



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

The 15th of November 2020 A.D. – 24th 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 other parts of the service 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.

Psalm *Psalm 90:1-12*

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

² **Before the mountains were brought forth,**
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³ You return man to dust

and say, “Return, O children of man!”

⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.

⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning:

⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

⁷ For we are brought to an end by your anger;
by your wrath we are dismayed.

⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.

⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath;
we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty;
yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger,
and your wrath according to the fear of you?

¹² So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Scripture Lesson

(Matthew 25:14-30)

¹⁴[Jesus said:] “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Sermon – † *Is God a Hard Man?* † *A written copy of the sermon is at the end of this resource.*

The Nicene’ Creed

**I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven
and earth and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of
God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,**



whose kingdom will have no end.
**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.**
**And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Entrusting into God's Care

- Those suffering after the storm and during the pandemic
- The homeless & the unemployed
- Dee Rose - hospice care at Meth-Wick nursing facility
- Workers in the Church, here at Bethany and throughout the world

Healing

- Wilson (son of Luke Viertel) - health issues
- Angela Yuza - illness
- Donald (brother of Carol Edwards) - hospitalized with COVID-19
- Steve Hanchera - recovering after COVID-19
- Linda Patten - recovering after hip replacement
- Kim Neuhaus - health issues
- Steve & Erin Wilson - recovering after COVID-19
- Pat Krekeler - health issues
- Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders - health issues
- Kent Zenor - recovering after second eye surgery
- Darlene Eckert - recovering after broken leg
- Aaron Moffett - recovering after eye surgery
- Dave Christian - recovering after surgery
- Kris Dunn - health issues

Shut-Ins

- Larry & Sharon Easler– Summit Pointe, Marion

Mourning

- Bernice Stonewall– mourning her brother, Merle's death on 10/31
- Bonnie Bubke - mourning her son, Scott's, death on 10/27

Collect of the Day

Let us pray...Almighty and ever-living God, You have given exceedingly great and precious promises to those who trust in You. Dispel from us the works of darkness and grant us to live in the light of Your Son, Jesus Christ, that our faith may never be found wanting; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



✠ *Is God a Hard Man?* ✠

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

If you had known me as child, you might have thought that I was going to be a politician, rather than a pastor. You see, whenever my parents would question me about some sort of trouble that I had gotten into, I would tell them, “I can’t remember”. They would ask if I had knocked over my mother’s figurines – “I can’t remember”, I’d respond. “Did you punch your brother?” – “I can’t remember”. “Did you put a giant rubber spider under your mother’s pillow?” – “I can’t remember”. Like someone testifying before congress who “cannot recall at this time, Senator”, I had this very selective amnesia for my convenience. You see, I didn’t want to admit to the wrong that I was being questioned over, yet at the same time I didn’t want to lie to my parents. And even though saying I couldn’t remember certain things was in and of itself lying, I guess I reasoned that I had a far less likely chance of being caught in that lie, then if I had simply denied the deed.

Now, I would like to think that such reasoning and antics are the things that we only see in childhood, but we know that is not the case. We all at times have tried to weasel our way out of guilt, cover up secret sins, or hope that no one finds out about things we have done, thought, or said. But while these efforts sometime succeed before men and women, (they rarely did with my parents however), God’s Word tells us that our efforts to cover our sins will never succeed before Him.

The prophet Zephaniah tells us that because of our sin, when Christ returns on Judgement Day, it will be a day of divine wrath. It will be a day filled with distress and anguish – ruin and destruction. Paul tells us that Day will come like a thief in the night. And because of our sin Jesus Himself says it will be a day of darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But as dreadful as that last day when Christ returns will certainly be for many, there is hope. There is a chance for all people to escape this wrath. To escape the eternal destruction by having their sin taken away for good, so that we will no longer need to worry about it being brought out into the light. For not only is God a just god – punishing evil and sin, but He is also a loving God – filled with grace and mercy.

We see both of these sides of God in the parable that Jesus tells us in the Gospel Lesson. Out of no other reason than His grace, the man going on a journey gave his servants enormous sums of money, each according to his ability. And yet as much as they are given initially, those servants whom the master declares as good and faithful are given even more later on. We of course know that the greatest treasure that our Lord gives to us cannot be measured in amounts of money, but rather in the life, death, and resurrection of His only Son. Jesus brought into this world a love for the world that is beyond measure. A love that does not turn away in the face of sin, but a love that willingly suffers all of the wrath and destruction of the last day so that humanity will not have to pay for its own sin and evil. The love of Christ shows that God is not only just, but that He is also forgiving.

