introduction

Before Jesus' arrest, torture, and crucifixion, He spent time in prayer. This prayer is recorded for us in John 17 and is one of the closest glimpses we have inside the mind and heart of Jesus as He prepares to drink from the cup of salvation. In this prayer Jesus teaches us many things about His mission, His relationship with the Father, and where His true glory is found. Jesus even sneaks in a prayer for you, His future disciple. So as we continue learning about prayer, let's take some time to learn about what Jesus prayed for in the High Priestly Prayer found in John 17.

P R A Y E R

The Hour Has Come

AUTHOR: Isaac Niewedde

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSES OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:1-3**

“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Have you ever prayed in a moment of hardship? Most of us have. Life’s difficulties often drive us to our knees, seeking God’s presence and peace. Maybe you are even in that time of hardship now. Tough times are part of being human, and when that hour has come, we need God. Even Jesus, the Son of God, needed His Father when His hour had come. Jesus sought His Father in prayer during His toughest time.

Before we get to our Verses of the Day, I want to draw your attention to a different time of prayer, recorded in the Gospels. In Matthew 26:37 it says that Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled. Jesus? Troubled? A lot of people think Jesus was never really scared of anything because He was the Son of God, but He was human just like us. He felt pain and confusion just like the rest of us, and even though He knew God’s plan for Him, He still wept and prayed to God in Matthew 26:39, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

In our Verses of the Day, Jesus knows that the hour of Matthew 26 was upon Him. He knew that everyone would soon behold His glory and receive eternal life. And what was His glory? Jesus’ glory is displayed in this hour. In the difficulties of His life, His glory is shown. The same is true for us. In our difficulties, struggles, and trials, God reveals His glory. Now that’s a prayer that would make you sweat blood, “God, show your glory in my life.” Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 12:10, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” When Christ looked weak, when it was His hour, He was the strongest person in the world.

How amazing is it that we have a God Who endured all of that suffering for us? We have a God who we can go to in prayer that understands and can resonate with us in our suffering and hardships.

Thank You Jesus for suffering on our behalf and that You can resonate with us in our hardships. Thank You for the gift of prayer and that You are always there for us. Thank You for showing Your glory in our weakness. For when we are weak, You are strong. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

God's Name Is Power

AUTHOR: Eric and Elizabeth Pankow

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:11**

“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.”

In this portion of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, Jesus intercedes for His disciples (including us, His disciples of today) to God the Father for protection. Jesus knows when He dies and ascends to the Father in heaven, the disciples will be left on earth to be His hands and feet to do the work of the church. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh will attack, oppose, and try to frustrate all that the church will do, so Jesus asks the Father to leave the disciples protection in the power of His name.

What is that name? The Verse of the Day speaks of “the name you gave me”. God gave Jesus His name in Matthew 1:21 when the angel spoke to Joseph about the baby in Mary's womb saying “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

What power does the name of “Jesus” have? In Philippians 2:9-11 the apostle Paul says, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. Every created thing, including the devil and all angels, bow before the name of Jesus.

At the end of the passage Jesus prays for His disciples “that they may be one as we are one”. Here Jesus is pointing out that just as the three parts of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) have different roles but are one God (the mystery of the Holy Trinity), the disciples will have different gifts and roles, but form one body (the church)!

In the Old Testament the Jewish people regarded the name of God so powerful and awesome that they would never say it out loud. Today Jesus calls on us as His disciples to use the power of His name. Use the name of “Jesus” out loud and with boldness in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, when you pray, when you are tempted, and to defend and support the kingdom of God.

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Jesus and for giving us the power of His name. May we use it with reverence to powerfully defend and grow Your church. As Psalm 54:1 says “Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.” In Jesus' powerful name we pray, Amen.

Joy

AUTHOR: Lydia Hammons

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:13**

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”

In the midst of suffering, I very rarely find myself praying for joy. I’m usually trying to find a way around the hardships, whether that’s avoiding it altogether or finding a way to fix it. I think most of us can agree that we don’t find joy in the situation in suffering, at least until it’s resolved.

During my junior year of college, I fell into an overwhelming depression that swallowed me whole. Instead of hanging out with friends, attending events, or enjoying the beautiful city of Nashville, Tennessee, I would lay in bed, skip my classes, and go days without speaking to anyone. I had hit rock bottom.

After much consideration and research, I decided to move home and finish my senior year online. Within two weeks, I had reconnected with some old friends, taken a position at Columbus Gymnastics Center, and had reached out to volunteer at Venture. During one of the hardest and loneliest times of my life, I wasn’t praying at all, especially not for joy.

Before Jesus’ arrest, torture, and crucifixion, He spent time in prayer. Two verses after our Verse of the Day, John 17:15 says, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” In the midst of Holy Week, Jesus prayed for all of us. He didn’t pray for our happiness, but for our joy. Next time you are in suffering or lacking joy, try this prayer:

Dear Lord, even in the midst of my trials and hardships, help me experience the full measure of Your joy. Teach me to trust in Your Word and to find comfort in the truth that You are with me always. May my heart be anchored in the joy that comes from knowing You, no matter what I face. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

The Evil One

AUTHOR: Lauren Cline



The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

VERSES OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:14-15

“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”

As Jesus prays this portion of His High Priestly Prayer we are reminded that our ultimate home is in heaven (and eventually the new heavens and new earth) and that our time here on earth is temporary, just as it was for Jesus. While many of us fear death, the death of a loved one or our own death, we know that it is inevitable, and that after death we will join the Father in heaven for eternity. The knowledge that our ultimate home is in heaven doesn't always curb the sadness and sorrow that death brings, but our faith in Him gives us hope and comfort that when the journey here on earth has ended our eternal salvation awaits us.

