



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

July 25th, 2021 A.D. – The 9th 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.

Psalm

Psalm 136:1-9

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁴ to him who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁵ to him who by understanding made the heavens,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁶ to him who spread out the earth above the waters,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁷ to him who made the great lights,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁸ the sun to rule over the day,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

⁹ the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

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 – Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Sermon – † *Praying is Better* † (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

- Millie (infant daughter of Drew and Carolyn Zimmerman) - baptism today
- Owen (grandson of Shari Mehlhoff, great grandson of Donna Birkicht) - born 7/13
- Tina Freese - recovered after hospitalization

Entrusting into God's Care

- Those suffering after the storm and during the pandemic
- The homeless & the unemployed
- Workers in the Church, at Bethany and throughout the World

Healing

- Velma Ziesemer - surgery on 7/29
- Micah (grandson of Willmses) - recovering after surgery
- Ed Schumacher - shoulder injury
- Sandy (neighbor of Bonnie Bubke) - cancer treatment
- Kim Neuhaus - recovering after surgery
- Nancy Owens - recovery after surgery
- Darlene Eckert - recovering at Garnett Place
- Dale Stonewall - recovering at home after surgery
- Faye Sieck - health issues

Shut-Ins

- Wayne Schilling - Linn Manor Care Center, Marion

Mourning

- Barb (sister of Linda Patten) - died 7/16
- Tamara (aunt of Erin Heller & Matt Rinderknecht)- died 7/9
- Darrel (father of Janet Hoech) - died 7/6
- Dorothy (mother of Mark Elias) - died 7/6

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... Almighty and most merciful God, the protector of all who trust in You, strengthen our faith and give us courage to believe that in Your love You will rescue us from all adversities; 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.



✠ *Praying is Better* ✠

The disciples once asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. He responded by teaching them, what we know as the Lord's Prayer. But sometimes, we Christians today, have acted as though the Lord's Prayer is the only prayer the New Testament teaches. But this isn't the case. In our Scripture reading, we see that Paul interrupted his train of thought in his letter to the Ephesians, to offer a powerful prayer for those who face faith shaking circumstances in their lives. For the Ephesians, it was uncertainty about what would happen to them now that Paul was in prison. They wondered, if they would be arrested too? Or, should they return to their old, safe false religions? But, in the midst of this spiritual crisis, Paul prays to calm their worries and fears. And in doing so, Paul teaches us to pray for those family members, those friends and acquaintances who are dealing with faith threatening situations.

Now when many in our society today hears that a person is going through a difficult time, we'll often hear them say something like, "You'll be in our thoughts". But what good can just our thoughts do – they have no power to change anything! Instead, we Christians can do better.

We can pray, "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...that you may be filled with the fullness of God.*" May you, "be filled with the fullness of God" is the climax to Paul's prayer, but it also summarizes all that he has asked beforehand. To pray that someone may be filled with the fullness of God is to ask that Jesus Christ dwell within that person. And faith is the only way by which Christ dwells in anyone's heart. So, Paul is really praying that the Ephesians faith will remain strong, despite his imprisonment. And the only way that faith can remain strong is by God strengthening it through the work of the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, yet far too often, when hearts are troubled and shaken, people turn away from the very thing, the Word, that could strengthen them! So, in essence, they are like cars running on empty.

If you see fellow members isolating themselves, you can offer more than, "I'm thinking of you." Or even just, "I'm praying for you." You can say, "I'm praying that God will fill you with the fullness of Christ!" Nothing is as powerful as asking the Father to strengthen the anxious with His Spirit so that Christ would dwell in them. For the indwelling of Christ can bring peace, forgiveness, life and salvation to those who are troubled by any fear or anxiety.

But Paul's prayer goes even further. He also asks that his hearers may have the power to grasp the magnitude of Christ's love for them – "*that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth*". Often when we face difficult times, the question comes, "Why did God let this happen to

me?” But when we ask this understandable question, we very often approach it with our own limited understanding of God’s love for us! The wise pray-er asks God to give anxious people the power to see beyond his or her condition to the greatness of Christ’s love for them.

Now, why would Paul pray that God would give his hearers the power to grasp the enormity of God’s love? So they won’t lose heart and be discouraged in this life! The devil loves nothing more than to isolate us, to make us believe we are all insignificant, that God has better things to do, that He has better people to look after. The devil wants us to ask, “Who am I among the billions of people in this world, that God should help or love me?”

The statistics say that North American Christianity is shrinking in numbers and influence. That can make us feel insignificant, just as the Christians in Ephesus knew that they were insignificant number of people too. Thanks to modern day advances in astronomy and physics, our understanding of the size of the universe or universes continues to grow, but that can make us feel even more insignificant! Our particular chunk of rock that orbits the Sun can seem so small in the vastness of space. Yet this is where God has focused His redeeming love. It was for fallen humanity that God sent His Son to set things right between Himself, us, and all of creation. The fate of all human history reached its climax when Jesus died on that insignificant little patch of land called Israel. But the enormity of God’s love doesn’t stop with Jesus’ death and resurrection. He sent apostles and missionaries throughout the world to get the Word of life out. He say to it that faithful parents, grandparents, or friends spoke that love to generations of people.

“You’re in thoughts”? How about, “I’m also praying that God will help you see the enormous scope of His love for you, and that He is not limited in the way that he can help you.”

Yet, while Paul asks God to help the Ephesians understand the enormity of God’s love in all of its fullness, even more does he ask God to help them experience that love for themselves in Christ, so that they may have than just a knowledge of it. What such a prayer looks like is the difference between hearing about a great new car, and actually getting behind the wheel and being able to drive it! For our Christian faith is not just a matter of knowing that God is love, even the devil and the demons know that. But it is also the experience of it that Paul prays for his hearers – *“the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”*.

How and when does that experience take place? Today people will jump around from church to church trying to find the experience that they are looking for. But the experience of God’s love is not defined by a church’s size, worship, or its style. It is found where Jesus speaks to us in the Scriptures. We experience that love as we hear Him speak forgiveness through Absolution, for Jesus said in Luke 10, *“The one who hears you, hears me”*. We experience that love as we receive Him in the Sacrament as a pledge that He has given Himself completely for us.

“You’ll be in our thoughts”? How about, “I’m also praying that you will experience God’s love as He gives it to you in worship and as the members of the Church care for you”?

With these bold requests, does Paul exceed the limits of prayer? Does he ask too much of God? Is it okay for you to pray this way? Shouldn’t we be cautious and not ask too much from God? Not at all! Paul ends our Scripture lesson with words that give us confidence to pray just as he did: *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that was ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen”*.

Let your desire for people who suffer, who are in need, who are anxious or worried about life and all of its problems be that of St. Paul – that those who for whom you pray would be filled with the fullness of God as Christ dwells in their hearts through faith. That God, working through

His Holy Spirit using the Word and Sacraments may enable them to grasp the enormous scope of His love. And that finally, you and they may experience that love in God's family. Amen.

