


# HEAR OUR PRAYER



Lenten Devotional Booklet



Prayer was very important to Jesus. It was a time he could talk to his Heavenly Father to receive strength for his ministry and for all that lay ahead of him. Jesus used prayer not only to seek his Father's help for himself, but also for his disciples and others touched by his ministry. The period of Lent focuses on the troubles and trials Jesus faced in His ministry and in lead up to Good Friday. Prayer was Jesus' source of strength... I pray it is also yours!

The Lenten season begins with Ash Wednesday and goes right through to Easter Sunday – there are 40 days and 6 Sundays. This is a booklet of 46 short devotionals, Bible readings and prayers for each day during the Lenten Season (including Sundays).

The Bible Readings that go with each day lead you through the prayers of Jesus to strengthen and to support you in your personal prayer life. The Lord's Prayer and Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers are on page 51 (inside back cover) – you may wish to include these with your devotion time.

***May these devotions bring your personal prayer life  
to a greater depth and a greater knowledge  
of the extent of God's love for you.***

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# Prayer of Obedience

Ash Wednesday

Read: Psalm 22

***“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered” Hebrews 5:7-8 (NIV)***

I once read in a devotional prayer: ***‘Since we cannot always do what we like, grant that we may like what we do.’*** Obeying God and doing what he wants us to do is not always the easy option to follow. Even Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed that there might be another way on his journey to the cross. Jesus being the Son of God, was subject to His Father’s plan and will for his life. Being made perfect he always lived in obedience even through great suffering.

As a young child I was taught to obey my parents and other people in authority for they have been placed in these positions by God to protect and care for me. When I didn’t obey there were usually consequences that followed. God has placed many people in our lives to direct and guide us: parents, teachers, pastors, government officials, and so many others. These are not there to constrain or constrict us but to lead us safely through our lives.

Jesus prayed throughout his life for his people and even became the sin offering, dying for our sins. Jesus was an example for our prayer life too. When he needed help or energy to keep going, he prayed. When he was tempted by the Devil, he prayed. He also went off by himself to pray so as to be focussed on what he needed to say to his Heavenly Father. He prayed for strength in Gethsemane. He prayed ‘with loud cries’ on the cross. God always sustained His Son, enabling him to become *“the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9b NIV)*. We learn from Jesus how to obey and how to pray. Give us the hearts to listen, pray and obey ....so that we “may like what we do.”

***Prayer:*** Lord Jesus, teach me to be obedient to you and your will for my life. Let my prayers, along with everything else I say and do, show my joyful obedience to your Word. Amen.

# Remembrance Prayer

2nd Day in Lent (Thursday)

Read: Isaiah 49:8-15

***“...according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord.”***

***Psalm 25:7b (NIV)***

It is said that early missionary priests in South America used a flower as a visual aid to explain Christ's suffering to the Indians. This was the 'passion flower'. The five stamens were said to represent Jesus' five wounds; the circle of stamens – the crown of thorns; the three stigma – the nails that held Jesus to the cross. Another flower to have a special message is the 'Forget-me-not', a symbol of God's faithfulness. This can assure us that God does not forget his people. In the Isaiah reading there are questions about human traits, but it resounds in verse 15 with God saying: ***“I will not forget you!”***

Jesus, being the very image of God, also does not forget. Throughout his journey to the cross, He was forgetful of himself but very concerned for those around him. He prayed for his disciples. He tried to keep Peter from denying him. He asked his disciple to care for his mother, who was now alone. He said to the thief on the cross that he would not forget him, but that he would be with him in Paradise that very day. Jesus also remembers us in his prayer for all believers as recorded in John 17:20-26. ***“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” (verse 26 NIV)***

Revisiting the story of the 'passion flower', make sure you also tell the 'Forget-me-not' flower's story. Knowing that God never forgets us, we can only respond in gratitude for this love and faithfulness to us in all circumstances. The story of the passion flower is meaningless without the knowledge of God's Forget-me-not!

***Prayer:*** My Lord Jesus, thank you for remembering me and wanting me to be in your Kingdom. Help me to always remember you and share your love with others. Amen.

# God-Pleasing Prayers

3rd Day in Lent (Friday)

*Read: Psalm 42*

***“By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me – a prayer to the God of my life.” Psalm 42:8 (NIV)***

How do we pray ‘God-pleasing’ prayers? I have been in many bible study groups throughout the years and there are always a couple people who don’t want to pray aloud in the group. I once asked someone why they didn’t want to and the response wasn’t ‘I just don’t know what to say’... it was ‘How do I know that God will be happy with my prayer?’ God is pleased with any prayer as that means the person is talking to him, having a conversation and acknowledges him as their Heavenly Father. In Psalm 141:2, the psalmist talks of prayer as sweet-smelling incense, a gift of love to God that drifts upwards to heaven.