As Jesus is praying He says, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.” As I reflect on these words I am both saddened and comforted. The reality is we are surrounded by evil in this world. Evil shows up in big obvious ways, but also in our everyday lives in small ways. And sometimes evil just makes it feel like everything around us is falling apart. I have certainly had moments when I am thinking “what else can possibly go wrong now.”

But as I read these words from John I am reminded that at the darkest time in His life on earth, Jesus took the opportunity to pray to His Father asking Him to protect ALL OF US from this evil. Evil exists, but the power of Christ, which is ours in faith, is so much stronger. Jesus, during this prayer and now, is our Intercessor, wrapping His arms around us and asking His Father to protect us from the evil in the world. The words from Jesus' prayer are a reminder that when it feels like our world is beating up on us, Jesus is walking beside us helping us to overcome the evil one.

Dear Jesus, help us to remember that as we navigate our spiritual battles in this evil world, You are there walking beside us, praying for us and with us. Continue to guide, protect, and guard us from the evil one as we journey through this life on earth and help us to remember that our ultimate home is with You in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Holy Spirit

AUTHOR: Tim Pinnow

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:17**

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Have you ever wondered how the historic site Mt. Rushmore came into being? The concept for this site began in 1923 and was revised over the course of the next several years until “construction” of the site began on October 4, 1927. Over the course of the next 14 years, 400 sculptors set out to carve the images of America’s founding fathers into the mountain. Multiple successive techniques were used, from dynamiting sections, to “honeycombing” (a process in which small holes are drilled close together so sections could be chiseled off), to grinding for the finish. The original design was to have included figures down to the waist; however, World War II and funding issues halted the project and thus was never completed as designed. When all was said and done about 800 million pounds of rock were carved out of the mountain.

Just as the construction of Mt. Rushmore was a process and occurred over the course of years, sanctification is a process of being set apart by God to become more like Christ through the renewing of our minds as we stay rooted in the truth. In a world that presents many conflicting ideas about what truth is, we are reminded in John 17:17 that “God’s Word is truth” and that the Word of God is Jesus (John 1:14).

The Word of God (the Bible) remains as a steadfast guide for our lives; it never changes! It has the power to refine our character and align our hearts with the will of God. As we embrace the truth, we are called to live out the principles of the truth in our daily lives through love, honesty, and integrity. As Paul writes in 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”

Unlike Mt. Rushmore, which was never fully completed, God’s work is truly completed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We have every confidence just as Paul said in Philippians 1:6, “that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”.

Thank You, heavenly Father, that You have created me in Your image and that You have engraved me on the palm of Your hands. Thank You for the truth of Your Word. May we be sanctified by Your word daily. May Your truth guide my thoughts, my actions, and my heart that I may be a beacon to those around me reflecting Your truth. Transform me by the renewing of my mind to be more and more like Jesus. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

The Future Generations

AUTHOR: Chandler Goddard

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:20**

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.”

Growing up, I recall the soft echo of countless voices singing *Jesus Loves the Little Children* during every worship service at my grandfather's church. At the time, I didn't quite grasp the depth of those words, but they watered the seed of faith within me. Jesus loves us, even when we don't fully understand prayer or know exactly where to begin our Christian journey.

As I grew older, I watched many people, including myself, drift away from their faith, only to find a way back, sometimes unexpectedly. It's comforting to know that Jesus promises forgiveness. He calls us to unite as Christians, to love one another as He loves us, even the ones who are still trying to figure life out. Yet, as humans, we often struggle to see others like that. We are usually clouded by our judgements and the different paths we travel.

My personal struggle with prayer was an intimate battle. For the longest time, I didn't know how to pray or what to say. At times I even wondered if He was listening. I felt lost, surrounded by the cacophony of silence. But then, I began to simply speak to Jesus. These conversations, carrying my hopes, heartaches, and humble gratitude, gradually transformed my silence to speaking. I realized that prayer isn't about how well you pray, but about speaking to Him from the heart with honesty.

As I continue to dig deeper into my faith, I've learned that it's okay to stumble with words. Jesus listens, not to the perfection of our prayers but to the desires driving them. Our connection with Him doesn't rely on flawless dialogue but rather, on the One we are communicating to. This journey taught me to approach Jesus with openness, knowing that He hears us in our quiet moments and our loud cries. In a world filled with the cacophony of noise and distractions, finding moments of silence to converse with Him has turned from shame to strength.

So, whether you're well versed in prayer or just starting, know that your words are being heard. Jesus loves each of us, regardless of where we stand on our spiritual paths. Embrace your journey, speak from your heart, and trust that He is listening. As we grow in faith, may we remember to love others with the same unconditional love He shows us. It's Jesus who loves all the children of the world.

Jesus, thank You for listening to me even when I don't know what to say. Forgive me for focusing more on saying the right words than speaking sincerely to You. Thank You for Your love that went to the cross for me. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Unity

AUTHOR: Liz Collins

**The HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 17:21**

“[My prayer is] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

I love “aha” moments! I love how they swoop in unexpectedly and give us reason to celebrate. I had such a moment of delightful discovery a few years ago with our Verse of the Day, John 17:21. I couldn’t believe I had never realized that this prayer Jesus prays for me was uttered during Holy Week. I have known my whole life that “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so,” but right here, right here, in Jesus’ most difficult time, He was praying for us, for me, for you! My realization made me want to jump and shout!

