



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

Adopted from *The Lutheran Service Book* (p. 294)

The 26th of July 2020 A.D. – 8th Sunday after Pentecost

This brief service is intended as a simple form of daily prayer for individuals and families. When more than one person is present, the psalm and responses may be spoken responsively, with one person reading the words in regular type and the others responding with the words in bold type. The Creed and Prayers that are in bold type are to be said by all.

The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

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

Amen.

Opening Psalm *Psalm 125*

¹ Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved, but abides forever.
² As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.
³ For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous,
lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong.
⁴ Do good, O LORD, to those who are good,
and to those who are upright in their hearts!
⁵ But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers!
Peace be upon Israel!

For those with access to the internet, you may now play today's worship video, located on Bethany's website (www.bethanycr.org) under the Worship Resources tab and then continue with the Apostles' Creed. Everyone else may continue the service as printed....

Scripture Lesson – Matthew 13:44-52

⁴⁴[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” ⁵²And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Sermon – † *The Kingdom* † *(A copy is included at the end of this service.)*

Apostles' Creed

☐ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life † everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer



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

Bethany's Prayer List

Those suffering during the pandemic; the homeless; the unemployed; our medical professionals and first responders; workers in the Church, here and throughout the world;

Thanksgiving:

Confirmation students

Kay Karsten- *taking online Stephen Leader training until the end of August*

Prayers for healing/comfort:

Lee (husband of Brenda Heims)- *health issues*

Kent Zenor- *recovering after eye surgery*

Rick Foreman- *recovering after surgery*

Gordon Doehrmann - *recovering after medical procedure*

Mary Jane (mother of Phil Hedtke)- *recovering after surgery*
Joe (relative of Bonnie Bubke)- *medical issues*
LoAnn (relative of Bonnie Bubke)- *ill with COVID-19*
Agnes & Shel (friends of the Siebenmanns)- *serious medical issues*
Jane (daughter of Bonnie Bubke) - *recovering after medical procedure*
Dave Christian - *recovering after surgery*
Ella Smith - *recovering after broken arm*
Ron Prescott - *recovering after eye surgery*
Dee Rose - *recovering after hospitalization*
John Hamm - *recovering after surgery*
Kris Dunn - *health issues*
Betty Hein - *recovering at home*
Stephanie Macke - *recovering after radiation treatments*
Nadine Wax - *recovering at home*

Mourning:

Sheryl Knutson- *mourning the death of her cousin, Jim*
Bonnie Bubke- *mourning the death of her cousin, Ray*
Shirley Deetz (*wife of Rollis, mother of Barb, Scott and Kim*) - *died 7/1*

Serving Our Country:

Taylor & Charlie (*grandsons of Kim Neuhaus*) – *serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.*

Collect of the Day

Let us pray... Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Concluding Prayers

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Together we pray... **I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



✠ *The Kingdom* ✠

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today in the Gospel of Matthew we hear some parables of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. We should not really be surprised that Matthew took the time to record the teachings of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of Heaven because, to be quite honest, the Kingdom of Heaven can be a difficult thing to understand. One of the reasons that this is so, is that often seems to be filled with contradictions. For instance, people in Jesus' day heard Christ Himself tell them that the Kingdom was near, yet things seemed to go on in their lives pretty much as they always had. Likewise, this weekend at Bethany we have several of our young people confirming their Baptismal vows in the Rite of Confirmation. As they do so we talk about all of the blessings of forgiveness and salvation that God gives to people living in His Kingdom. And yet the confirmands, like all of us, are still sinners. They, like all of us, hear the promises of God's love and providence for those in the Kingdom and yet they'll be confirmed with masks on and socially distanced from one another in the midst of a global pandemic. We know that Paul says in Romans, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" But are living what we read Psalms, "*The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*" And so today we are blessed to have Jesus shed some light on this Kingdom of His.

The first two parables in the Gospel lesson are fairly straight forward. Actually, almost the same story with just a few small differences. A man finds a treasure in a field. According the laws of the day it was "finders keepers". But just to make sure the treasure is his beyond a shadow of a doubt, he happily sells everything he has and buys the field. Now, he can be sure treasure is his. Likewise, Jesus tells us that the kingdom is like a merchant looking for pearls. He finds one so valuable he sells everything he has to buy it.

Hearing these parables it's easy to see that these two men came across something that was so valuable, that they were happy to give up everything they had to get it. In comparing the kingdom of heaven to this treasure in a field or this great pearl, Jesus is telling us of the great value of being in His Kingdom. And the two men happily selling everything they had reminds us that we ourselves would not be foolish to do whatever it takes to be part of that same Kingdom.

Now all of us here today already do this kind of buying and selling for things in our lives already. We all have our ideas of what is important, and we invest our money and our time appropriately. But the question for us is, what is the most important thing? What is the most valuable thing we have? For instance, I like to run. But every minute that I spend running is a minute that I cannot spend with my dog. (That's part of the reason I like to run). The same thing with money. Every dollar for a new book is a dollar that can't be spent on groceries. So, we decide what is valuable in life. And if we decide that anything is more valuable than being a part of the kingdom of Heaven, we're fools. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6, "*Do not store up for*

yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.” The truly valuable thing in life is heaven.