Jesus prayed continually to his Father, and God was always well-pleased with his Son and with all His words and works which ultimately were from the Father himself. Much of what Jesus did and said was steeped with temple worship of the Old Testament as this is what the people knew and understood at the time. Jesus was called the High Priest who was able to talk directly to God and intercede on our behalf... which is what the High Priests did in the Old Testament times. But, Jesus was recreating how to talk to God. He became the God-pleasing sacrifice who took upon himself the sins of the whole world. Then, as evidence that this sacrifice was accepted by God, the Father in heaven raised His Son from the dead on Easter morning.

Through Jesus, we can now approach our Heavenly Father directly and talk to him in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. Know that everything we say to God is pleasing to him and we are loved unconditionally.

***Prayer:*** *Thank you Lord, for accepting my prayers as offerings of praise to you. Thank you for loving me unconditionally and allowing me to talk to you any time. Amen.*

# God's Promises in Prayer

4th Day in Lent (Saturday)

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:15-22

***"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."***

***Psalms 27:14 (NIV)***

Catching buses was a daily occurrence in my teenage years. One morning I remember sitting at the stop waiting – no bus came! I sat until someone said the bus drivers were on strike, so I set off back home for my mother to drive me. When we pray do we wait expectantly like waiting for a bus knowing that it will come sooner or later... or do we sometimes think God has gone on strike and doesn't hear or see us waiting for him? Some say: God promises to come and help, but he never comes through. Others say: It is useless to pray and to wait for God.

Are we to believe in a *deus ex machina*, a God who comes on cue solving the unsolvable – at our beck and call – to help us out of trouble? Are we to reach the negative conclusion about the promises of God because they are not fulfilled in our own time schedule? Faith is what allows us to wait for God to answer. He loves us too much to answer at any other but the perfect time.

In 2 Corinthians 1:20a, Paul states emphatically that: ***"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Christ."*** The 'proof' of the Christian's faith rests in Jesus Christ, in whom God has kept all His promises. Our Messiah, born of a virgin, was to come; He came in the person of Jesus. He was to suffer and die for the sins of all; Jesus did this. He was to rise again to fulfil His redeeming work; Jesus did this. God has left nothing undone to assure us that our salvation in Christ is secure and His promises to us are also secure. Know that your praying and waiting are not in vain – our Heavenly Father hears and acts according to what is best for his beloved children. Wait with confident expectation!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you God for fulfilling all your promises in Jesus. I know that your promises to me are also true and I just need to wait for your will to be done. Amen.*

# Coming to Jesus in Prayer

1st Sunday during Lent

*Read: John 15:12-17*

***Jesus said: "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."  
Matthew 21:22 (NIV)***

Two talented men, Daniel Chester French (sculptor) and Henry Bacon (architect) were close friends. Their skills complemented each other as the men worked on joint projects. One such example was in the Lincoln Memorial in which French created the statue of Lincoln and Bacon designed the building. This friendship produced works loved by the people.

There is also such a friendship that exists between Jesus and us. In the John 15 reading, Jesus states that he is not calling us to be his servants, but his friends. This friendship like the above two friends, French and Bacon, produce works created and loved by others and for others. This friendship is the reason that we can come to Jesus in prayer. Jesus wants to hear what burdens and cares we have. He carried all these sins and burdens to the cross because of his immense love for us. All power in heaven and on earth accompanies this great love for us. Jesus even says in the verse above that whatever we ask in prayer will be heard by our Saviour and friend. So, whatever the problem we can take it to our Lord in prayer.

Since Jesus has done everything for our salvation, as a friend we can serve him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. But Jesus himself doesn't need this service, but our neighbours in the world do. We are able to show our friendship and love for Jesus by showing friendship and love to all those around us. Pray for your neighbour, your friends, those in need and those you don't know. Our Lord hears us and answers in love.

***Prayer:*** *Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for your friendship and love for me. As a friend I want to show my love for you by loving others – help me to do this. Amen.*



# Praying to the Good Doctor

5th Day in Lent (Monday)

*Read: Matthew 9:9-13*

***"On hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"***  
***Mark 2:17 (NIV)***

Many turn to God in prayer for healing. When all else seems lost, they figure it can't hurt to ask God. Jesus came for those sick both in body and spirit and encourages us to call on him in all our hurts and troubles. Jesus in his ministry healed many people hurting from various afflictions: blindness, deafness, crippled, leper, paraplegic, even death. There are times though that in healing their ailments Jesus referred to their spiritual situation, "Your faith has made you well."

Jesus himself fell on his knees in Gethsemane wrestling with the pain that was to come and praying to his Heavenly Father for respite from this pain. Soon after, his enemies attacked him and thereafter he was beaten, flogged, struck, verbally abused and then forced to carry a cross too heavy for him to bear. Did God remove this pain and suffering? No, because knowing that the result of this suffering was the salvation for all of humanity. Can Jesus heal us? Of course he can and he does but it may not be how we want or think. Our Lord is the 'good doctor'. He does not like it when we are in pain or suffering, but he has the fortune to know how the story ends – we are not privy to that, but we must trust in his love for us. He became a man in weakness as he journeyed to the cross to also understand human pain and suffering.