However, as sinful and selfish beings, sometimes our joy-filled “aha” moments can be short-lived when we let distractions or discontentment sneak in and steal our joy. My joy of fully comprehending that Jesus prayed for me, thought of me, and took on my punishment can become commonplace when I let earthly things take up more importance in my mind. And how often do I focus too long on identifying myself in Jesus’ prayer and forget Jesus used plural pronouns like “they” and “them” in His prayer? “Yes, Jesus loves me”, but we all get to sing that song! Jesus was praying for all who will believe, that includes people I struggle to get along with, people with whom I may frequently disagree with, and people who I think may require more grace more often.

So how can I carry the joy of my “aha” moment with me more faithfully so that I can reflect the heart of God to the people Jesus was praying for? Colossians 3:12-14 gives some direction for us: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people (the people He prayed for during His week of Passion) holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” These virtues Paul was encouraging the believers to apply in their lives were instructions on how to live with others, a call to a spiritually healthy, active community. Jesus’ prayer came with the hope that we will point the world to the Father. Jesus prayed for future believers to be united in this. When we keep Jesus’ prayer of unity in our minds, we can move forward in joy with His strength. Together we can say, “aha”!

Dear Jesus, You prayed for us. When Your life was coming to its darkest moments, You were thinking of us! Thank You for Your gift of salvation. Please let the joy of eternal life never be taken for granted so that our joy can bubble and spill over to others. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Prayers in Scripture Introduction

Prayer, at its simplest, is talking to God. While that definition captures its essence, prayer is much more—it's a sacred space where we encounter the fullness of the Christian life. Through prayer, we express our deepest joys, our rawest pain, our gratitude, and our longing for God's Holy presence in a sinful world. Yet, despite its significance, prayer isn't always easy. Many of us struggle with what to say, how to say it, or even finding the time. Thankfully, God hasn't left us to figure it out on our own. His Word is filled with examples of powerful and honest prayers that can guide us. These prayers not only show us how to pray but often serve as words we can echo in our own prayer lives. The next several days we will look at the prayers of God's saints in the Bible and how they poured their hearts out to Him in prayer.

P R A Y E R

Jonah's Prayer

AUTHOR: Avery Brooks

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: JONAH 2:1-2**

“From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God, pouring out his heart in desperation and trust. He said, “In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.”

When Jonah was swallowed by the fish, he was spiritually overwhelmed along with being physically trapped. Jonah was facing the full weight of his life's choices, as his disobedience had led him far away from God, and now was in the belly of the beast. Yet, from the lowest place any of us can imagine, spiritually and literally, God heard Jonah. Instead of wallowing in pity and despair, shutting down in hopelessness, Jonah prayed to the Lord.

Just like Jonah, we all become trapped by our circumstances in our lives - weighed down by failure, fear, and despair. Oftentimes when we reach our lowest point, prayer can feel like a daunting task - the last thing we want to do. The devil tempts us to believe that we are too far into the depths of sin and that there is no way God will listen to our prayers.

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that we have to fix ourselves before coming to God. However, Jonah teaches us that God meets us where we are, no matter where we are. He meets us in our stress - not at the beginning or at the end, but right in the middle of all the chaos. He rescues us and redeems us from the deepest pits of sin.

This story reminds us of just how faithful God is to us. Just as God always provides us with a way out of the depths, God helped Jonah. God did not leave Jonah hopeless in the belly of the fish, even though it was his actions that led him there. God is so faithful that no matter what we do, He will never leave our side. Deuteronomy 31:8 tells us, “The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Sometimes, we are instantly delivered from our pain, other times, it happens slowly, as God pulls us back into the light of His love.

As we go through trials and difficult seasons of our life, we can take comfort knowing that our faithful God will meet us wherever we are, no matter what, hearing, answering, and rescuing us. He will never leave us, instead He brings us into the light and reminds us that we are never too far gone and our story is never over. The same God who rescued Jonah from the literal depths, the belly of a fish, is the God who raised Jesus out of the pit of death. And it's the same God that raises us up and brings light into the darkest depths of our soul.

Heavenly Father, find us in our darkest places, so that we may shine more of Your light. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hannah's Prayer

AUTHOR: Sharon Johnson

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: 1 SAMUEL 1:10-11**

“In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, ‘LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life.’”

So many times I have found myself struggling with what to say to God in prayer and how to say it. As with most of us, we tend to ask for something for ourselves. We may only go to God in prayer when we are in pain or need help. God loves us to pray and He hears all of our prayers. Sometimes, it can be very simple while driving and seeing beauty in the land to just say a simple thank you. Many times we are on our knees in fervent prayer for others who are suffering and in need of our prayers. We can thank God for sending His Son to us and for all of the many blessings He has given us.

When my husband of nearly thirty-one years was dying, I started by asking God to save him. I was not ready for him to go. As I watched him and realized he was ready to go home, my prayer changed. I thanked God for our years together and all the blessings God had given us. In this, I was much like Hannah in our Verses of the Day. When we read Hannah’s story we see a mirror of ourselves—maybe not because our struggle is the same, but mostly because our hearts are.

Our hearts have, at times, been full of anguish and weeping. Like Hannah, we long for what this imperfect life on earth does not give. For me I yearned for a life without death. What has caused you anguish? Like Hannah, we want to be known and remembered by our God. And while all our prayers to Him are not answered with a “yes,” they are heard and we are known. Just like Hannah. We are known by the Firstborn who was given to the Lord’s service all the days of His life. His service would take him from Bethlehem to Nazareth to Capernaum and ultimately to Calvary.

