



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

The 13th of December 2020 A.D. – The Third Sunday in Advent

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.

Psalm

Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

²Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.”

³The LORD has done great things for us;
we are glad.

⁴Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like streams in the Negeb!

⁵Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!

⁶He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

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 – I Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise prophecies, ²¹but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²²Abstain from every form of evil.

²³Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Sermon – † *Always Rejoice???* † (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

Entrusting into God's Care

- Those recovering from the derecho
- Those suffering from the pandemic
- Dee Rose - hospice care at Meth-Wick nursing facility
- Workers in the Church, here at Bethany and throughout the world

Healing

- Pat Krekeler - recovering after hospitalization
- Andrew (grandson of Schumachers) - recovering after open heart surgery
- Jane (daughter of Bonnie Bubke) - recovering after surgery
- Del & Dee Block - recovering after COVID-19
- Noelle (relative of Larsons) - cancer
- Wayne (relative of Knutsons) - COVID-19
- Robert & Bud (fathers of Chris & Leisa Knudson) - health issues
- Hazel (granddaughter of Kim Neuhaus) - health issues
- Linda Patten - recovering after hip replacement
- 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

- Ann Meyer - Terrace Glen, Marion

Mourning

- Larsons - mourning the death of friend, Steve on 12/1
- Bernie Rehnstrom - Died 11/25
- Karen Pfeffer - mourning her uncle, Ray's, death on 11/7
- Bernice Stonewall - mourning her brother, Merle's, death on 10/31

Serving Our Country

- Tailor & Charlie (grandsons of Kim Neuhaus) - serving in the U.S. Armed Forces

Collect of the Day

Let us pray... Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Concluding Prayers (For Times of Temptation and Answer to Prayer)

Almighty and everlasting God, through Your Son You have promised us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Govern our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that in our daily need, and especially in all time of temptation, we may seek Your help and, by a true and lively faith in Your Word, obtain all that You have promised; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Almighty God, You have promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in Your Son's name. Mercifully incline Your ears to us who have now made our prayers and supplications to You, and grant that those things that we have faithfully asked according to Your will we may receive to meet our need and bring glory to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Luther's Morning Prayer

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.



✠ *Always Rejoice???* ✠

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

One of the most annoying things in life is when you find yourself in a bad mood and someone comes along and tells you to cheer up. As if when we're angry or frustrated or depressed we simply hadn't thought of just choosing to be happy! In fact I find that when this happens - when I'm a little irritated, when I'm grumbling under my breath over my lot in life, and someone tells me to be happy or not to feel the way that I'm feeling - it not only doesn't help matters. It actually makes things worse! I tend to become more irritated, more angry, or more whatever. Now I do believe that people who offer such advice to cheer up have good intentions – I'm sure that I've done it myself plenty of times. People don't want to see someone "feeling bad" and so they try to help, and so we should appreciate the care and the concern. But let's be honest - when we're not feeling well it usually takes more than just someone offering a passing word of encouragement or the latest platitude for us to turn our "frowns upside down." Which is why our Epistle Lesson from First Thessalonians may seem to be a bit strange or maybe even a little irritating.

In I Thessalonians 5:16 Paul writes, "Rejoice always!" Our first reaction on hearing this might be something like, "Easy for him to say. Saint Paul was, well, a saint. Of course, he can always rejoice because his saintly status must have surely made his life wonderfully blessed and easy." As we read 5:16, we might think that Paul didn't have to worry about the Coronavirus. He didn't have his Christmas plans all thrown up in the air this year. He didn't lose his job or have his livelihood threatened because the economy took a nose dive. "Rejoice, always" Paul says? His children must not have had any problems in their lives. His parents must have been growing older gracefully. His doctor must have given him a perfectly clean bill of health. We might think any or all of these things because if or when we experience these hardships or others like them, the last thing we feel like doing is rejoicing. So why would Paul write such a thing? Didn't he know the effects of sin in the world. Didn't he believe that the Thessalonians had any problems of their own that might dampen their rejoicing?

Well, the truth of the matter is, Paul and the Thessalonians knew a thing or two about hardships and problems. If we read II Corinthians 11, we see that Paul was beaten with rods three times, received the 39 lashes five times, and one time was even stoned. He was shipwrecked, spending a day and a night adrift at sea. His life was in danger from bandits, from Jews and Gentiles who opposed him, as he crossed rivers, when he went into the city, when he was out in the country. He says many nights he suffered from the lack of sleep. That there were times when he knew hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness. And yet in spite of all of this he still urges the Thessalonians to, "*Rejoice, always.*"

The Thessalonians themselves knew a thing or two about hardship and persecution. The church in that city was founded during Paul's second missionary journey. As was his custom, Paul began sharing the Good News of Jesus in the synagogue of that city. However, it was not the Jews who came to faith, but mostly the Gentiles who turned from their idolatry to faith in Christ. Yet despite the initial success of his work while Paul was there, he had to flee the city due to the persecution of the church. It seems that both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles made life difficult, if not miserable, for the new Christians in Thessalonica. Things were so bad that Paul wondered if there would even be a church left in that city after he had departed. And still, Paul tells them to, "*Rejoice, always.*" The Holy Spirit, working through Paul tells us today, "*Rejoice Always*".

We, as Christians, are always able and always should rejoice not because things go our way or because we get what we want or because life is particularly easy or pleasant. Rather we rejoice because of what God has done for us in Christ. You see Paul tells the Thessalonians to rejoice, as well as to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in all circumstances at the end of his letter to them. Before He tells them to do all those things that, to be honest, our sinful natures may or may not want to do, Paul writes to them about how God had chosen them to be saved (1:4). He tells them how God has called them into His kingdom and His glory (2:12). And in some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of Christ's glorious return and the resurrection of their loved ones who have died in the faith. In short, before Paul tells the Thessalonians how to live as Christians, he shares with them what Christ has done to make them Christians. Before Paul tells them how to keep God's Law as disciples of Christ, He shares with them and motivates them with the Gospel. For it is there, and only there, in the Good News of Jesus Christ, that we have reason to rejoice.

Thus Paul stands in a long line of God's messengers in pointing people, not to themselves, but to Christ for the reason to rejoice in this life. Jesus is the one that brings joy to us in the midst of any suffering because He has overcome the evil that causes it. God's Son, born of a virgin, Jesus faced all of the things that take joy away from us. He faced the loneliness. He faced the loss of friends. He faced the threat of violence and war and persecution. He faced all the temptations that you have faced and never sinned. That fact that Christ faced what you do and did not sin is not meant to make you feel guilty. Rather it is to show you His love. That He loved you so much that while He was God, He took upon Himself all of what you deal with everyday, so that you might be saved. Everything He did, from conception to His trial before Pilate and even to the cross was for our salvation which brings us joy beyond understanding.

In Hebrews 12:(1-2) we read, *“let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

For the joy of bringing people life and salvation; the joy of forgiving you your sin and giving you eternal life; Christ set aside all of His joy in heaven and endured the shame of the cross. This is what brought joy to Simeon, to John the Baptist, to the shepherds watching their flocks on that first Christmas. It had nothing to do with themselves, and everything to do with Jesus. Therefore because of Jesus, Paul can tell himself, the Thessalonians, and we ourselves today that whatever situation we find ourselves in, to live fully and completely as God's people. This isn't a platitude. It isn't wishful thinking. It's God's plan for you through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is the reason that we can always rejoice. Amen.

And now may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Amen.