Because Jesus fulfilled his task and rose from the dead, he established himself as our Saviour, our helper and healer, a doctor of our body and soul. He proved himself worthy of our prayers. Those who come to him with the burden of their sins, pain and grief will never be turned away but will receive rest for their souls. Jesus, our good doctor has promised us this!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you, Father, for the promise of healing and rest that you give me. Help me to turn to you every day knowing you hear my prayers in times of trouble. Amen.*

# Prayer of the Redeemed

6th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

*Read: Colossians 2:6-15*

***“God forgave all our sins; he cancelled the unfavourable record of our debts with its binding rules and did away with it completely by nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13b, 14 (GNB)***

Recently we have all been involved and affected by the Covid 19 virus. It has affected everyone in some way – financially, socially, mentally and physically. This pandemic has caused huge economic problems within our state, country and the world with many small and large businesses being on the brink of financial ruin and having to commit to bankruptcy, with the issue of not being able to pay the debts owed. The governments have tried to help in many ways with stimulus grants and loans, but in some cases it wasn't enough. The gifts and stimulus packages can only help to a point financially – eventually something has to be done!

In a spiritual sense we are in a huge debt to our Heavenly Father for our sins and wrong-doings which just keep piling up. How could we ever make retribution for all this and be accepted into heaven on our own merits? Fortunately, in Jesus our debt was paid in full with his death on the cross, forever covering and paying for every wrong thing we have ever done... and will ever do in the future.

In Christ, it has all been done for us – there is nothing more we can do. Our debts are forgiven, we are washed clean by the blood of Christ and are one of the redeemed. In the verse in Colossians above (read it again), it tells exactly what God has done. We are forgiven. Our debts cancelled and we are redeemed by Jesus' actions. No matter what may come our way in the future – for in the world there are always uncertainties – but in Christ all is certain so go ahead knowing your eternal life is secured! Pray the prayer of the redeemed thanking and praising Jesus for his love!

***Prayer:*** *Loving Saviour, thank you for paying the debt of all my sins and allowing me to live my life freed from guilt. I know you hold the world in your hands, heal the suffering and turmoil. Amen.*

# 'Not Yet!'

## 7th Day in Lent (Wednesday)

Read: John 12:17-36

***Jesus replied, "Now my heart is troubled and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" John 12:27, 28a (NIV)***

I have heard people say that God has three ways of answering prayers: 'no', 'yes', and 'not yet.' The words of Jesus in the verse above were spoken after his journey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He foreknew what his fate was to be that week and was inwardly troubled. This was also a sure sign that Jesus (God's Son) was indeed human – not some cosmic being without feelings or emotions. The intensity of his troubled state was not yet as great as it would be later in the Garden of Gethsemane, but it was real. His inner struggle had begun. Jesus didn't ask at this time that the Father save him from the hour – the time of suffering and death. Rather, Jesus stated that his reason for not praying this: ***"It was for this very reason I came to this hour."***

Had Jesus prayed that the Father should save him from this hour, I imagine God would have said: 'Not yet!' Jesus' deliverance from all evil was to come at a later time that week. It came when Jesus stated on the cross, "It is finished," for then God received his Spirit and on the third day raised him bodily from the dead.

God tells us to pray to him, to call on him, and he promises to hear us. This is a gold-edged promise, but has no date stamped on it or gives a date that we ask or suggest. God's promises are answered in just the right time for us and we can pray as Jesus did: ***"Father, glorify your name!"***

"God is not ignoring your prayers – He just loves you too much to answer your prayers at any other time than the right time."

~Lysa Terkeurst

***Prayer:*** Lord God, thank you for hearing my prayers and answering them when it is best for me. Help me to be patient and to pray continually. Amen.

# Close to God in Prayer

## 8th Day in Lent (Thursday)

*Read: Mark 1:21-34*

***“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35 (NIV)***

Some people only pray when they are caught in a crisis. In the classic story of Huckleberry Finn, a story by Mark Twain, Huck and Jim (a runaway slave) are caught in a severe storm as they float down the Mississippi River on a raft. Jim asks, “Huck, aren’t you going to pray?” Huckleberry Finn responds, “It ain’t bad enough yet.”

Are we sometimes like that, deciding not to pray as it’s not bad enough? Do we think we might run out of prayers or ask God’s favour too much? Jesus prayed fervently. Not just in his last week but throughout his ministry using prayer to bring him strength and renew his spirit. In the bible reading we see what an incredible day Jesus experienced. He had taught in the synagogue, freed a man from an unclean spirit, cured Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever and in the cool of the evening had healed all the sick who had been brought to him. I’m sure Jesus would have been exhausted, but yet in verse 35 we read that he got up when it was still dark and went out to a quiet place to pray. Jesus knew that even when there wasn’t a crisis, he needed to remain close to his Heavenly Father in prayer. In prayer he renewed himself, replenished his strength, and kept his ministry in perspective.