As in my prayers for my husband, God took him home in 2020. Yes, God ultimately did answer my prayer. But God has also given me more. He has given me the blessings of Christian friends in my life. He provided me with opportunities for Bible study and ways to grow my life spiritually. I have prayers of thanksgiving for my blessing and gratitude for my family, friends, and church family. Pray for whatever is in your heart and know that God will answer your prayers.

Father, thank You for all your goodness to me. Thank You for listening to my prayers, but answering them in Your time and in Your way. Help me to trust in You more so that I share all my thoughts in prayer to You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Solomon's Prayer

AUTHOR: Amy Kissell

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: 2 CHRONICLES 6:13-15**

“[Solomon] stood on the platform, then knelt before the entire assembly of Israel, spreading out his hands toward heaven. He said, “Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven or on earth—You who keep Your covenant of love with Your servants who walk wholeheartedly in Your way. You have kept Your promise to Your servant David, my father; with Your mouth You have promised, and with Your hand You have fulfilled it—as it is today.”

In our Verses of the Day, we find King Solomon in a moment of spiritual significance as he dedicates the newly built temple to the Lord. God finally has a dwelling place on earth with His people. Solomon's prayer, offered in the presence of all Israel, is a powerful testament to the enduring faithfulness of God's covenant. As we reflect on these verses, we are reminded of the faithfulness of God's promises and the stark contrast with our human struggle to keep our commitments.

Solomon begins his prayer by kneeling, spreading his hands toward heaven, and addressing God with deep respect. This physical act of kneeling was unheard of for a king because it meant he was submitting to a higher authority. This submission reflects an attitude of dependence on God. We must recognize that in prayer, we are submitting to a Higher Authority. It is by God's grace that we are invited into a relationship with Him.

Solomon praises God for His faithfulness and love. He acknowledges that there is no God like the Lord, who keeps His covenant and shows unwavering love to all who walk before Him. Solomon's words highlight the reliability of God's promises. A promise given to David was fulfilled in his son Solomon. Throughout history, God has remained faithful, fulfilling His promises to His people in His time. This truth should fill our hearts with gratitude and trust in God's unchanging nature.

Solomon's prayer also brings to light our struggle to keep our commitments. While God is unwavering in His faithfulness, we often find ourselves faltering. Our intentions may be sincere, but our actions frequently fall short. We are prone to distractions and temptations. The difference between God's faithfulness and our weaknesses can be disheartening, yet it also emphasizes the power of God's grace.

God's Word offers us valuable insights into the faithfulness of God's promises amidst our human weakness. It calls us to approach God with humility, to trust in His promises, to examine our own commitment to Him, and to seek His presence and guidance. As we reflect on these truths, may we be encouraged to deepen our relationship with God and to rely on His strength to keep our commitments, knowing that His grace is enough.

Heavenly Father, God of Your church and God of us, thank You for Your Word that teaches us about prayer. Help me to honor You, to stay committed to You, and to seek Your forgiveness when I fail. Help me to grow in my trust in You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Moses' Prayer

AUTHOR: Rusty Downey

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: EXODUS 32:11,13-14**

“But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.”

Gary, a good friend of mine in Texas, has some major health issues because of Long COVID and needs a lung transplant. I am praying for him. With the Los Angeles fires and the hurricane flooding in the Appalachian Mountains, thousands of people have lost their homes and all their worldly possessions. I am also praying for them. One in seven (14%) of Christians around the world are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. I am praying for them too. It's not just me. Many people are praying for each of these people. How many times have we prayed for a friend going through a tough time? How many times have we prayed for people who have been affected by a natural disaster, a military conflict, or some other global newsworthy event? These prayers are often part of our regular prayers. Sometimes these are just a quick prayer. Other times they are more thoughtful and heartfelt prayers. The closer I am to a person, the more fervently I pray. While I am confident my prayers are heard, sometimes I wonder if my prayers really make a difference.

Through Moses' example, we see that God calls us to pray for one another. Notice that Moses doesn't pray a “check the box prayer” for the Israelites. Moses intercedes on behalf of the Israelites before God. He pleads for the Israelites. Moses cries to God for mercy for the Israelites even though they have turned away from God and made a golden calf to worship. God heard Moses' prayers and had mercy on the Israelites.

God also hears your prayers when you pray for others. Maybe they are ill. Maybe they too have fallen away from God or have never known Him. Maybe you are praying for someone across the globe whom you don't even know. We may or may not see the answer we want or expect. Often, we never know the outcome at all. Regardless, it delights God when we draw closer to Him and share our love and caring thoughts for others. What better way to “love thy neighbor” than to start by lifting them up to God.

(Footnote – A few days after I started drafting this devotion, I received word that Gary had a match and is now recovering from a successful lung transplant. Praise God!)

Heavenly Father, forgive me for times of doubt concerning my prayers. Strengthen me in my prayer life so that I continue to lift up all those who need Your help - both close to me and strangers to me. Let me witness to others about Your goodness. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Tax Collector's Prayer

AUTHOR: Haylee Hudson

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSE OF THE DAY: LUKE 18:13**

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

For most of my life, prayer has been one of the most difficult practices for me. During mission trips or youth group outings, I would always secretly hope the youth leader wouldn't call on me to pray in front of everyone. Although prayer is a wonderful thing, I've never felt confident enough to pray aloud in front of a crowd.

To me, prayer was always a personal, intimate time between God and me—a space where I could share everything in my heart without anyone else listening. The idea of being called to pray in front of a large group was always intimidating. I often found myself worrying that whatever I said wouldn't be “good enough” or that I would make a mistake in front of everyone.

