



# Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

**December 17, 2023 A.D.**

**The Third Sunday of 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 Psalm 85*

Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,  
**and grant us your salvation.**  
Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,  
**for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.**  
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,  
**that glory may dwell in our land.**  
Yes, the LORD will give what is good,  
**and our land will yield its increase.**  
Righteousness will go before him  
**and make his footsteps a way.**

*For those with access to the internet, you may now play today's worship video, located on Bethany's website ([www.bethanycr.org](http://www.bethanycr.org)) under the Sermons tab and then continue with the Nicene Creed. Everyone else may continue the service as printed....*

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## **Scripture Lesson**

*(1 Thessalonians 5:16-24)*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise prophecies, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast what is good. <sup>22</sup>Abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

**Sermon** ✠ *Rejoice?* ✠ *(A copy is included at the end of this service.)*

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## 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**

- Shirley Kellogg - hospice care at Terrace Glen, Marion
- Persecuted Christians and refugees
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

**Healing**

- Lora Raymon - upcoming surgery on 12/20
- Carolyn Johnson - recovering after surgery
- Pat (mother of Karen Swanson) - recovering after falls
- Diane (relative of Brenda Heims) - health issues
- Rodney (relative of Betty Happel) - cancer
- Jan (friend of Joni Schmith) - complications from chemo
- Cindy Broadwater - recovering at Harmony after hospitalization
- Lee Heims - recovering after surgery
- Karl Hoech - recovering after surgery
- Del Block - recovering after hospitalization
- Kelly Johnson - healing
- Bonnie Breiholz - recovering after surgery
- Philip Hackbardt - recovering after surgery
- Ron Prescott - recovering after surgery
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment
- Doug Knutson - immunotherapy treatment
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Abi Clark - health issues

**Homebound**

- Cindy Broadwater - Harmony Cedar Rapids

**Mourning, friends and family of**

- Loretta (relative of Barb Rocarek & Tyler Steggall) - died 12/4
- Denny (relative of Brenda Heims) - died 12/3
- Lee Roesti (former music director) - died 11/18

**Serving Our Country**

- Ben (son of Kroemers) - IA National Guard
- Devin (friend of Kroemers) - IA Army National Guard
- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Smiths) - US Navy
- Harrison (son of Siecks) - US Army, stationed in TX
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - IA National Guard

**Collect of the Day**

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; 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.**

**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.**



✠ *Rejoice?* ✠

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

We all know that uncertainty in life breeds anxiety. What isn't yet set or determined tends to make us nervous. When our favorite team is in a tie game with playoff hopes on the line – that can be an anxious feeling. Waiting for the results of a medical test – that's a lot harder still. Until the doctor or lab calls us with a clean bill of health, we probably worry.

And, in anxious times – whatever the reasons – it may not be all that easy to hear St. Paul's exhortation when he writes, "*Rejoice always.*" In fact, with so much uncertainty in life these days, it may be difficult to hear a lot of what God says through the apostle in our text. For St. Paul actually gives us quite a lengthy list of things that ought to reflect the sanctified and holy life of a Christian.

First, we come across three "dos" in our lives as Christians. Paul says in verse 16 that we should "*rejoice always*". More than just being happy or denying the reality of the sinful world around us, true joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It manifests itself, not necessarily in smiles and laughter, but rather in our whole lives and is contagious to those around us. But this type of joy is not easy. With world events these days, with loved ones or even ourselves being sick, with all of the uncertainty in our lives these days there can be a lot of anxiety that makes it hard to rejoice.

The second thing that Paul tells Christians to do is pray without ceasing in verse 17. It has been said that relationships grow with communication. Most of us know that this is true with our relationships with each other, and it is also true in our relationship with God in prayer.

God invites us to pray to Him. God wants us to lift up our thanks and concerns before Him in prayer. Knowing that this is what God wants because of His love and concern for us can bring a huge relief to all of the anxiety we have in life. But how can we really be sure that He will hear or answer our prayers? And what happens when we are too anxious, too weak, too troubled, to even pray to begin with?

The last thing that Paul tells us to do in our Scripture lesson is to give thanks in all circumstances. It is true that the Good News of Jesus Christ forms a grateful heart in all who believe. Knowing that God alone has rescued us from our sin and certain spiritual is a humble realization and one that we are thankful for. But, it is much easier to be grateful when things are going well of us, isn't it. How can we be grateful when we don't know where we'll be working tomorrow, what my health will be, or who will be my true friend?

In addition to telling us what to do, there are also things in our text that St. Paul tells us that we should not do. He tells us not to “*quench the Spirit*”. Christians believe that the Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace and so Paul tells us not to avoid God’s Word or His Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The Comforter, as the Holy Spirit is sometimes called, cannot comfort us after all if we shut Him out of our lives. But even when we come to the Lord’s house and hear His Word and receive Communion, we’re not all that comforted. And even if things go great on Sunday, we still have to face the uncertainty of Monday morning.

St. Paul also tells us that we should not “*despise prophecies*”. This happens when we misuse God’s Word, often for our own purposes. We look for meanings in the Bible that we want to see, instead of letting God’s message come to us as He wants it. We “despise prophecies” when God’s Word speaks to us clearly, but we ignore it because we think that we know better.

And finally we read in our text that we are not to “*give in to evil*”. This includes all forms of evil and sin and temptation. But especially those false teachers of God’s Word that promise faithful Christians exactly what they want to hear about their futures, telling them that God always wants them to be healthy, wealthy, and happy. Listening to such false teachings, giving in to this evil of believing promises that God has not promised, leads only to disappointment and increases our anxiety in life.

These are just some of the things that St. Paul tells us that God wants us to do and not to do. Paul says this is the will of God...for you. God wants us to be a holy people and live lives that reflect that – doing good works, loving Him, and loving our neighbor in all sorts of ways. But how can we do this with so much uncertainty, and anxiousness, and evil in the world today? How can we live as God wants, when we are tempted by evil and have sin inside of ourselves?

Well, the simple answer is that by ourselves, we cannot live as St. Paul tells us. We cannot just determine that we will pray more. We can’t just tell ourselves to be more thankful, let alone more joyful.

But thankfully we can with our Savior. For St. Paul tells us that these do’s and don’ts are not just God’s will for us, they are God’s will in Christ Jesus. And with Christ, all of these things are already being done so that there is no uncertainty about our lives any longer.

Did you notice in our text that Paul says our whole spirit and soul and body will surely be “kept” blameless. Not “made” blameless. Kept blameless. Making us blameless has already been done when Jesus paid for the sins of the world on the cross. Us being made blameless is finished. It is done! All people have been justified before God.

And when you were baptized, what Jesus has already done, what He has finished on that cross, was made yours personally. It’s done, set in concrete, on the date that is on your baptismal certificate. There is nothing, no power on earth or in Hell that can undo that. Your sins have been washed away and you have been made blameless.

How you live your life now and your attitude in life are all a result of these things that Christ has already done. Because you have been made holy, you do holy things. The fact that you are holy – and that God will keep you holy, is the reason to rejoice; it’s the reason to know God will hear your prayers; it’s the thing that we always give thanks for. That you are holy by the blood of Christ is what the Spirit keeps telling you here in the Word and Sacraments. There is no uncertainty about this.

Christ has come and died for you and will come again. While we wait for the glorious day, live holy lives as Paul tells us to. But do not try to do this by your own power and strength. Remember the God of peace sanctifies us completely and He who is faithful will surely do it. Amen.