



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

December 4th, 2022 A.D.

The Second 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.

Psalm

From Isaiah 40 & Psalm 105

In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Seek the LORD and his strength;

seek his presence continually!

Remember the wondrous works that he has done,

his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

O offspring of Abraham, his servant,

children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

He is the LORD our God;

his judgments are in all the earth.

He remembers his covenant forever,

the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations.

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

Matthew 3:1-12

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

*“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.’”*

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Sermon – ✠ *Prepare the Way* ✠ (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

- Rowan (granddght of Thomases) - recovering after hospitalized
- Elaine Cook - recovering after cataract surgery

Entrusting into God's Care

- Persecuted Christians and refugees
- Those suffering after the storm and during the pandemic
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Tom Larson - recovering after surgery
- Don Hein - recovering after surgery
- Lucas Heller - recovering after surgery
- Philip Hackbardt - recovering after tumor treatment
- Bonnie Bubke - recovering after hospitalization
- Lorelei Hackbardt - recovering after surgery
- Doug Knutson - recovering at home after surgery
- Joyce Fritz - recovering at home
- Donna Birkicht - health issues
- Dave Dohrmann - recovering after surgery
- Stephen Stepanek - brain cancer treatment
- Abi Clark - health issues
- Carol (mother of Kris Larson) - hospitalization

Homebound

- Tom Stock - at home

Mourning, friends and family of

- Karon (relative of Emily Kroemer)- died 12/2
- Wayne (cousin of Rick Foreman) - died 11/7

- Walter (cousin of Rick Foreman) - died 11/5

Serving Our Country

- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Smiths) - US Navy
- Harrison (son of Siecks) - US Army, deployed to Poland
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - National Guard, deployed

Collect of the Day

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, 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.



✠ Prepare the Way ✠

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

“Preparing the way of the Lord” is Old Testament imagery from Isaiah that our Gospel lesson in Matthew uses to describe the ministry of John the Baptist. John’s message was that the Lord was coming in grace and in judgment, so it was time for the people of Judea and Galilee to

prepare. But due to the sin and idolatry of God's people, it was almost as if God's path to return to His people had become impassable! So, it was John's purpose to get the people ready for that coming of Christ.

But if John the Baptist thought the spiritual condition of first-century Israel was challenging, imagine what he'd think if he were preaching in the spiritual wilderness of the twenty-first-century United States. Today, we have countless false religions and unbiblical world views for people to stumble into; a huge segment of the population identifying as "none", meaning they say that they don't believe in anything; and even a significant portion of Christian churches deny central tenets of the faith to be more attractive to the world around them. It is specifically because of these challenges that this account of John the Baptist continues to contain an important message for Christians today.

Our text from Matthew focuses on three important aspects to preparing Christ's path. First, the central word in John the Baptist's preaching that prepared Christ's path was *repent*. Just as Lent is a season of preparation and spiritual renewal for Christians, so also is Advent. It's a time to quit kidding ourselves about how good and holy we think we are and honestly recognize our sins – in thought, word, and deed - and repent. John the Baptist did not sugarcoat his condemnation of sinners. As did the prophets of ancient Israel, he told people straight up the deep problem they were in without the grace of God. Repent does not mean just being contrite or sorry for our sins, but it also encompasses faith, believing in God's grace to forgive sins for the sake of Christ's saving work. Without the Holy Spirit working the miracle of faith, contrition for sin is a dead end. But with his mention of the kingdom of the heaven, John is pointing his hearers to God's gracious work in Jesus to bring God's reign back to this sinful earth. Just as John called people of old to repent, Advent is a special time for Christians to hear that message of repentance as well. This isn't always easy however.

Three simple words that most people, including many Christians, find difficult to say are "I am sorry". When we sin against God or someone else, we would rather yell, scream, and argue than tell God or that person, "I am sorry". Evidence of repentance, of faith worked by the Holy Spirit, which we see in our Gospel, is when the people coming to John and being baptized confess their sins. During Advent we are encouraged to be honest with God and one another by confessing our wrongs, and our sin. Doing so, we'll see that confession is often the rhythm of life for a Christian. And Advent is a time to make sure that we are back in that rhythm of confessing our sins to God and one another.

The second aspect to preparing Christ's path that is revealed in Scripture reading is to live in your baptismal grace. Jews did many ritual washings seeking purity from their sins. For example, some of the remains uncovered at Qumran, near the region where John baptized, include *mikvahs*, or washing pools with steps where you could walk down into the water for ritual cleansing. John's Baptism was different however; it was a one-time washing that brought forgiveness. It was a one-time sharing of God's forgiveness in a very tangible way. Just as people were plunged under the water, they were washed of their sin through Baptism. It was a Baptism that laid the foundation for the Christian Baptism we have received.

We continue to prepare the way for Christ in this Advent season as we live in and treasure our baptismal grace. John the Baptist said, "*He who is coming after me is mightier than I. ..He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*" (v.11). As amazing as John the Baptist was with his preaching and Baptism, you have received the very preaching and Baptism of Jesus. When you were baptized, you received the Holy Spirit, who united you with all the saving work of Christ: His entire obedient life, His death as a payment for sin, and His resurrection victory! Therefore,

an important aspect of preparing Christ's path is simply living in this baptismal grace, claiming and treasuring it; living in its power and peace. Advent is a time to get back to the spiritual basics, and Baptism is one of those spiritual foundations in our lives.

Finally, our Scripture reading reveals a third aspect to preparing Christ's path. John says, "*Bear the fruit of repentance!*" (v.8). At first, this command sounds rather challenging. John even goes on with a strong word of judgment: "*Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire*" (v.10). If we are sinners, then how can poor trees like us produce good fruit? But, it is the Holy Spirit who works repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, so it is not us who will produce good fruit, but the Holy Spirit whom we have received abundantly in Baptism when we were united with Christ. The fruit we cannot produce by nature – such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – the Holy Spirit can and will produce in and through us. We prepare Christ's path today by bearing the fruit of faith for the world to see, fruit that is not produced by us alone, but rather by the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist must have been overwhelmed with his task to prepare Galilee and Judea for Christ's coming. And likewise, we may feel overwhelmed with what we need to do this Advent season. But to prepare as God would have us, it all starts within us by repenting and confessing our sins; living in our baptismal grace; and bearing the fruit of repentance worked by the Holy Spirit. This of course is never easy. But we don't do this preparation by ourselves. We have been baptized. We have the Holy Spirit. We have faith. So we can be sure that God will lead us to repentance and bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives making us ready not just for Christmas, but also for our Lord to come once again in glory. Amen.