Sometimes the shortest prayers are the most powerful. In the simple prayers, we are forced to be honest without all of the fancy words. The tax collector in our Verse of the Day demonstrates this kind of prayer. His words, simple yet profound, should be on the lips of all of us every day. He prays, “God have mercy on me, a sinner.”

He begins and ends with honesty - acknowledging his sin, his guilt, and his unworthiness. He knows there is nothing he can do to earn forgiveness, but he humbly asks for God's mercy. This is what Lent is all about, recognizing that God's mercy is what we need and what we are given. Today, God's Word teaches that to us by the prayer of a tax collector.

Remember the difficulty of praying in large groups? Although I may have not realized it then, God hasn't left me to navigate my prayer life alone. His Word is full of prayers from His people that not only guide me but can teach me how to pray. They also offer words I can borrow in my own life when I don't know what to say. Through the prayers of God's people in the Bible, I've learned that prayer is not about being perfect or polished—it's about being personal and persistent with God.

God, have mercy on me, a sinner. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Stephen's Prayer

AUTHOR: Linda Ralston

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: ACTS 7:59-60**

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.”

I've always thought I didn't really need to worry about forgiving others unless they asked me to. I believed forgiveness came pretty naturally and wasn't really that difficult. When someone apologized for saying or doing something hurtful, yes, of course, that's okay! I'm fine. No harm, no foul. No worries. But both Jesus and Stephen demonstrated otherwise. They both asked God to forgive their enemies even during the time they were receiving the most severe torture leading to their deaths.

In Acts 7, we witness one of the first displays of murderous violence against Christ's Church. Stephen had been chosen to care for the growing number of new believers—in particular, the community's widows—and so powerful was his ministry, a group of Jewish leaders within the community rose up in opposition, fearing their loss of influence. There was no doubt about their intentions. Acts 6:12 says they “dragged him off”, and brought him to the Sanhedrin. Stephen must have recognized the pattern. It is what had happened to Jesus before a crowd yelled, “Crucify him!”

What's the pattern the world gives us for forgiveness? Outrage: No fair! That's not right! I didn't deserve that! How could you do that to me? However, we see in forgiving others, we relinquish our need for personal justice. In forgiveness, we care more about our enemy than ourselves. In Jesus' death, He cared more for His torturers, than they did for themselves. The act of forgiveness requires humility.

What was Stephen's last prayer? Right before the last rock hit? He followed not in the pattern of the world, but in the pattern of his Savior when he said, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them”. That's truly what prayer is. In prayer we follow the pattern of Jesus. We forgive even until our final breath.

Lord, forgive me for all the times when I have sinned against You - sins that led to Jesus' death. Help me to be more willing and able to forgive others when they wrong me. Help me to share the forgiveness that comes through Jesus with all those around me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul's Prayer

AUTHOR: Rob Motosicky

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-9**

“Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

This may sound a little weird, but when I first read this Scripture I immediately thought of some (definitely more than one) times when my wife and I have been hooked up to our camper heading off for one of our camping adventures. Then all of a sudden we see a sign that says ROAD CLOSED AHEAD. “Oh no? Really?” I think to myself. But then there’s always that sign that gives some kind of encouragement for us that says “Detour Ahead”. When this happens on a highway, somewhere out in the middle of nowhere, it usually means an extra thirty minutes or so before we make it to our destination.

Detour ahead, that’s what I think when God doesn’t allow me to travel the road that had been my plan to travel on all along. Believe me, when I turn off the road that I was planning to be on, I begin to pray quickly to God that I won’t become lost and forced to back into someone’s driveway just to turn around and head back the direction I just came from.

I don’t know exactly what Paul refers to when he speaks of the thorn in his side, but I’m pretty sure when God said no, Paul was thinking “oh no, detour ahead!” What do you do when God puts a “detour ahead” sign in your life? What do you do when God says no to your prayers and your pleads? That’s ultimately what all of us want to know, isn’t it? According to the Verse of the Day, when God says no to your prayers and your pleads you are to boast all the more about it. Have you ever boasted that God has denied your prayer request? Have you ever gone around your house, your neighborhood, or your community telling everyone that God has told you no? Probably not. But that is what we are to do. (Maybe not exactly that, but you get the point). We boast in God’s response, because we know that God has an even better plan. We are to praise God in our weaknesses, because when I am weak, than I am strong. Praise be to God that in my weakness of sin, Christ flexed His arm of forgiveness.

Returning to my story from the beginning. I can honestly say I have had more exciting stories to tell my friends and family, not when the road was exactly as I planned, but when God placed a Detour Ahead sign in my path. Proverbs 16:9 says, “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”

Lord God, Your ways are always better than ours. You see things in their entirety and we must learn to trust in You and Your leading in our ways. Thank You for Your desire to have meaningful relationships with us and Your unwillingness to ever give up even to the point of death on a cross. Help us to be open to Your Will in our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Paul's Prayer II

AUTHOR: Kaitlyn Carothers

**PRAYERS in SCRIPTURE****VERSES OF THE DAY: PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11**

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

We all have had a time in our life where we needed to pray for someone. We may have told a friend, “I will keep you in my prayers” or “I’ll be praying for you,” whenever they have life hit them hard. At least for me, whenever I come across a person who has asked for time in my prayers specifically, I keep it pretty basic and my prayer goes a little along the lines of, “Please help (insert the friend’s name) with (said circumstance the person is in)” and that is about as far as it goes. If your prayer is similar to mine, you are not alone. However, we can do much better.

