



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

December 19th, 2021

The 4th 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 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.

Introit

(From Luke 1 and I Samuel 2)

☐ My soul magnifies the Lord,
☑ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.
There is none holy like the LORD;
there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.

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 Nicene Creed. Everyone else may continue the service as printed....

Scripture Lesson

(Luke 1:39-45)

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,
⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,
⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Sermon – ✠ *Blessedness Through The Word* ✠ (A copy is included at the end of this service.)

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.**



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

- Advent Season

Entrusting into God's Care

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

Healing

- Carol Grimminger - hospitalization
- Carl (relative of Bonnie Bubke) - health issues
- Janet (mother of Jennifer Shoemaker)- recovering after surgery
- Marlys Jaspersen - recovering after fall
- Burt & Jan (friends of Bonnie Bubke) - health issues
- Charlotte (granddaughter of Karen Swalley) - health issues
- Cindy Broadwater - recovering after surgery
- Tracy Donels - recovering after surgery
- Emily Kroemer - back pain
- Ryan Urban - recovering after surgery
- Marcia (mother of M Rinderknecht & E Heller) - health issues
- Lee Rathje - broken wrist, recovering after fall
- Sharon Ramsey - recovering after surgery
- Faye Sieck - recovering after hospitalization
- Dale Stonewall - recovering at home after surgery

Shut-Ins

- Candi Engel - Garnet Place

Mourning

- Randy (friend of John Hamm) - died 12/12
- Fred Schuchmann - died 12/11
- Pastor Dana (brother of Melissa Loney) - died 11/25

Serving Our Country

- Ben - serving in the Iowa National Guard
- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Amy Smith)- serving in the U.S. Navy
- 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... Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father 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.



✠ Blessedness Through The Word ✠

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

For many years I enjoyed watching the news on television and reading about the news in the paper and on various websites around the internet. But I must admit, recently I've enjoyed these things less and less, almost to the point that I don't do them anymore. Part of the reason, if not the reason for this, is that I've just gotten tired of watching people argue all of the time and mistreat those with whom they disagree. This is clearly seen in politics. Long gone are the days when our representatives would fiercely debate policies with one another during the day and then go out to dinner with each other at night. Instead, there now seems to be a competition to see who can cast their political opponents in the worst possible light, demonizing and insulting them and their followers at every possible opportunity.

Of course, this terrible way of treating each other doesn't just happen in Washington or City Hall. Far too often we see this mistreatment in our own families. Instead of being those whom we can always trust and rely upon to help and lift us up, we see more and more parents and children, brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces – all working to help and lift themselves up. Family members are often looked upon as resources to exploit, rather than people to care for and love.

And unfortunately, even the Church today is not immune from mistreating those within and without. We gossip and talk behind each other's backs. When things aren't being done how we want we sabotage the Church's work through our indifference and lack of support. And instead of proclaiming God's Law out of love so that sinners might repent and find forgiveness in the Gospel, it's often done out of malice and with a false sense of superiority. Here, and in all these cases, it almost seems as if people believe they must tear down others and those around them to look or feel good about themselves!

But with all this mistreatment of one another is a tragic consequence of sin being in the world, thankfully God shows us another way of treating one another in His Word. In today's Scripture reading we see the young Virgin Mary, who is pregnant with Jesus, going to visit her much, much older relative Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. Luke tells us that, "*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth*" (Lk. 1:39-40). Seeing her young relative, Elizabeth blesses Mary and wonders why she should have such an honor saying, "...*why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me*" (Lk. 1:43)?

Notice how these two women treat each other in Christian love. While it certainly was a great honor for Elizabeth to be carrying John the Baptist, Mary is pregnant with the Son of God, the one whom John would serve. Yet Mary doesn't lord this over her relative. Instead, she runs to see Elizabeth when she hears of her pregnancy. And Mary's greeting gives Elizabeth and her household the honor they deserve. Likewise, Elizabeth doesn't look down upon her younger relative Mary. Even though she was much older, perhaps wiser, and married to a respected priest, she considers it the highest of honors to have this unwed pregnant Mary visit her home. Mary and Elizabeth each could have thought of themselves as better than the other, yet they don't. And this is because instead of focusing on what they have done or who they are (which almost always leads to foolish and selfish pride) they focus on what God has done for them and one another.

When we pay less attention to what we think we have done, and more attention to what God has done for us, the relationships that we have in our lives will be like that of Mary and Elizabeth – filled with trust and respect. Trust that kindness in our relationships will be genuine, coming from the heart without any expectation of something in return. Trust that when criticism is given, it is given out of love and concern for one another, and not a desire to tear each other down. When Christians are in God-pleasing relationships, they see sin in others as being done out of weakness, not out of malice or spite. Forgiveness is freely offered as we trust one another, which turns anger and bitterness over sin into a greater unity than there was before. And in these types of relationships there is respect – not thinking of yourself as better or greater than anyone, but rather seeing the Holy Spirit at work in others, just as Jesus was with Mary.

If your relationships with others aren't like this, if they don't mirror what we see with Mary and Elizabeth, then remember that all of this is built on Christ and His Word. It is only when we are focused on these things that we are able to live with one another in ways that are not just pleasing to God, but also helpful and pleasing to ourselves.

For two times in our text Elizabeth calls Mary blessed. But why? Later in Luke 11:27-28, "*As [Jesus] said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!'*"²⁸ *But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'*" There is nothing about Mary herself that would cause her to be blessed, not even giving birth to our Savior. Instead, Jesus says blessedness comes from God and keeping His Word.

This is what Elizabeth says of Mary in our text. In Luke 1:45 we read, “*And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*” Mary believed the angel Gabriel, unlike Elizabeth’s priestly husband, and that is why Elizabeth says Mary is blessed. Jesus says the same thing to the woman who thinks Mary is special because she gave birth to Jesus. But Jesus won’t have any of that. He always goes back to God and His Word.

Obviously, none of us can play a role in God’s plan of salvation like Mary or Elizabeth. But the very thing they had and listened to that caused them to be blessed in their relationship and in their lives, we have as well – the Word of God. Don’t ever think that we as Christians today are missing out on any of God’s blessings because we haven’t seen John the Baptist, or Jesus, or any of His miracles. People who saw those things were only blessed by God’s Word – the very same Word that we have today in the Bible. The very same Word that points us, not to our own work, but to what God has done for us and all people through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Most importantly, the Holy Spirit uses this Word to give and strengthen our faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior. As such, it brings us forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. But as we’ve seen with Mary and Elizabeth, all that God does for our eternal life with Him, impacts how we live in this life with others. And therefore as we celebrate our Lord’s birth this Advent Season and prepare for His coming again, let us continue to focus on Christ and His Word so that we, our relationships, and every aspect of our lives, now and forever, will be truly blessed. Amen.

And now may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds forever in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