Jesus is more than our example in prayer – he is our enabler. Because he redeemed us through his death on the cross, he removed every obstacle, clearing the way for us to come confidently into the presence of God in prayer. We can boldly ask God as dear children ask their human fathers. God is a loving Father and we can come to him at any time, not only in times of trouble but in times when all is well. Follow Jesus’ example!

***Prayer:*** *Heavenly Father, thank you that I can come to you at all times in prayer knowing that you will always help renew and strengthen me for whatever lies ahead. Amen.*

# A Morning Prayer

9th Day in Lent (Friday)

*Read: Psalm 5*

***“O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress.” Isaiah 33:2 (NIV)***

There is something special about getting up early in the morning before anyone is awake and going for a walk or sitting having that first cup of coffee. If it's a work morning and you have to get up, it's not the same, but when we arise of our own accord and not rush, the morning is a very special time. You feel like you are the only one awake and slowly the birds wake with their calling and the beginnings of the day are heard.

I can understand Jesus getting up early to pray (see yesterday's devotion). What a time uninterrupted to pray to his Heavenly Father. This was not only an early morning, but also an early time in his ministry. It would be nearly three more years before he would be crucified and again rise early that first Easter morning; heralding in the glorious resurrection of God's Son. In the meantime, this working, healing and praying ministry of Jesus would continue until he had fully healed all people from the sickness of sin.

King David in many of his Psalms writes about rising early and praying to God for help, for thanksgiving and for deliverance. In Psalm 5:3 we read, ***“In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.”***

Following Jesus and King David's example maybe you also can begin each day with prayer and praise asking for God's help in situations and then wait and see how the day unfolds. Each morning is a new beginning, a new gift of God's love and faithfulness for the day ahead. Begin each morning in prayer!

***Prayer:*** *Jesus you are Lord of my life. I pray that you hear my prayers as I begin each day in your name. May each day be filled with your blessings. Amen.*

# Jesus' Baptismal Prayer

10th Day in Lent (Saturday)

Read: John 1:19-34

***"When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Luke 3:21-22 (NIV)***

At our baptism we are named and claimed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are made God's special children and have access directly to God's throne of grace. Such power and authority is given in baptism, so why do we not place a greater importance on it? Years ago there was a conference 'Child in my Hands' where the importance of celebrating with the baptised and making it key to the child's growing was discussed and explained. Such incredible importance and emphasis! Do we still stress and celebrate this incredible time in a person's life when they become heirs of God's eternal kingdom?

In Luke, Jesus was praying and heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit rested on him – the beginnings of baptism into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus was given credence by God that he was truly His Son and had all the power in heaven and earth at his disposal. In our baptism we are also given access to heaven and have placed in our hearts the power of the Holy Spirit. In the baptismal prayer we are claimed by God as a precious child of the Kingdom.

Each day, Martin Luther says is a new day in God's world and so we should mark ourselves with the cross every morning reaffirming our baptism and God's love for us. "In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life. By water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church which is the body of Christ. As we live with him and with his people, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God."

[Extract: Martin Luther's Introduction to the service of Holy Baptism]

**Prayer:** *God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I give you thanks for freeing me from the power of sin and for raising me to a new life through this holy sacrament. Pour your Holy Spirit on me: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence. Amen. [from the 'Service of Holy Baptism']*

# Wilderness Praying

2nd Sunday during Lent

*Read: Mark 14:32-42*

***“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” Luke 5:16 (NIV)***

As part of my training for Lutheran Youth Encounter for team ministry I had to head out into the Black Hills of South Dakota for 24 hours of solitude. Quite a frightening thing to do, especially not knowing the American countryside and its animals. The first 8 hours seemed to be so loud where every little snap of a twig or screech of an owl brought terror to my heart. But soon, with only a Bible and sleeping bag I was able to steady my heart and really read, pray and concentrate on scripture. I sometimes feel that this was the first time I truly felt the presence of God speaking to my quiet, listening heart.

Jesus must have felt the same way to truly pray without any distractions, for in more than one instance he retreated to the wilderness or a lonely place to pray. Here he could meditate on his true mission and hear what God was saying to him. Prayer, like a golden thread was prominently being woven into the very fabric of his life and especially into his redeeming ministry. From earliest childhood in Nazareth to his final hours on Calvary's cross, Jesus prayed. We don't know the first prayer Jesus spoke – it may have been simply 'Abba, Father' that he again repeated in Gethsemane – but we do know his last prayer: 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' Strengthened through prayer, Jesus was able to carry out his work to the salvation of us all.

