



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

December 22, 2024 A.D. 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 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 1 Samuel 2 & Luke 1)

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.

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

(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

- Angela Yuza - recovered after surgery

Entrusting into God's Care

- Fred Henkelmann - hospice care at Westridge Care Center
- Nathan & Sarah Federwitz - Lutheran Bible Translators
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Ridlee (1-year-old friend of Emily Kroemer) - leukemia
- Jill (friend of Emily Kroemer) - cancer
- Ron Prescott - recovering after surgery
- Paul LeFevere - hospitalization
- Tom Larson - health issues
- Everly Zimmerman - knee injury
- 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
- John Hamm - recovering at assisted living in Waukee
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment

Homebound

- Elda Joyner - at home

Mourning, friends and family of

- Virginia (relative of Nancylee Siebenmann) - died 12/10
- Prudy Petersen - died 12/7

Serving Our Country

- Aiden (grandson of Foremans) - US Army
- 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, Germany
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - IA National Guard

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

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 – the Father, the ✚ Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

People in our culture are often celebrated for what they look like, instead of for who they are. The airwaves are filled with ads for diet pills and plans, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery, all aimed at showing women and men what they can truly be if only they would improve their appearance. Magazines in the grocery store feature an endless parade of the latest models and celebrity sensations. Pop culture encourages living in the moment and celebrates the lives of the young and beautiful. In many cases, the stars, having no grounding nor morals, meet tragic ends. But regardless of where the famous end up, a consequence of paying so much attention to appearances is that it keeps all of us from recognizing true beauty. In today's text, we meet two women. Luke never bothers to tell us what they looked like. Nevertheless, he shows them for what they are: truly beautiful women.

The first of these women was probably quite young, perhaps a teenager. Her name was Mary. As was the custom of the age, she was engaged to a somewhat older man, a carpenter by the name of Joseph. And, as you know, she found herself to be with child. This was not because she had put the cart before the horse. Rather, the angel proclaimed that her child would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary, a virgin, had been chosen to be our Lord's mother. And she received this news with great humility, saying, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord*".

The second woman, Elizabeth was married to Zechariah, a distinguished priest who served in the temple. Unlike Mary, she was advanced in age, too old it was said to have a child, but pregnant as well. Luke tells us that she was a righteous woman and so in the eyes of God, no less beautiful than young Mary.

Now, as soon as Mary entered Elizabeth's house, she excitedly told Elizabeth all that had happened: about the angel, about the conception by the Holy Spirit, and about the child whom she would call Jesus, which means, "*The Lord saves.*" And at this greeting, how did Elizabeth react? Was she perhaps a little jealous that Mary's news was greater than her own? Was she chagrined or put out by the fact that this young girl, and not she, would give birth to the Savior? After all, Elizabeth was married to a respected priest who served in the temple. Mary, on the other hand, was only a simple girl, set to marry a simple carpenter. But no. There was no jealousy in Elizabeth. In fact, she was honored, saying, "*Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" (v 43). At Mary's good news, Elizabeth herself was glad, and she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

Compare this beautiful scene with the ugliness of sin. The ugliness of sin is constantly looking in the mirror, without a thought for others. The world says, "A woman should not have to carry a child that she doesn't want. Especially if the child gets in the way of her own plans or her own career." In the ugliness of sin, life is all about "me, myself, and I." We judge others by how useful they are to us. And woe to anyone who gets in our way - whether that be an inconvenient child, a person suffering with a handicap, or an elderly person who requires "too much" of our care, attention, and love. So goes the ugliness of sin and vanity.

How much better is the scene that Luke tells us of. Here we see a wonderful affirmation of life. Here we see beautiful faith as it is given by God. Consider Mary. At hearing that she would be the mother of our Lord, Mary did not succumb to vanity or engage in empty boasting. She has no ideas of self-promotion or self-fulfillment. Instead, she finds herself raised and graced by what the Lord has done. She finds her fulfillment in what the Lord has promised. Mary's

beauty is in her humility and trust. In response to the angel's word, she said simply, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*".

This was not blind obedience or mere ignorance. Mary trusted in the Lord because she knew that He is, in fact, trustworthy. Throughout the ages, our Lord had kept His promises. He has a long history of raising the lowly and showing kindness to the poor. Mary knew that through her child, God could and would do great things. In her Son, she would see the proud scattered and the mighty knocked off their thrones. In her Son, she could see the humble exalted and the hungry filled with good things. In her Son, she could see the salvation of Israel and her own exaltation as well.

Mary had the right point of view. Society teaches us to look in the mirror and judge ourselves by appearance. But what's the result? Either vanity or despair. Because, finally, there's nothing there. Mary and Elizabeth, on the other hand, were women of substance. They did not vainly look in the mirror but were happy for each other, and more important, they put their focus on Christ. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was most excited by the fact that Mary would give birth to the Savior. And because of that, Elizabeth could rejoice with Mary, apart from jealousy. Nor was Mary vain. Rather than look at what she had done in life, she looked at what God had done for her and saw the One who would come forth and save her. The attention of both Elizabeth and Mary was on our Lord and because they were focusing on Christ, they had a beauty that this world does not know. They looked into the face of the Lord and reflected His beauty.

So, what does this all mean for us in our world of superficiality and vanity? I suppose that in this season of Advent, we would do well to take some time out of our busy schedules and reflect once more on what it's all about. We would all do well to look beyond the tinsel and Christmas lights, fixing our eyes on the Christ Child, finding our glory in the cross that He would take up on our behalf.

This means teaching our children the countercultural values that Mary sang about in her Magnificat. For earthly beauty is a gift from God and cosmetics are fine. But earthly beauty fades. So, let us move away from the vanity of the mirror and the ugliness of pride. We do better to adorn ourselves with Christ and to put on His Spirit of holiness, living as His disciples. We do better to place Christ before our eyes and before the eyes of our daughters and sons.

Our Lord could have chosen to be born in beautiful Jerusalem, or, for that matter, in glorious Rome. Instead, he chose to be born in lowly Bethlehem, least among the cities of Judah. He could have chosen to enter into the family of the high priest or be born into the imperial family of Emperor Augustus, but instead he chose to be born into the family of a carpenter, with a poor young maiden as his mother and became a beautiful Savior, willingly bearing all of our sin. As Isaiah would say of him: "*He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him*" (Is 53:2). Ah, but that's true beauty! As He endures the ugliness of the cross for us, we see His truly beautiful heart that last for an eternity!