Some people might say, well what about exercising and taking care of yourself. Shouldn't running and getting into shape be valuable? All of this is good and God does want us to be healthy, but Paul does write to Timothy (I) saying “... *physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*” The Kingdom of heaven is so valuable because it does not lose value, but remains priceless now and even after we die.

Some people may say that their jobs should take precedence over the kingdom of heaven. After all, you have to eat! Other well intentioned people say that raising the kids eats up all their time and energy. But when talking about the worries of what we will wear or what we will eat, remember what Jesus says? He says, “*the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*” The two guys in the parable got the message - nothing was going to keep them from the great treasure of the kingdom.

So as we sit here today, we might ask ourselves how we can sell everything we have to purchase the great treasure. The answer to this question lies in the rest of our Gospel lesson. First it should be noted that unlike the parables, there is nothing that we can do to buy our way into heaven. This would fly in the face of everything Jesus has taught concerning entrance into His Kingdom. Likewise there is nothing that we can do to earn our way into His Kingdom either. It is not by works that we are saved. So what do we do?

Well when we look at the parable of the net, we see that all the fish are separated into two groups. You have the good fish in the baskets, and the bad fish that get tossed out. Jesus tells us at the end of this age, when He comes again, the angels will sort out the human race. On one hand there will be the righteous that will be with Christ and on the other there will be the wicked who will burn. The key here is righteousness versus wickedness. What side do you fall on? We might be tempted to think that if we live good lives, do what we're told to do, and keep our noses clean we will be considered among the righteous. But this is living under the Law, and when God looks at us through the eyes of the Law, He sees that we have not kept it, and that we are wicked.

But for those who know about the kingdom, there is something new. It does not replace the old, but rather makes it complete. Jesus says those who teach the law of God, but know about the kingdom of Heaven bring out new treasures as well as the old. What determines if we are righteous is not the law of God, only condemnation lies there. But rather our righteousness lies in the new treasure which fulfills God's law. Our righteousness lies in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, leaving the splendors of heaven and becoming a man so that He might be placed under the law. And having kept the law perfectly, having never sinned Himself, having fulfilled the Law, He died willingly upon the cross, so that the treasure that belonged to Him, might be given to all of us. We don't have to earn the precious treasures of heaven. We don't have to buy them. For Christ already has. And in the words from the Small Catechism, He purchased the Kingdom for us not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. The Kingdom of Heaven is not to be found with Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai with the 10 Commandments. Rather it is to be found with Christ going up to Mt. Calvary and being nailed to the cross. And it is given to us through the Word, through our Baptism, and through Holy Communion.

This is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is foolishness according to Human wisdom, but the power of the Creator Himself to save all of us. We therefore need not worry when the Kingdom does not make sense. When we know that God loves us and we know that we are forgiven, yet still sin and suffer in this world. We need not worry, because Christ has paid the price for the treasure and has given it freely to us. Amen.



Members and Friends of Bethany,

As we enter into the sixth month of *Living and Sharing God's Love* during a pandemic, I would like to thank all of you for your faithfulness to God and His Word, the Mission of Bethany and God's Church, and the well being of our community as a whole. It has been a challenge for all of us, but I pray that like myself, you have been able to see God's grace and mercy through the fog of uncertainty and trouble that often surrounds us. Of course, as I write this, the bad news is the pandemic seems to be getting worse, both in Linn County and the nation. The good news is that the consensus seems to be that we can do something about it. Things like wearing a mask when in public (or in church), washing your hands often, and practicing social distancing will not only help keep people safe from the virus, but are the means (not obstacles) to getting our community back to where we want it to be.

I understand that taking such safety precautions may seem like a lack of faith and trust in God to some. I can assure you that this is not the case at Bethany. Rather, just as we should look at seat belts and fire extinguishers as God's gifts of protection in times of accidents and fire, let us thank God for the scientific knowledge of how to protect us during this viral pandemic. To ignore such precautions, even in the name of "trusting in God", is actually rejecting God's help that comes through knowledgeable doctors, scientists, and other health care workers who are doing their best to keep us safe.

Not able to make this connection (that God works through means like doctors and wearing masks), some have claimed that a church taking such safety precautions is sending the "wrong message" to an unbelieving world. Claiming that the Church has become too much like the rest of society. But the message that we are sending at Bethany is that our faith in God is faith, but it is not an unreasonable faith. And we are also saying that we care about the well-being of not only one another, but also our community, because Christ cares for all of us. This is a wonderful message to send out into the world today and through conversations with those outside of the church, I'm happy to say that people are hearing it.

As for some upcoming news, I want to let all of you know that in the month of August we will resume our normal Communion schedule of having Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays of each month at both our 8:30 and 11:00 am services. In addition, we will be offering Holy Communion to individuals and families in the afternoons of the first Sunday of each month who are still not comfortable attending our normal services. This practice cannot become the norm in the church, but is being done during this exceptional time so that God's people may be fed with both the Word and the Sacrament. Keep your eyes open in future communications for more details.

God's blessings to you all and stay faithful and safe!

+ Pastor Erickson