We too will find our everyday work, family commitments, jobs, and personal time easier when we follow the example of Jesus in prayer. When we seem to be the busiest with people and things and commitments crowding in on us, that we know it is time to pray the hardest. Where do you do your 'wilderness praying'?

***Prayer:*** *Dear Lord, help me to find time to sit still and be quiet to pray and listen to you. Still my mind and heart and open me up to your leading and guiding. Amen.*

# Praying for Guidance

11th Day in Lent (Monday)

*Read: Luke 6:12-16*

***“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:”  
Luke 6:12-13 (NIV)***

During his ministry on earth Jesus had a lot to do – prove that he was God’s Son, deal with opposition from the Pharisees, cope with people’s needs and most importantly train people up for the continuance of his ministry. There were many who followed him from place to place, but to choose his special apostles and helpers for him to train, teach and carry on the ministry; he needed guidance from his Heavenly Father.

In Luke 6:12, we read that Jesus went to a lonely place (a mountainside) to pray and talk to God. It says that then in the morning he must have had clarity to be able to then name the twelve apostles/disciples who would learn from him and also be guided by him, so that the ministry could continue when he was gone. Paul speaks of it in Romans 6:14-15 when he asks: ***“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?”***

Paul was emphasising the need for people to get to know and love Jesus and then be a disciple to others around them telling them the Good News and spreading God’s love. Jesus had a most important job choosing his disciples as they would then carry on his work when he was gone. Asking God’s guidance and the Holy Spirit’s help was key to the calling of these men. So too for us, when we face important decisions: medical issue, accepting a new job, hiring a new employee, moving to a new home, planning for the future – ask God’s guidance and pray for help and discernment. God will always guide you in the right direction... just ask!

***Prayer:*** Dear Lord, I pray that you will guide and lead me in areas of my life in which I am uncertain. Especially give me the courage to be your disciple, telling others of your love for them. Amen.



# Prayer of Thanks

12th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

*Read: Mark 8:1-10*

***“And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.” Matthew 14:19 (NIV)***

Since I was a little girl, to this day, when sitting down to a meal we ‘say grace’ and afterwards we ‘give thanks’. The above bible verse has gotten me thinking – ‘giving thanks’ works for both before and after the meals. We give thanks to God for the meal that he is providing for us (as Jesus did) and then afterwards we thank God for all that he gave us in sustaining our bodies with food. Do we thank God enough for providing us with every good and perfect gift for body and soul?

Jesus teaches us to ask, but he also teaches us to ‘give thanks’. In the feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000 in Mark 8, Jesus prays. He acknowledges that God is the one who provides and gives everything. For the people of that time in the Jewish religion, a special prayer (Bracha) must be said before any eating and the type of prayer is determined by the type of food. The fact that Jesus prayed was not a shock to the people, rather how he prayed and that God accepted the prayer by multiplying it to feed everyone. Jesus, in the situations of everyday life and in formal worship, always gave thanks. We see this when Jesus celebrated the Passover at the Last Supper in ‘giving thanks’ for the bread and wine. We also give thanks to God for this gift of life.

So, let’s now ask ourselves again: Do we give thanks? Do we thank God through Jesus Christ for all his bodily and spiritual blessings to us? Do we express our gratitude for the greatest of all his gifts: the salvation that we now have through the death and resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ? Take time to thank God!

***Prayer:*** *Dear Jesus, thank you for all you do for me in saving me from all my sins by dying on the cross. I appreciate the blessings you provide for me every day, thank you. Amen.*

# Mountaintop Prayer

13th Day in Lent (Wednesday)

*Read: Luke 9:28-36*

***“[Jesus] took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.” Luke 9:28b (NIV)***

The expression, ‘Mountaintop experience’ originated from the Bible because of the many dealings God had with his people on mountains. So the phrase itself has come to mean ‘a moment of transcendence or epiphany; and in particular an experience of significant revelation given by God’. In the Bible there are the stories: Noah’s Ark resting on Mt. Ararat; Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah; on Mt. Sinai Moses received the Ten Commandments; Elijah challenged the false prophets on Mt. Carmel; Elijah heard the ‘still small voice’ on Mt. Horeb; King David built Jerusalem on Mt. Zion; and Jesus taught his disciples on the Mount of Olives.

Therefore it shouldn’t surprise us that in this story Jesus took a couple disciples to pray on a mountain. Being on a mountain can make one feel close to God and experience his majesty. Maybe Jesus also felt close to his Father there. On this mountain while praying with the disciples, Jesus was transfigured – changed with a shining face, dazzling white clothes and then Moses and Elijah appearing... what wonderful sights and sounds the disciples must have experienced! Such an extraordinary event called for prayer in an extraordinary setting on the mountain.