To achieve this we look to Philippians 1:9-11. In this we find that we first need to ask ourselves two questions. The first is: “How can we approach the task of prayer so that we are praying for the best outcome for our friend or a situation we may have in our hearts?” As Christians, we are called to serve God and spread His message with love in everything we say and do. No matter what circumstance a friend might ask you to pray for, we must make sure to focus the goal of the prayer on how we can spread the Gospel to them through this action we are blessed to display. The second question we need to ask is: “What qualities of Christ do we need our friend to display in their course of action?” To do Christ’s work, we need to pray for our friend to have actions such as Christ’s. We should ask God to give them patience, self-control, discipline, and many other fruits of the Spirit you think they need to display during this time. Finally, according to Paul, we also need to ask God to inform our friend of their mission that God has called them to do and to prepare them to do His Good Work.

Now for the big question, why? Besides “that is what the Bible says,” we need our friends to love the Lord so that they can spread that love and good news to others. In verse ten, Paul mentions, “for the day of Christ” which references Judgement Day. Our top priority as Christians is to prepare ourselves and everyone around us for the day that Jesus comes back. We only have so much time to spread the Gospel while we are on earth or before Jesus comes back on Judgement Day.

Hey God, whenever an opportunity arises today to share Jesus, make us aware and prepare us to let You shine. Speak through us and allow our actions to speak even louder of the love You have for us. Help us speak with the joy that only comes from You. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

The 7 Last Words of Christ Introduction

Jesus hung there. On the cross, tortured. Dying. The hard metal of the nails fastening His hands and feet in place. As He struggled for air and was barely able to breathe, Jesus didn't hang in silence. He spoke to those around Him, to complete strangers and to His family and friends. Jesus was speaking to us in His final hours. In His Seven Last Words, Jesus shows us how He has fulfilled His saving mission and sends us forth to follow in His footsteps. These final moments of Jesus' life are filled with purpose and grace, revealing His deep love for humanity and His unwavering obedience to the will of the Father. During Passion Week, we will pray through His final seven words, reflecting on their profound significance, so that we can fully take in everything God accomplished in our salvation.

P R A Y E R

First Word: Forgiveness

AUTHOR: Stefani Christopher

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSE OF THE DAY: LUKE 23:34**

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”

At school, I had a person say really mean things about me. They made sure to say horrible things about me to everyone. They were enjoying making my life miserable. I was super hurt about this and felt emotional pain. I didn’t want to forgive them because they weren’t sorry about what they had done. However, I then remembered an Instagram Reel I saw. Yeah, I know that sounds so much like a teenage thing. Trust me, the reel was a good one.

It brought into perspective that Jesus did not only die for my sins, He died for all sin, whether we are sorry or not. Jesus was tortured, had metal nails placed in His hands and feet, could hardly breathe, and was fighting for His life. Despite this, on that very same cross, He talked and begged His Father to forgive His tormentors during His seven last words. Jesus did not ask God to punish them but to forgive. Wow!

Forgiveness is hard. When someone has hurt you, it’s genuinely hard to forgive them. Most of the time when someone does hurt us, society has taught us to keep that anger and let it boil up. Nevertheless, in Jesus’ seven last words, He shows us that we are to humble ourselves and grant full forgiveness. The soldiers nailed Jesus up to the cross and left the scars on His hands and feet, yet He still asked God to forgive them.

The Lord wants us to forgive others. Jesus knew that His tormentors did not feel bad for what they had done (sound familiar?) because, at the end of Luke 23:34, it says, “they divided up His clothes by casting lots”. Who cares so little about a dying man than people who divide up the very clothing He was wearing. But Jesus still asked the Father to forgive them and it is only through Jesus that we can truly forgive.

Dear Heavenly Father, during this season of Lent, help us remember that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Also open up our hearts to forgive others who may have hurt us. Lead us not to get revenge but to treat all people the way You would treat them. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Second Word: Salvation

AUTHOR: Bekah Babbitt

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSES OF THE DAY: LUKE 23:40-43**

“But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

I am a person who likes to know the definition of words so I looked up salvation in the dictionary. The first definition for salvation in Webster’s dictionary is “deliverance from the power and effects of sin.” What a powerful definition. If I take that and think through it, my salvation in Christ delivers me to the perfect heaven when I die. Sin has absolutely no power or effect in heaven.

But what about on earth? When I go deeper into that, Christ also delivers salvation to believers while they are on earth. Even though we still sin against people, cause hurt, and allow our sinful nature to have power over us, Christ is holding our hand. He wants to be a part of our lives daily and for us to remember to follow Him. Even on our worst days when we don’t look to God, the Holy Spirit is with us. Whenever we come back to speak to the Trinity in any way, He hears our prayers of remorse and we are forgiven again ... and again ... and again.

The criminal spoke of his wrong deeds as he was dying. He knew his death was deserved. He also saw Jesus for who He was, perfect and the Son of God. That is all God requires; repentance for our wrongs and faith that Jesus died for our sins. Jesus told the criminal he would be in heaven that very day. What a wonderful thing to hear as he was dying. I can only imagine the weight lifted off that man’s shoulders knowing his pain and suffering would end soon and he would be living in Jesus’ kingdom.

Jesus’ blood covers our sins, just as the blood of the lamb covered the doorpost of the Israelites while the firstborn of Egypt were killed. Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. Our sins are washed away leaving us clean because of His terrible, painful death. The knowledge that my sins put Christ on the cross is hard to swallow, but it is also wonderful to know that I am loved by God beyond anything imaginable. He loves me in spite of my failures and imperfections. I am made clean by Him. I am going to be able to live forever in the glory of God because Christ died for me and all believers.

We can all have comfort that we have salvation in Jesus Christ. Praise be to God for His love and mercy.

