



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

May 23rd 2021 A.D. – The Day of 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.

Psalm

(From Psalm 139)

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,”
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

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 – *Ezekiel 37:1-14*

¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” ⁴Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’ ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

Sermon – † *Back to Life* † (*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

Thanksgiving

- Installation of Darin Elm as Youth Director

Entrusting into God's Care

- Those suffering after the storm and during the pandemic
- The homeless & the unemployed
- Workers in the Church, here at Bethany and throughout the World
- Roland (brother of Bonnie Breiholz) - hospice care

Healing

- Gil (relative of Sheryl Knutson) - medical tests
- Anne (relative of Patty Fitzgerald) - hospitalization after bike accident
- Nancy Owens - recovery after surgery
- Jeannine Robinson - health issues
- Al Bachman - recovering at Cottage Grove after hospitalization
- Darlene Eckert - recovering at Cottage Grove after surgery
- Kyle Kraft - recovering after surgery
- Kim Neuhaus - health issues
- Elaine Cook - recovering after surgery
- Dale Stonewall - recovering at home after surgery
- Faye Sieck - health issues
- Dave Christian - recovering after surgery

Shut-Ins

- Candi Engel - Garnet Place

Mourning

- Bev Munson - mourning the death of husband, Blaine on 5/15
- Jim Heitland - mourning the death of mother, Barbara on 5/3
- Family and friends mourning the death of Rev. William Riley

Serving Our Country

- Tailor & Charlie (grandsons of Kim Neuhaus) - serving in U.S. Armed Forces
- Harrison (son of Rob & Faye Sieck)- serving in U.S. Armed Forces

Collect of the Day

Let us pray... O God, on this day [Pentecost – May 23rd) You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; 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.



✠ *Back to Life* ✠

It was almost 600 years before the birth of Christ that Ezekiel lived and worked. Like all of the prophets, his work was to proclaim God's Word – sometimes to Israel, sometimes to the nations around God's chosen people. Unlike many of the other prophets however, Ezekiel did not speak to God's people in the Promised Land – he spoke to them in the far away land of Babylon. You see, by the time Ezekiel appears on the scene and begins to share the visions that God had revealed to him, the northern tribes of Israel had been crushed by the Assyrian empire and southern kingdom of Judah had been conquered with her people taken away as slaves to the land of Babylon. And it is there, in Babylon, to those people who had seen their homes destroyed and who had been hauled away from them in chains, that Ezekiel shares God's Word.

Now instead of putting his arm around the people and telling them not to worry, everything will be all right, Ezekiel tells the people of Israel like it is. Having their homes destroyed and now living as slaves, Ezekiel says that nation of Israel is like a valley filled with dry bones scattered all around. They are deader than dead. There is no flesh or blood left on these bones, they have been dead so long they are all dried up. And they are on the surface, no one remaining or caring enough

to even give them a proper burial. Is it any wonder than that God tells Ezekiel that the people are saying things like, “Our hope is lost.” Or thinking that they have been cut off from God.

Of course, the Israelites in Babylon have not been the only ones throughout time who have felt like all hope is lost and they have been abandoned by God. Every great civilization in history, and most of the not so great, have all seen a day when their power and glory became a shadow of what once was. Today, even many in our own country are wondering if the United States is not quickly becoming a valley of dry bones. No matter where on the political spectrum one might find themselves, almost everyone agrees there are some serious problems with our country – especially when it comes to morals, or as Christians might say, living according to God’s laws.

But Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones applies to more than just nations and cultures. It can be taken down to individuals and our own personal lives as well. After all, the reason the Israelites found themselves as slaves in Babylon was because the majority of them had turned their back on God. They were deader than dead, dry bones stacked up in a valley because of their sin. And we are kidding ourselves if we think that we are any better off with our own sin!

When we encounter God’s Word that shows us our own sin, or when we find ourselves in circumstances that sin, our own or that of others’, has brought about, our lives can indeed feel as if they are piles of dried up bones lying on the floor of some remote, forsaken valley. When we look at our actions that hurt others, or our inaction that fails to help others; when we listen to the words that come out of our mouths and the desires that come out of our hearts and compare all of these things to what God expects from us, very often we find that we have come up short of His expectations. It should be of no surprise then, given the depth of our sinfulness, that many people today feel an overwhelming sense of hopelessness or abandonment.

But for Ezekiel, the nation of Israel was to be compared to a valley of dried bones not just because of their sin, but more so because of their refusal to believe that God could and would forgive that sin. Israel refused to believe, despite what the prophets would tell them, that the same God who showed His love by creating the world out of nothing, would show His love by redeeming the sinful world to Himself. It is one thing to know we are poor miserable sinners, but to believe that we are lost in our sin is where we truly find ourselves without hope and feeling abandoned by God.

But look at what God tells Ezekiel to do with those bones lying on the valley floor. He says, “*Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live...*” When Ezekiel said this there was a mighty rattling sounds and the bones he saw laying on the valley came together. And soon flesh appeared upon them and skin covered them. Speaking God’s Word to them again breath came into them and soon a mighty army stood upon their feet.

What was it that caused these piles of dry bones, these bones that were deader than dead, to be turned into a mighty army, ready and standing on their feet? Is it not the same thing that takes us, who were once dead to our sin, and give us life? It is the Gospel of God – the Good News that God forgives us our sin because Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. But not only the Gospel, for there were many in Israel who would not or could not believe it, just as there are many today who refuse, for one reason or another, that God would forgive them or others. But what brought those dried up bones to life was the breath or the Spirit of God with His Word.

Explaining the Apostles’ Creed, Martin Luther wrote that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in the Gospel or come to Christ as our Savior. But this is the work of the Holy Spirit. As it was for Israel needing the breath of God to bring that nation back to life, so it is for all of us needing the Holy Spirit to make the Good News of Jesus Christ our own. It is simply not

enough to only hear the Word of God or even to know it. The Devil knows God's Word better than anyone. But we must believe it – we must believe it when it tells us that we are lost and condemned sinners, but have been saved by God's grace through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. But this is only possible, to believe God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit. For by ourselves, we are still left in our sin and found rejecting the Good News of Jesus. We need God's help to believe that God has helped us!

And God has always promised that He would help us. In Ezekiel's time God said His breath would enter into the people resurrecting them into life. In John 15:26 Jesus says, "*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*" This Helper, Jesus says, is the Spirit of Truth or the Holy Spirit and He will bear witness about Jesus and help people to believe the Good News that Christ is their Lord and Savior.

We see this promise realized at – the first Christian Pentecost. As people from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem, we are told in Act 2:2-4, "*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" God sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples so that they might be empowered to share the Good News of Jesus. And being filled with the Holy Spirit everything changed for the disciples. No longer were they afraid hiding behind locked doors in fear. But they could be found out in public, bearing witness to the wonderful things that God had done through Christ.

And while we may not have been there in Jerusalem 2000 years ago with tongues of fire over our heads, we too have had the Holy Spirit poured out over us in Holy Baptism. Every baptism, and every remembrance of baptism, is a continuation of Pentecost where God gave His Spirit so that we might believe in Christ Jesus and have the dried bones of our sinful lives forgiven and brought back to life. As individuals then, never give up hope even in the midst of your sin and never believe that God has abandoned you. As a congregation and as a church, let us never believe that we will be stuck, enslaved in the land of Babylon forever. Instead remember those dried bones in the valley brought back to life by the breath of God. Remember the Spirit of God filling the disciples on Pentecost. And remember your baptism, where you too received help from the Helper, the promised Holy Spirit so that you might believe and have life in Jesus' name. Amen.