Mountains are symbolic of God coming to his people. God gives ‘mountaintop experiences’ to sustain us for when we enter valleys in our lives. The purpose for Jesus praying on a mountain was to encourage us to pray everywhere so as to help us journey more closely with him through our everyday lives. For Moses that journey was to lead God’s people to the Promised Land. For Elijah it was to confront wickedness in the land and appoint the next prophet. For Jesus it was the journey to the cross and for us it is a journey from our sinfulness to the promise of eternal life. Prayer makes things happen!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you, Father for the mountaintop experiences that you have given me. Help me to lift up my eyes and know that my help comes from you. Amen.*

# Praying to the Father

14th Day in Lent (Thursday)

*Read: Matthew 6:5-13*

***Jesus says: "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." John 14:13-14 (NIV)***

In the last few years, leading up to Father's day there are a lot of adverts on TV around fathers and fatherhood – 'Dads4kids'. They show dads being the caregivers of children, feeding them, hugging, changing nappies, playing games, and working beside them. Through this media coverage there is the hope that all fathers will model these actions to help raise children into well-rounded members of society who are valued and loved.

But, we also have the example of our Heavenly Father – who loves, cares, helps and guides all his children into the way they should go. Jesus also referred to God as his Father and spent many hours in prayer talking to him. The difference between an earthly and our heavenly Father is that God knows what we need before we ask it and gives us according to what we need and not just want. God knows each of us intimately, even knowing how many hairs are on our heads. Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), who was known as the 'Prince of Preachers', said about his Heavenly Father: "He who counts the stars and calls them by their names is in no danger of forgetting his own children."

When we pray to God we are also praying to the Trinity, the Triune God. The concept of divine Fatherhood expresses love which is common to the three persons of the Trinity. The Father showed love by sending his Son to redeem us. The Son showed love when in obedience to his Father he gave his life for our salvation. The Holy Spirit shows love when he creates and keeps us in the Father's saving faith and allows us access to talk freely to our Heavenly Father and His Son. What an amazing gift we have been given to be able to call God our Father and speak to him as easily as Jesus did!

***Prayer:*** *My dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your love and forgiveness that you give me every day. Continue to help, guide and protect me from all harm of body or soul. Amen.*

# The Holiness of God's Name

15th Day in Lent (Friday)

Read: Hebrews 13:7-16

***"Jesus said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name...'"***  
**Luke 11:2a (NIV)**

A well-known hero in England, especially after defeating Napoleon at Waterloo, was the Duke of Wellington. While his name was on many lips, not everyone could recognise him in person. On one occasion a man approached him and said, "Mr Jones, I believe." The duke replied, "Sir, if you believe that, you'll believe anything."

How is your relationship with God? Have you heard his name but do not know him personally? Do you think that it doesn't matter what name you call him? If so, you'll believe just about anything.

God's name is not just a label; it is God as he has revealed himself in His Word – as Lord (Yahweh, Jehovah), God Most High, Maker and Redeemer, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is not indifferent about His name, declaring through the prophet Isaiah 42:8a: ***"I am the Lord; that is my name!"***

As God himself is holy, so is his name. We need not pray that God's name be hallowed, for it is holy. Jesus though had a good purpose in mind when he taught us to pray: 'Hallowed be your name.' In this petition we ask God's help for sanctifying or keeping holy his precious name. How? By accepting in faith what God has revealed about his saving love and by living according to His Word. We do not use God's name in vain, but call on it for prayer, praise and thanksgiving. In his prayer for all believers, Jesus says: ***"I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*** John 17:26 (NRSV) God has made his name known to us and allows us to use it personally – what an incredible love!

***Prayer:*** Dear Lord, thank you that you have revealed your name to me – help me to keep it holy. Help me to live knowing your saving love and share your name with others. Amen.

# Praying for God's Kingdom

16th Day in Lent (Saturday)

*Read: Matthew 22:1-14*

***"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)***

JRR Tolkien wrote 'The Hobbit' and 'The Lord of the Rings' and quite a few smaller stories. He was in the process of writing 'The Silmarillion' when he died and so his son Christopher finished it for him and had it published four years after JRR Tolkien's death. What would have happened if Jesus had died before completing his work? It would then be up to us to put the finishing touches to it – maybe then it would not look quite the same!

We can thank our Lord and Saviour that he did not leave redemption an unfinished symphony, or an unfinished book. The last words he spoke on the cross were – "It is finished!" Salvation is assured and death has been beaten. The kingdom of God is all about redemption from guilt, power and the punishment of sin. In the Matthew reading for today, God compares the kingdom of God to a king holding a banquet where all are invited – it is divine grace that we can all come; the Heavenly Father provides everything because the Son has done it all.

