



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

December 15, 2024 A.D. The 3rd 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 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

(From Philippians 4 and Psalm 146)

Rejoice in the Lord always;

☑ again I will say, Rejoice.

Blessèd is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD his God,

who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,

who keeps faith forever;

who executes justice for the oppressed,

who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

Scripture Lesson

(Luke 7:18-28)

¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ²⁰And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” ²¹In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

²⁴When John’s messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵What then did you

go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. ²⁶What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is he of whom it is written,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”*

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Sermon

(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.**

Bethany's Prayer List

Thanksgiving

- Elaine Cook - recovered after fall

Entrusting into God's Care

- Nathan & Sarah Federwitz - Lutheran Bible Translators
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Jill (friend of Emily Kroemer) - cancer
- Ron Prescott - upcoming surgery on 12/17
- Paul LeFevere - hospitalization
- Tom Larson - health issues
- Everly Zimmerman - knee injury
- Fred Henkelmann - hospitalization
- Kris Larson - recovering after hospitalization
- David (father of Chris Frampton) - recovering after surgery
- Jamie (daughter of Larsons) - health and wellbeing
- Phillip Hackbardt - recovering after surgery
- Duane Pfeffer - recovering after surgery
- Dave Christian - cancer treatment

- Faye Sieck - recovering after hospitalization
- Elda Joyner - recovering at home after surgery
- John Hamm - recovering at assisted living in Waukee
- Angela Yuza - recovering after surgery
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment

Homebound

- Dorothy Freese - Keystone Place

Mourning, friends and family of

- Virginia (relative of Nancylee Siebenmann)- died 12/10
- Prudy Petersen - died 12/7
- Ken (brother of Karen Schmidt) - died 11/19

Serving Our Country

- Mallory (friend of Abi Clark) - IA National Guard
- Amber (dght of Ann Balvanz) - US Army, stationed in Germany
- 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

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.



Grace,, mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

This week our Advent Wreaths grow ever brighter as we move ever closer to celebrating the Light of the World being born on Christmas Day. And of course, we are not just lighting any old blue candle on the Advent Wreath this morning, but today we light the third candle, the rose candle, the candle of Joy.

Now of course, when December rolls around, we don't have to see a pink candle being lighted in a wreath to know that this is supposed to be a season of Joy. We remember the joy of our savior Jesus being born – so that we are no longer are dead to sin, but have been given new life through our faith in Jesus Christ! We know the joy of hopefully having some time off of school or work, or some extra time with our family and friends. Perhaps we may even know the joy of a gift or two under the Christmas tree. All of these things can be great and joyous during this time of year, especially remembering the gift of Christ. But for many, the joy Christmas can be incredibly fragile and not all that long lasting.

For instance I am one who is always looking forward to celebrating Christmas. I enjoy the focus of the church this time of year as we celebrate Christ's first coming and look forward to His second. It brings me no small amount of joy to see members of our congregation not only coming to church to hear God's Word and receive the sacraments, but also living as Christians, helping one another and those less fortunate than themselves. But in the midst of this joy, there is also some stress, some worry and concern. For some, this might come about from things like getting all the shopping and all of the preparations done for the holidays. For others the stress and worry might be from things events in our nation or around the world. Issues at work, at school, in our families, with our health - can all remind us that in midst of all the joy this year, there is worry and concern for our congregation and for its' members. One minute everything is cruising along just great, we really feel like we're on top of the world, that God is just pouring down His blessings upon us, and then the next minute, it's not blessings that are getting dumped on us.

I know that I'm not the only one who feels this way, because we read in our Scripture lesson that John the Baptist seems to have lost some of the joy of Christ's coming as well. We read in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus Himself says that, "*of all those born of women, none is greater than John the Baptist.*" He was the one sent by God to prepare the way for the coming Christ. He was the voice out in the desert calling out to those around, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" as he pointed to Jesus. Early in the Gospel of Luke, we even hear that when Mary was pregnant with Jesus and went to see her relative Elizabeth who was pregnant with John, John leapt for joy as the yet unborn Christ came near! If anyone had ever seemed to have clear picture of who Jesus was, what He would do, and thus an incredible reason to be joyous, it would seem to be John.

But by the time we get to chapter 7 in Luke's Gospel, it seems that John isn't so joyous. During his ministry, John the Baptist had angered the king, causing him to earn a stay at the local prison. As time went by, it seems that even the great John the Baptist, began to wonder, exactly what was going on with Jesus. So he sends his disciples to Jesus, to ask Him, "*Are you the One? Or should we expect someone else?*" It's as if he was asking Jesus, if the joy that he had even before he was misplaced?

Now I do understand that spending time in prison because you are a faithful follower of Christ is a difficult burden. But shouldn't John the Baptist have known better. If he wavers in the faith, if his joy is turned to doubt, what chance do we have when we facing the troubles in life? If the GOAT, the Greatest of All Time, is questioning when he is in prison, what will happen to us when we suffer persecution, or sickness, or even death? As Christians, ones who know the Almighty God loves all people, should we be expecting something more, perhaps someone else?

Jesus tells John through the disciples, "No", Jesus is exactly who John thought He was. Jesus tells the messengers sent by John to take a look around and tell John what they see. Those who are sick are cured, the dead are brought back to life, and the message of salvation is preached not the proud or the privileged, but to the poor. This is what the people had been waiting for.

When John began to doubt, when the Joy that he had at the coming of Christ faded as he sat in prison, Jesus told him to look around at all that was happening. He showed John and those around Him some pretty impressive miracles. Miracles that show Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh.

Now we may pity ourselves since we cannot see with our own eyes the miracles that Jesus performed. In a sense, we are like John in prison – separated from seeing the miracles of Jesus not by bars and guards, but by space and time. And yet we do have our messengers. John sent two who reported back to him, we have four. In the scriptures we have the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the authors of the Gospels who tell us of the miracles that Jesus had done. Who tell us that Jesus is our Savior. That we have a reason – we have the reason - to be joyous, not just today or this time of year, but forever, because God has come in the flesh.

The pink candle of Advent reminds us of this Christian Joy that we have regardless of where the king puts us, how busy we become, or even who death takes away from us. We can be joyful because God has come to us in the midst of our sin and the problems we face. Is it always easy? Of course not. At times we will always want to be like John the Baptist in prison, as opposed to John the Baptist leaping for joy. But when we do find that our Joy is slipping away, whether it be just before Christmas, or anytime of the year, remember what Jesus said to John's messengers. "Take a look around at what you see." Look at the work of Christ. John's disciples saw blind men seeing, the deaf hearing and the lame walking. We have the faithful testimony of the Gospel writers that tell us these things and more. We have God coming to us in His Word and Sacraments. We also have those who work in the Kingdom today, who while they may not perform deeds that are as spectacular as raising the dead, do live faithfully as God's people in the midst of a sinful world.

And while we know of Jesus' miracles, and we see signs of God's kingdom today, we can see the greatest miracle the world has known, one that John was unable to see. We have the privilege of seeing the incarnate Christ die for us and rise in three days. That is truly a miracle that Jesus would die for us sinners, and rise again to give us life. And so we remember, that our Joy doesn't lie with us, but with the incarnate and resurrected Christ – the true source of Joy for us and all people, today and always. Amen.