Dear God, thank You for the gift of forgiveness and the promise of heaven through Jesus. Help me to live each day as a dearly loved and forgiven child of You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Third Word: Relationship

AUTHOR: Eric and Elizabeth Pankow

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSES OF THE DAY: JOHN 19:26-27**

“When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

Jesus Christ, in His third Word from the cross, demonstrates the importance of relationships to His faithful followers. This interaction between Jesus, his mother Mary, and the disciple John (John referred to himself in his Gospel as “the disciple whom he loved”) is more than just a touching story about a son’s love for his mother. It is another example of Jesus perfectly fulfilling God’s Law for us.

Jesus was the oldest son in the family, and that position in the Jewish culture meant He was to care for His mother in her later years. Where was Joseph His father? The lack of mention of Joseph during Jesus’ three-year ministry leads many to think Joseph might have died earlier in Jesus’ life, but ultimately we don’t know. What about Jesus’ other brothers? We don’t know, but John 7:5 would lead us to think they left Jesus because they didn’t believe in Him. So Jesus, Who was experiencing unimaginable pain and suffering, pauses to care for His mother in a perfect fulfillment of the Fourth Commandment to “honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Jesus completes a perfect Law-fulfilling life for us right to the very end.

In this moment Jesus (and John) again show us how relationships are such an important part of the Christian faith. Mary, who at Jesus’ birth pondered all that had happened in her heart, now was having her heart crushed watching her son humiliated and in extreme pain as He died on the cross. With Jesus gone, Mary would have to ponder how she would be cared for after this day. Jesus, knowing He would soon pass away, made sure His mother Mary would be cared for after He died by assigning His responsibilities as the oldest son to His disciple John. John, who was one of Jesus’ closest disciples, was possibly the choice because he was young (thought to be the youngest disciple) and he was the only disciple we know was there at the crucifixion (the other disciples were in hiding). We are told here that John took on that responsibility faithfully, taking Mary into his home.

As we pause to consider Jesus’ perfect fulfillment of the Law even when suffering for our sins, we are reminded that even in our times of persecution, pain, and suffering, we need to be aware of those around us. Jesus calls on us to love and care for others in all situations, following His example.

Heavenly Father, as you cared for Your mother even as You were dying on the cross, show us the people around us that need our love and care. Give us the strength to love others, even when we are experiencing challenges in our own life. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Fourth Word: Distress

AUTHOR: Alaina Scholl

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSES OF THE DAY: JOHN 19:28-29**

“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.”

I know very little about football, but I know that in the game, water breaks are crucial. It can get really hot during the game, plus layers of heavy equipment and constant exercise only add to the heat. Without hydration, the players’ performance would falter. They wouldn’t be able to give their best because their bodies would lack the essential sustenance they need. Similarly, the Bible frequently mentions water, often symbolizing life and sustenance. In John 19, Jesus, while hanging on the cross, spoke of His thirst. Typically, when Jesus mentioned water, He referred to offering it—being the Living Water for those who believe. But in John 19, He asked for water.

This moment on the cross is profound. Jesus had spent three years teaching, healing, and spreading God’s message of salvation. He had given so much of Himself, like a football player pouring all their energy into the game. On the cross, Jesus expressed His human need. He showed His humanity by asking for water, seeking strength to complete His mission.

The significance of water in this context cannot be overstated. Throughout His ministry, Jesus offered living water to quench spiritual thirst. In John 4:13-14, He told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Here, Jesus promised a source of eternal sustenance for the soul, a gift only He could provide.

However, in His final moments on the cross, Jesus, the Provider of living water, expressed His physical thirst. This act is a powerful reminder of His humanity and His willingness to experience suffering for our sake. It also emphasizes the importance of recognizing our own needs and seeking replenishment from God.

In our daily lives, we often push ourselves to the limit, neglecting our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. We may feel worn out and unable to perform at our best, much like dehydrated football players. It is essential to acknowledge our weaknesses and turn to God for strength and sustenance. As Jesus asked for water on the cross, we too can ask God for the refreshment we need to continue our journey.

Heavenly Father, refresh us in body and soul so that we can serve You to our fullest. Thank You for providing salvation through the suffering of Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Fifth Word: Abandonment

AUTHOR: Caleb Wolff

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSE OF THE DAY: MARK 15:33-34**

“At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’).”

When we hear the last words of Jesus as He hung on the cross, we have an opportunity to connect with Him in one of His most human and vulnerable moments. To fully experience this with Him, it's good to reflect on what He had just experienced. He had celebrated the Last Supper surrounded by His closest people. He had agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane as He pleaded with God His Father to “take this cup from me.” He had been betrayed, condemned, tried, handed over to be crucified, mocked, and taken away to Golgotha Hill. As if all of this hadn't been enough, He had just felt the pain of nails being driven into and through His flesh and bone to hang from the cross. Six hours later He spoke these words: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

For thirty-three years Jesus had experienced the highs and lows of being human. We can all relate to His human flesh in this way. We experience highs and lows each day. Many of these are forgotten with time but the moments of extreme high or low can stay with us forever. It can be as simple as a negative comment or as significant as the birth of a child or grandchild.

Jesus was in the midst of His lowest of lows. He was experiencing many of the same emotions we do in times of hardship. Sadness. Misery. Heartache. Gloom. Abandonment. It's impossible for us to fully feel what He felt but we do have the ability to relate from our own experiences. Jesus was alone, nailed to a cross, feeling the whole weight of all our sins. In this moment of fully human struggle, Jesus shows us He is also fully God. He uses this critical time to remind us of the power of God. Jesus did not ask this question in surprise or despair. He was quoting the first words of Psalm 22. David wrote the Psalm as a prophesy to express the agony of the Messiah's death for the world's sins. Jesus took on our sins and that's when He fully experienced God's abandonment.