Wherever this truth is told and believed so the Kingdom of God comes to us, for that is where God wants to be – in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is at work through the Gospel which is where salvation then comes to us. So, the Kingdom of God does come without our praying for it, but we pray 'Your Kingdom come' in Lent because we ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our faith so that we can remain in this kingdom until we go to our eternal Kingdom. We pray that God may use us as his instruments to bring others to his kingdom of grace and then into the kingdom of glory. Then the glorious work Jesus completed on an inglorious cross will have been completed!

***Prayer:*** *May your Kingdom come dear Lord and your will be done on earth as in heaven. Guide me in the kingdom of grace until I enter your kingdom of glory. Amen.*

# Praying for God's Will

3rd Sunday during Lent

Read: Hebrews 10:1-10

***"And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Hebrews 10:10 (NIV)***

***"The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11a NIV).*** The converse was also true: Moses spoke freely and informally to God, pleading with him and sometimes arguing. But he didn't always get his way. When nearing the borders of the Promised Land Moses prayed, ***"Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan..." (Deuteronomy 3:25a NIV)*** But the Lord said no. Moses did have the opportunity to see the land from the top of Pisgah. He was well aware that not his will, but God's will must be done on earth as in heaven.

Jesus, as our great prayer teacher, taught us by example. In the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed, ***"...yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42b NIV).*** Earlier in his ministry Jesus said, ***"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38 NIV).*** It was the will of the Father that his Son should be offered up on the altar of the cross to bear the sins of all humanity. That will, despite great agony and pain, Jesus obeyed.

Jesus, also when teaching his disciples to pray said, ***"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father... your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9a, 10b NIV).*** Not only do we pray that God's will may be done, but we also endeavour to carry out God's will in our everyday living. It is not always easy to do what God wants, rather than what the world expects. But, as we carry out our daily vocation and Christian mission, we can hear God saying, ***"Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21a NIV).*** God's will is our mission!

***Prayer:*** Lord, help me to do your will here on earth. May you bless my life with your promise of joy eternal in your Kingdom of glory. Amen.

# Provisions for Life

## 17th Day in Lent (Monday)

*Read: John 19:17-27*

***“When you pray say: ‘Father... Give us each our daily bread.’” Luke 11:2a, 3 (NIV)***

There is a close relationship between the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross and the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. This is not surprising as Jesus authored both of them. In both, God is addressed as Father; forgiveness is prayed for; finished redemption is the message of the kingdom; and the commitment of our spirit into the hands of God is the final delivery from evil.

In the Bible verse above, we are to ask for our daily bread – is there a counterpart in the statements of Jesus from the cross? There is a connection in the case of Mary, Jesus’ mother. When we think of ‘daily bread’ as not only food but, as Martin Luther says in the explanation to the fourth petition: ‘...everything we need from day to day,’ including food and clothing, home and family, daily work... So, when we consider ‘daily bread’ as all that and more, Jesus provided for his mother when asking the disciple at the cross to take care of her from that time and it also then states that Mary was cared for from then on by this disciple.

In the home of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, Jesus in his childhood and youth had received his daily bread. Now the tables were to be turned. The disciple as a substitute son, was to provide Mary with the means to live and survive. Our Lord Jesus, even when he was nailed to a cross, makes provision for his family. Jesus will not forget us. He gave his life so that we might satisfy our hungry souls with himself as the Bread of Life. In answer to prayer he will also supply bread for our bodies. So the logic of faith applies: If Christ did not spare his life but gave himself up for us all, will he not also give us all things we need for the support of our earthly life? Jesus provides for our lives!

***Prayer:*** *Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for supplying for my everyday needs and providing to sustain my life. Help me trust in your love and mercy to me. Amen.*

# Praying for Forgiveness

18th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

*Read: Matthew 18:15-22*

***“In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)***

In the Old Testament we read of the sacrifices of animals on altars built in worship for God. Animals were killed and their blood poured all over the altar and then the remains were burned outside the city. This was done in accordance with God’s commands given for the proper worship of God. There were High Priests whose job it was to make sure that the offerings were done correctly so as to be acceptable to God. For us in the 21st Century, this can appear cruel and unnecessary with God appearing as a God who needs death.

But, all that was done before Jesus came. There were so many rules and regulations that those in the Old Testament had to carry out in order to be accepted and forgiven by God. What a change for us today! In Jesus all these rules and regulations have been made null and void. There was the shedding of blood, but it was the blood of our loving Saviour who willingly went to the cross and suffered and died so that we can be acceptable to God and forgiven of all our sins. God sent his only Son to die so that we could have all these rules done away with and our path to heaven opened.

