



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

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

March 23, 2025 A.D. The Third Sunday in Lent

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 Psalms 1 & 5)

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.
For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.
The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

Scripture Lesson

(Luke 13:1-9)

¹There were some present at that very time who told [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

⁶And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the

ground?’⁸ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.’⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Sermon

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

Last Friday, 46 tornados tore their way through states just to the south of Iowa. On Saturday, 41 more tornados came. These storms killed 13 people in MO; 6 in MS; 3 in AL and AR; others in Texas and Kansas. The same storms also sparked 130 wildfires that burned over 400 homes in Oklahoma. Were these people who had their homes destroyed or who were killed or injured, worse sinners than those who were unaffected? Were they worse offenders than you who sit here today alive and perhaps even well? Jesus says, “*No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish!*”

In our text from Luke 13, Jesus makes no distinction between the tragedies caused by man, such as the massacre of the Galileans by Roman soldiers, or freak accidents like the collapsing of the tower in Siloam. The devastation and heart break brought about by these events are not God’s punishment upon individual sinners for specific sins. Rather they, like the catastrophes in our time, are a call to repentance. A call that, if we are honest with ourselves, forces us to realize that we ourselves are sinners who deserve to face the anger of the Almighty.

It is true that there are people whom we love and respect in this world; People to whom we look up to or love so much that we find it hard to believe that God would let anything bad happen to them at all. But we have to silence the well-intended voice of our emotions for a moment and listen to the Lord as He speaks to us in His Word. There He tells us that all have fallen short of the glory of God. There He tells us that He looks down from heaven and sees that there is no one who is righteous, not even one. Remember, God is judging by His standards here, not ours. The standards that say someone who hates is a murder. That its not OK to look or to touch. That not only should we not steal, but that we must protect not just what is ours, but even our neighbors. That we are to love not just our loved ones, but even our enemies. Looking at the standards that God has set, examining others and ourselves with God’s Law, it is clear that we do not deserve to be loved by God, but punished by Him. The question then is not why do these terrible things happen, but why has God given us anything good?!?

This is not an easy concept to grasp, let alone like, for most of us. Like someone deathly ill who won’t go to the doctor, our pride doesn’t want us to admit how sinful we really are. But if we can put that pride aside, keep our egos in check, if we can repent of our sin, we are carried by God’s Word from despair up to the heights of a sure and certain hope.

Calling us to repentance, Jesus tells us of the vinedresser and the fig tree. For years the owner of the vineyard patiently waited for this fig tree that he had planted to bear fruit. He knew that it was eating up valuable time from the vinedresser, fertilizer and nutrients from the other plants, nevertheless he patiently waited until he could wait no longer. After three years, it was time to get the tree down. But the vinedresser pleads with the owner of the vineyard for one more year. “Let me work on it a little longer. Dig around out it, fertilize it a little more” he says. “if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.” The vinedresser will work to save the tree, however the fig tree must respond by producing fruit.

Jesus tells this parable to his listeners so that will understand God’s mercy in light of the evil that they see everyday. Like the owner of the vineyard God is patient with us, not destroying or cutting us down at immediately, but giving us time to bear the fruit of repentance. Of course

God's patience and mercy will not last forever, but even when it runs out, there is one who works for us, one who intercedes on our behalf to the Father – our Lord Jesus Christ. By Jesus' work on and leading up to the cross, He has given all of us a chance to turn away from our sins and grab hold of the forgiveness that He bought with His own innocent blood. On the cross where Jesus suffered and died everyone of our sins that convicts us of not living up to God's standards, every sin that would justify us being cut down and thrown into the fire, every sin that causes untold suffering and death in this world was paid for so that you might be forgiven.

Arthur Just, a Lutheran professor, therefore says that tragedies that we face in life, be them global or individual, must be seen from the foot of the cross. From there, and only there, may a Christian encounter the suffering Christ and see in Christ's own suffering for us, her comfort, her peace, her forgiveness and everlasting life. Do Christians have these wonderful gifts because they are better than others. No, but we have this because turning from our sins, we have turned to Jesus to save us. We repent and are forgiven. This forgiveness...we do not deserve, but comes from our patient and loving God who gave His own Son over to death, so that we will live. Amen.

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

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

- Blakely (daughter of Nick & Kiley Ryan) - baptism today

Entrusting into God's Care

- Tony Dixon & family (King of Kings DCE) - house fire on 2/25
- Nathan & Sarah Federwitz - Lutheran Bible Translators
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Dan (relative of Ann Balvanz) - recovering after surgery

- Rick Foreman - recovering after surgery
- Derek (son of Hackbardts) - recovering after surgery
- Kelly Johnson - life issues
- Pat Krekeler - recovering after hospitalization
- Luci Stoelting - recovering after fall
- Linda Patten - recovering at Cottage Grove after surgery
- Oliver (nephew of Darin & Maren Elm) - recovering after surgery
- Clyde (friend of Dave Johnson) - recovering after surgery
- Shannon (relative of Tim Potter) - cancer
- Ron Prescott - recovering after surgery
- Tom Larson - health issues
- Everly Zimmerman - knee injury
- Dave Christian - cancer treatment
- Deb Heitland - health issues
- Ethel Doehrmann - immunotherapy treatment

Homebound

- Candi Engel - Heritage Care Center

Mourning, friends and family of

- Kim (relative of Shirley Witte) - died 3/19
- Frank (uncle of Karen Swanson) - died 2/28
- Don (godfather of Noah Pelletier) - died 2/27

Serving Our Country

- Aiden (grandson of Foremans) - US Army
- Mallory (friend of Abi Clark) - IA National Guard
- Amber (daughter of Ann Balvanz) - US Army, Germany
- Ben (son of Kroemers) - IA National Guard
- Devin (friend of Kroemers) - IA Army National Guard
- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Smiths) - US Navy
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - IA National Guard
- Harrison (son of Siecks)- US Army, Germany

Collect of the Day

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You 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.

