



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

December 18th, 2022 A.D.

The Fourth 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

(Isaiah 64 and Psalm 130)

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.

And he will redeem Israel

from all his iniquities.

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 1:18-25)

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Sermon – † *Christmas Confidence* † (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

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

- John (brother of Donice McDonald) - cancer treatment
- Dave Christian - recovering after surgery
- Raymond (father of Lora Raymon) - hospitalization
- Joyce Fritz - hospice care
- Nora (great granddaughter of Pat Krekeler) - In NICU
- Courtney (Monday morning coffee friend) - cancer treatments
- Jean (mother of Kristi Montague) - hospitalization after stroke
- 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
- Doug Knutson - recovering at home after surgery
- Donna Birkicht - health issues
- Dave Dohrmann - recovering after surgery
- Stephen Stepanek - brain cancer treatment
- Abi Clark - health issues

Homebound

- Darlene Eckert - at home

Mourning, friends and family of

- Carol (mother of Kris Larson) - died 12/15
- Marian (friend of Don Hein) - died 12/2
- Karon (relative of Kroemer family) - died 12/2

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 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.



✠ Christmas Confidence ✠

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

When many of us think of the Christmas story, there is always tendency for us to romanticize these events happening to Joseph and Mary. We of course remember the surprise of Mary becoming pregnant, but then after that it seems that many just think Mary and Joseph did what they were told, until Jesus was born, everyone living “happily ever after lives” that we love to sing about today. But our text today reminds us that, at least at first, the events around Jesus’ birth were anything but something to sing about. And indeed, it seems these events actually led to heartache and quite a bit of fear.

The story, if not all its’ implications for us today, is well known. Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married. But “engaged” may not be strong enough of a word to describe the relationship. What bound them was more than what constitutes an engagement in our society. In Jewish society of that day, the agreement of betrothal between two families legally bound a man and a woman as husband and wife—though the two so bound did not begin to live together for a time, usually a full year. This was the situation that Joseph and Mary found themselves in when they got the news – Mary was pregnant.

The Gospel of Luke tells us about Mary's reaction, but here in Matthew we see Joseph's. We are told that because Joseph was a righteous and just man, he would end the engagement—which at that time meant he would divorce her. It seems that Joseph was afraid of what would happen if he married a woman who was pregnant with a child that was not his own. But in addition to being righteous, we are also told that Joseph was unwilling to put Mary to shame. Most people agree that Mary could have been stoned to death if people thought she had cheated on Joseph. But even if this didn't happen, having a child at that time, without being married was a sentence to a life of hardship and disgrace. So, Joseph, afraid for his own righteousness and not wanting to see the woman he loved have any more hardship placed on her than necessary, was prepared to do what he thought was best.

The problem however with doing what *we* think is best, is that very often it is not what **God** thinks is best! Joseph found this out when an angel from God appeared to him in a dream. "*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins*" (1:20-21). Rather than leaving Joseph alone to figure out God's will, or to overcome his fears in marrying the girl he loved, God sends an angel, His messenger, to reveal God's will to Joseph. God tells Joseph that Mary had not been unfaithful, but that the child she is carrying is the Son of God Himself. God tells Joseph this is His plan of salvation revealed through the prophets, as when we read in Isaiah, "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel*" (Matthew 1:23). God would not only be with His people through the Christ child called "Immanuel" to save them from their sins, but He would also be with His people, like Joseph, to quiet their fears of living as His people.

Today, not many of us have heaven sent angels appearing to us in dreams, but then again, not many of us have loved ones telling us they are carrying the Son of God inside of them. But many of us, like Joseph, do wonder what God is doing in the world today. Many of us like Joseph do encounter fear.

Joseph was afraid to take Mary as his wife – what are we afraid of today? At a pastors' conference this/last week I could sense that many pastors were worried about the church losing its' influence in society if we remain faithful to God's Word. In a world that adopts ways and values that deviate from God's will more and more, many churches and Christians feel pressured to compromise their beliefs and the Word of God in order to retain the influence that the church once enjoyed.

Or perhaps you as an individual face fears that come about from following God. As inflation raises the cost of just about everything today, we may wonder if we can still be good stewards of the gifts that God has given us? Or are we afraid that if we give generously to help our neighbors, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, we may not have enough for our daily bread? Or when almost all of us face the pressures of not enough time in our day, how many times have we skipped church, our daily devotions, or prayer, afraid we won't have enough time to do the things that we "need" to do?

Or if we don't face the fear of following God's ways, perhaps we at least question what God is doing in some aspect of our lives? Again, we'll never encounter a virgin birth, but what parent hasn't at one time or another questioned God's plan for their children? What injured person hasn't wondered why the accident happened? What sick person hasn't asked, "Why?"

Well, in the midst of our fears and our questions, we remember that God did not leave Joseph alone to overcome his fear of marrying Mary or to discern God's will for him. Instead, the Word of God came to Joseph through an angel, calming his fears, revealing God's will, and

strengthening Joseph to live out his life of faith. And today, we have the same Word of God coming to us.

The prophets of God, and His apostles and evangelists have written down His Word so that today we can clearly see His plan of salvation through Christ. That child that was miraculously conceived in Mary, and whom Joseph raised as his own, was no ordinary child. He was God in the flesh. Incarnate so that He might be placed under the Law of God, keep it perfectly, and yet still die as if a sinner. But being sinless, His death paid the price for our sin. So now, there is nothing for us to fear – no sickness, no sin, not even death or hell. God tells us in His Word that Christ, our Savior, has been born.

And all of this is God’s love for us. His Word tells us, “...*God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him*” (John 3:17). Jesus becoming one of us, so that He might die for our sins, is how God has loved us. And as Paul says in Romans 8:31b-32, “...*If God is for us, who can be against us?*”³² *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*” God may not reveal all of His ways and all of His plans to us. But He has revealed His love through His Son. And if God gave His own Son into death so that we might live...was can have confidence that His plans are always the best for us!

We all may want every aspect of our lives to play out like a hallmark Christmas special on television. But the fact is, we live in a sinful world. Like Mary and Joseph, our lives are often filled with doubts and fears. But God came to them, and He comes to us today. Both through His Word, that is the Bible, as well as coming to us in the Word made flesh. He is Immanuel, God with us, and He has promised to be with us always through the Word and through the Sacraments. Jesus comes to us today with God’s love and forgiveness in the waters of Baptism and with His true body and blood at the altar. Therefore, we have nothing to fear, or even question, but every reason to give God praise and live in His confidence and hope. Amen.

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