Jesus' final human words are filled with purpose and grace. He shows us the strength of His love for us as He fulfilled His saving mission. As David continued in Psalm 22:19, “But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.” David reminds us in our most difficult situations that we aren't abandoned. God is always with us.

Heavenly Father, thank You for never abandoning us. Remind us in both our highs and lows that You love us so much that You were willing to sacrifice Your Son for us. Strengthen us in our low times so that we are still able to witness to Your love for us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Sixth Word: Triumph

AUTHOR: Anne Hartman

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSE OF THE DAY: JOHN 19:30**

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

When I was going through my mother’s things during her move from assisted living to a skilled nursing facility, I came across numerous worn-out Bibles and prayer journal notebooks. She had been keeping journals since we were kids! When I would go to visit her in assisted living, I would often find her at her desk doing her quiet time with her Lord, door shut, dog-eared Bible open, and her current prayer journal handy.

Her heart was always for her family, friends, and for everyone to believe in Christ as Savior. She found such joy in knowing Him and was not shy sharing that. Anyone who came in contact with her would know who her first love was. Even as memory loss took hold of her, she never forgot who her Father was. She would exclaim, “I need to be doing God’s work!”

My father, who had passed away years before, was a wonderful example, too, of the joy of the Lord. Whenever he met a stranger he would never hesitate to share Jesus. He always had a smile on his face and let others know where his joy stemmed from.

My parents both knew, just as we do, what Christ did for us when He hung on that cross and died for all of us sinners. With the words, “It is finished”, we were all ransomed, pardoned, forgiven, and will have eternal joy, rest, and peace with Him! Both of my parents, as we all can, have triumphed because of His loving sacrifice.

While He hung on the cross, Jesus, Word made flesh, had accomplished everything He needed to. Having taken the full weight of humanity’s sins, He had given Himself fully. He achieved the end for which He was sent. Jesus has triumphed. His work is complete. These words are His earthly farewell. Today we pray that people may know of Christ’s finished work throughout the world.

Dear Jesus, may we always be thankful for all that You have done for us and may we never be shy in sharing the joy of knowing You. Please help us to seek and fulfill opportunities to share the good news and lift each other up in prayer as we soldier onward for You! Be with us Lord as we share the Gospel and please, Holy Spirit, guide our words as we sow the seeds of faith. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Seventh Word: Reunion

AUTHOR: Yuliia Phillips

**The 7 LAST WORDS of CHRIST****VERSES OF THE DAY: LUKE 23:44-46**

“It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.”

The sun fades its light, covering the earth in absolute darkness. Everything – alive and not alive – becomes one in silence at that moment. The temple curtain, once separating humanity from God’s presence, tears in two, opening the way for all believers to come. Jesus, hanging and tortured on the cross, has not stopped teaching, loving, and giving of Himself, even in His final moments. He has poured Himself out for us, fulfilling His purpose. Now, as the end comes near, He is ready to reunite with His Father. “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” He speaks out with His last breath.

Despite the agony of the cross, Jesus commits His spirit into the hands of the Father, trusting fully in His love and plan. I think some people can relate to moments in life when we struggle to trust God fully. Moments when we don’t want to question God and His plans, we still do. We question and we doubt. We wrestle, and we ask, “Why?” “Why, God, did my family have to walk through such darkness? Why did You allow death to take my loved ones? Why didn’t You stop the evil we had to endure? Why should I trust You now?” We ask ourselves, “Why?” way too many times. However, Jesus had not questioned God’s plans. His last act was one of complete trust. He willingly gave His spirit into the hands of the Father, showing us how we are to trust God with our lives.

Jesus’ return to the Father fills us with a deep sense of love and even joy. He has completed His mission on earth – rebuilding the relationship between humanity and the Lord. He has done everything He was sent to do, and now, He finally reunites with His Father. We are truly blessed to experience this reunion also!

I have to imagine that was an incredible experience when the disciples found the tomb empty on Easter. Not only was Jesus reunited with the Father, they were too. You are too! Alleluia Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for always holding us in Your strong arms. Help us to remember the trust, love, and surrender Jesus showed on the cross. Teach us to trust You fully in Your resurrected plan. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

UPCOMING WORSHIP



ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5 at 12:15 PM and 7 PM Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion

WEDNESDAYS OF LENT

March 12–April 9 (7 PM only)

WEEKENDS IN LENT

March 9–April 6

PALM SUNDAY WEEKEND

Traditional, Sunday, April 13 at 8am

Contemporary, Saturday, April 12 at 6pm and Sunday, April 13 at 10:45am

(Note: There will not be a worship service on Wednesday, April 16)

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 17 at 12:15 PM & 7 PM with communion

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 18 *(school and church offices closed)*

Traditional at 12:15 PM & 7 PM

Contemporary at 5 PM in the sanctuary *(new time and location)*

(Note: There will not be a worship service on Saturday, April 19)

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 20

Traditional Sunrise at 6:30 AM

Traditional at 8 AM and 9:30 AM with communion

Contemporary at 11:15 AM with communion *(new time)*

(Note: There will not be a worship service on Wednesday, April 23)

WEEKEND AFTER EASTER

Saturday, April 26 at 6 PM with communion

Sunday, April 27 at 8 AM

Sunday, April 27 at 10:45 AM with communion

Wednesday, April 30 at 7 PM

