



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

February 2, 2025 A.D. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

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 Psalm 48)

We have thought on your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.

Within her citadels

God has made himself known as a fortress.

As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God,
which God will establish forever.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Scripture Lesson

(Luke 2:22-32)

²²When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, [Mary and Joseph] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹“*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;*

³⁰*for my eyes have seen your salvation*

³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

Sermon (A copy is included at the end of this service, or watch the video at bethanycr.org/sermons)

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.**

Bethany's Prayer List

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

- Ella (friend of Zimmermans) - critical condition from accident
- Carolyn Johnson - illness
- Holly (mother of Taylor Chittick) - recovering after surgery
- Mitch Myers - recovering after surgery
- Harold Schoen - recovering after surgery
- Ron Prescott - recovering after surgery

- Paul LeFevere - recovering after hospitalization
- Tom Larson - health issues
- Everly Zimmerman - knee injury
- Phillip Hackbardt - recovering after surgery
- Dave Christian - cancer treatment
- John Hamm - recovering at assisted living in Waukee
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment

Homebound

- Marge Grovert – Ridgeview Assisted Living

Mourning, friends and family of

- Charlotte (relative of E Kroemer) – died 1/23
- Kenton Zenor - died 1/4
- Fred Henkelmann - died 12/25

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

Almighty and ever-living God, as Your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh, grant that we may be presented to You with pure and clean hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Concluding Prayers

Lord God, gracious and merciful Father, because You have promised to hear us when we bring You are cares, we implore You not to deal with us according to our sins but according to Your mercy. Send seasonable weather so that in due time the earth may yield her increase. Remind us ever to receive with thanks our daily bread, trusting You as our Gracious God; 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.

✠ *How It Seems* ✠

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

There is an old saying that claims things are not always what they seem to be. We find this to be the case many times in the Bible. In the Old Testament we find a tiny, little nation known as Israel, wedged between the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. We would think that the Israelites would be a mere footnote in history, wiped away by any one of these great empires, yet they aren't. They survived because they are, contrary to all appearances, God's chosen people through whom He would bless the world.

In the New Testament we find an interesting man walking through Galilee, teaching and preaching. And though He does a miracle here and there, most people at the time looked at Him as nothing special. In fact many hated Him, and even accused Him of being a criminal so that He would be tortured and die upon a cross. This man was of course, not just a man, but the Son of God – Jesus Christ.

There are many other examples in the Bible of where things are not always what they seem. Just look at our text today when we catch a glimpse of Jesus' ministry in Capernaum and things appear to be going very well. Jesus heals the mother-in-law of Simon, who eventually becomes known as Peter. Jesus also healed many others, and even drove out demons from those people who were possessed by them. Because of all this, Jesus became very popular, so popular in fact that when He goes off by Himself early one morning the disciples chastise Him saying "Everyone is looking for you!" They think that things are going so well and they want them to continue. But as we know, things are not always what they seem.

Despite the appearance of success in Capernaum, Jesus did not come just to heal the sick and drive out demons. He did these things to show people His power and also because He had compassion on them. But that was not the real reason He had come. And when the people He was with, even the disciples, only saw Him as one who could make people well, He had to move on. He had to move on because He was with us to heal, but not just our physical diseases, but more importantly our spiritual disease of sin. Jesus came to deliver us, not just from demon possession, but from something much more fearful and deadly - our own sin.

In Mark 8:31 we read, "*And [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.*" Contrary to what many may think, this is why Jesus came into this world. He came to die on the cross and to be raised to life so that every man, woman, and child could be forgiven. The forgiveness of sins, through His life, death, and resurrection is the central point of Jesus' teaching. It is what the Bible is all about and the foundation on which our entire faith and lives as Christians rest.

As disciples of Christ, we need to be reminded of this from time to time for two reasons. First because there is a tendency for us to be like the disciples and crowds in Capernaum, wanting Jesus to perform this or that miracle, meanwhile neglecting who He really is and what He really came to do.

All of us are all too aware of the problems that sin cause in our lives. Our own disobedience has taken us out of paradise where we would live forever and put us in a damaged world where we get sick. How many of us have been to the doctor, the dentist, or the optometrist because we are not well. We might say that we are there because we ate too many cheeseburgers, or didn't floss, or read too much with too little light – and that may be true. But the reason that sickness is even around in the first place is because we have ruined God's creation with our sin.

Sin that not only destroys our bodies, but also our relationships with one another. How many marriages and families have been destroyed because of sin? Again we might lay the blame on any number of social or psychological reasons, but behind all these lies our own sin. Our very own bodies rebelling against God.

The second reason we need to be reminded that Jesus came to forgive sins is that when we are confronted with sickness or death or broken marriages and friendships - if we only call out to God to fix the body or the relationship, we are only asking God to put a patch on the problem. Doing this is like being stabbed and having doctor give you morphine but not taking the knife out or stopping the bleeding. Jesus came to take the knife out. He came not just to comfort, but to heal us by forgiving our sin.

This is now where we find our strength to live as God's people. Jesus had two disciples who did similar things, but ended up with very different results. On the one hand you have Judas, whose betrayal of Jesus for thirty silver coins led to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. On the other hand you have Peter, who did not betray Christ for money, but denied even knowing Him to save his own skin. Not just once mind you, but three times. These are both terrible sins, but look what happened to each of the sinners. Judas hanged himself in despair, while Peter became one of the most influential men in all of history by being a leader in the very early church. And so what was the difference between these two men, these two sinners? It wasn't their sin, nor was it their ability to go back and fix the problem or make up for it. Rather, it was faith that Jesus could and would forgive them. It was the faith that reminded us that no matter how evil they were, the blood of Christ washed their sins away. Judas did not have this faith, but Peter did.

With faith in Christ, your life and your problems immediately change. Within our families and circle of friends we no longer need to carry the burden of guilt caused by our own lies and betrayals, for they were nailed to the cross with Christ. And when we look at Christ on the cross through our eyes of faith and realize that He is there not just for us, but for our husbands and wives, for our children and parents, for our friends, and even our enemies, it becomes impossible to hate or hold a grudge against them. I know that some of you have enemies that you refuse to forgive, and think that all of this is just fanciful thinking. There are also times where we believe that forgiving, instead of seeking revenge, is a sign of weakness. But remember that you once were an enemy of God because of your sin against Him, but by the same death on the cross, that should lead us to forgive others no matter what they have done to us, we have been forgiven by God no matter what we have done to Him. If you think it's impossible to forgive your enemy, just think of what God did for you. Luther says that to be in the Kingdom of Christ is to be among your enemies, for this is what Christ Himself did. To those who do not want to forgive and be with those who wrong them, but rather sit among the "roses and lilies" Luther says, "*You blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing who would ever be spared!?!*" A citizen of God's kingdom forgives, because he or she has been forgiven.

This is why Jesus came and this is what He preached. If Christ does look with mercy and compassion upon us and perform modern miracles then let us be the first to thank Him for these blessings. But let us always thank Him for His death resurrection that takes away our sins. For with forgiveness we have life, eternal and everlasting life. But in Christ we also find strength to live as His people. To the world this strength may look weak or inadequate – just as the nation of Israel looked to the empires around it, or as Jesus looked to those trying to kill Him. But as with Israel and Jesus, our strength is not always what it seems. For our strength and power lies in God Himself.