Today, many people do not like the idea in this parable that God gives to each servant differently. In our consumer culture where more is always better, it looks as if God does not love everyone the same. Some might believe that the servant with five talents is loved more than the one with two. Likewise, in our profit driven culture, it looks as if the servant who makes five talents is better than the one who makes only two. But this is not the way it works in God's culture. Everyone lives under the generous, loving master. And while everyone is given different gifts, it is not how much we have that is important, but rather what we do with them, and why we use them.

The servants who made five and two talents know the true nature of their master. Regardless of how much each one has made, the Master tells them both the same thing. *“Well done...Enter into the joy of your master.”* But the unprofitable servant who buried his talent believed the master to be a *“hard man”*, reaping where he did not sow. Not understanding how the Master truly is, the Master deals with him just as he imagines.

The question then arises, how are we living in God's Kingdom. Do we live as if God is a hard man, full of wrath and destruction for those who transgress His ways? Or do we live as if our Master is loving and generous and forgiving through His Son Jesus? When we try to take care of our sins ourselves by hiding them or keeping them hidden – when we look at the sins of others and say that God could never forgive them, or maybe look at our own sins and believe they could never be forgiven – what kind of God do we believe in? Don't we then say with the unprofitable servant, *“Master, I knew you to be a hard man...so I was afraid.”* Or when we look at the effects of the pandemic and the derecho, do we see God as a *“hard man”* and are afraid of Him? If we do, we should take heed to what the Master tells the servant who thinks this way at the end of the parable.

But, if we believe in God as He has shown Himself to us - yes, as a just God who punishes sin, but who has also placed that very wrath and destruction on His own Son so we could live, then we are able to hear God say to us (no matter what we have done or what we must endure), *“Well done...Enter into the joy of the Master.”* It does not matter how much you have or how much you have made. It doesn't matter what you have covered up or are trying to keep hidden. Rather what we must do is believe in God as He has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ. Believe that He loves us all the same, despite each of us having different and unique gifts. And believe that He is a loving and merciful God who forgives any and all sin that we bring before Him. Not because we are good servants, but because of what His Son Jesus has done for us on the cross.

What a joy we all can have in this sinful and troubled world, no matter what we have or have not done, that by God's grace and the blood of Jesus one day we will hear, *“Well done, good and faithful servant....Enter into the joy of your Master”*. Amen.



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is probably safe to say that all of us are tired of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. However, the recent rise of infection and hospitalization rates here in Eastern Iowa make it quite clear that the virus is not tired of dealing with us. Therefore, despite our weariness, now is the time to renew our efforts to help control the spread of this plague.

At Bethany, as we continue to *Live and Share God's Love*, this means we will reinstate some practices that we were doing in the Spring and that we have since done away with. Simply put, I'm asking that all non-worship activities of the congregation stop being done in-person and move online until further notice, with the exception of our voters' assembly on November 15 and our blood drive with the American Red Cross on November 19. The cessation of in-person activities would include meetings of boards and committees, as well as Bible studies, Confirmation class, and fellowship events. On Monday, November 16, the Board of Elders will continue to discuss plans for our congregation, including upcoming worship services. However, please note that our traditional midweek Advent services on Wednesday evenings have been cancelled for this year. In their place, we have already begun recording Advent worship videos that will be available online and sent out on DVD's to those without internet access.

In summary, please note the following:

- As of today, (November 13) Bethany will continue to have Sunday Morning worship services, including our services on November 15.
- All Bible studies, including our Sunday Morning Bible Study on November 15, will only be available online until further notice.
- Our Voters' assembly will take place immediately following the 11:00 service on November 15. Voting members are encouraged to practice all of the necessary safety precautions and may fully participate in this meeting by attending in the Family Life Center or by listening to the meeting in their cars in the back (south) parking lot of the church on their FM radio.
- Both first and second year Confirmation class will be online until further notice. Zoom links will be sent to students and family
- The blood drive on November 19 will also take place in the Family Life Center. While this is not an essential function of the church, I think we all know that giving blood directly saves lives, which is especially important these days.

These have not been easy decisions to make, as I know the importance of actively living out our faith with other fellow believers. And while the technology available to us today is wonderful, it is no substitute for being with fellow Christians in-person. However, as mentioned above, the spread of the Coronavirus is currently out of control and poses a severe threat to our community and the people who live here. While we will only trust in the Lord to deliver us from all evil (1st Commandment and 7th Petition of the Lord's Prayer), we as Christians have a responsibility to do what is best for others, even at great expense to ourselves. As we have recently celebrated Veteran's Day, we are reminded that loving self-sacrifice is an ideal virtue for all Americans, if not practiced by many. But it should be a natural fruit of our faith for those of us who know what Christ has done for the world on the cross and in the empty tomb. It will not always be easy. And it may bring about even more suffering into our lives. But with God's love in Christ, we have His promise that we can and that we will endure as we *Live and Share God's Love!*