When we pray to God in the Lord’s Prayer to ‘forgive us our sins’, we are acknowledging that we are sinners and need to be cleaned and washed every day. God ultimately forgives us each and every day as we remember what he did for us on the cross. Because we appreciate God’s forgiving action for us so much, we also are moved ‘to forgive those who sin against us.’ Forgiving others is a fruit of our faith. Practice it daily!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you Lord for forgiving me all my sins and making me acceptable to my Heavenly Father. Help grow in me a forgiving heart to pass this forgiveness also onto others. Amen.*



# Overcoming Temptation

19th Day in Lent (Wednesday)

*Read: Hebrews 4:11-16*

***"He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Father... And lead us not into temptation.'" Luke 11:2a, 4b (NIV)***

The biscuit tin sat in the cupboard. Just the day before, a batch of Chocolate Chip cookies were made with the aroma of chocolate and sweetness entering every corner of the house. It wasn't long before the husband came in 'needing' to sample that they were as good as the last ones. Then the children came in 'absolutely starving' and these would fill that empty void. Before long there really wasn't a need for the biscuit tin. This temptation was just too great!

Temptations come in many disguises and forms: fears and doubts, self-absorption, getting that next promotion, drugs and alcohol and the list can continue. We all are tempted by something or someone in some way. Even Jesus was tempted: by Satan in the Wilderness, by Peter trying to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem, even in the Garden of Gethsemane Satan filled him with doubts. But Jesus being sinless overcame each of these temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh by prayer and the Word of God, 'It is written...', he said.

We pray that God will not lead us to temptation, but if we are tempted beyond our resistance he will help us to endure and not to surrender to it.

***"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV)*** God has given us means to overcome temptations in prayer, the Word of God, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through each of these we have direct access to God's redeeming love and are given a renewed faith. The best is to avoid temptation, but don't forget to use God's weapons when needed!

***Prayer:*** Lord, please lead me not into temptation, but give me the power to stand up to any and to always be faithful to you. Amen.

# Conquering Evil

20th Day in Lent (Thursday)

*Read: Romans 12:9-21*

***“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:37 (NIV)***

In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, there are these lines: “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” Do people really remember more of the evil or the good? Ever since the Garden of Eden sin has been rampant in the world. We see in the Marvel and DC comic movies where evil is always trying to take over the world. To conquer this evil, the people need superhuman powers. There is vice over virtue, falsehood over truth, hatred over love, and enmity over friendship. In our lives, God has good reason to have us pray: ‘deliver us from evil’.

The good news is that Jesus has already overcome the greatest evil. Jesus struggled with Satan on the cross and it appeared he had lost, even his declaration: ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,’ was not an indication of defeat but a deliverance from all evil. Three days later he had conquered evil and had risen from the grave and victory was his! This also is our victory. Jesus has paid our debt of all our sinfulness and has allowed us to enter heaven without having to struggle with Satan ourselves. That victory was done and dusted by our loving Saviour on the cross.

But still we ask God to ‘deliver us from evil’ – to deliver us from the evils of mind and soul: the sin, doubt, fear, temptation, dishonour, loneliness; to deliver us from the evils of the body: sickness, poverty, loss of property, thievery, dangers on the road and at home; and to deliver us from the final evil which is death and separation from God. God does answer our prayers and we are conquerors over evil through Jesus. Thus, we could add optimism to Shakespeare in saying: ***“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... for their deeds will follow them.” (Revelation 14:13 NIV)***

***Prayer:*** My dear loving Saviour, thank you for conquering death on my behalf and giving me the victory. Deliver me from all evil and guide me in your steps. Amen.

# Prayer of Praise

21st Day in Lent (Friday)

Read: Revelation 11:15-19

***“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.” Revelation 1:5b-6 (NIV)***

It is said that James 1 of England, the king after whom the King James Version of the Bible is named, was so low on funds that he had to borrow a pair of silk stockings when he got married. Not all who have a kingdom have the power and the wealth as well, and not all who have both a kingdom and power have the glory – some have shame from misrule.

Only God, whom Jesus taught us to address as ‘Our Father in heaven...’ has the kingdom, and the power, and the glory in perfect balance. The close to the Lord’s Prayer is more than a conclusion, it is more than the climax; it is a prayer of praise that establishes the reason for all that we ask in this model prayer. It is proper that we keep God’s name holy, that we ask for the advancement of his kingdom, that we desire that God’s will be done, ask for our daily bread, seek the forgiveness of sins and ask that God leads us away from temptations, and to plead for the deliverance from evil – because His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. This is certainly true!

Jesus not only gave us these words to pray, but also made it possible for us to pray to God as our Heavenly Father. Jesus is the mediator and the reconciler for all our sin. A communication gap developed between God and the human race right from the beginning of creation. But that is now no longer the case, as Jesus brought us into a close relationship to God by being the obedient Son who died for our sins and allowed us to come personally into the presence of God. Believing in Jesus we are united with God and can pray: ‘Our Father in heaven... Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.’

***Prayer:*** *My Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to earth to be the reconciler for my sins. You are holy and deserve my praise for your kingdom reigns forever. Amen.*

# Pre-Thanksgiving

22nd Day in Lent (Saturday)

Read: John 11:38-44

***“Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me’”  
John 11:41b (NIV)***

Have you ever tried thanking someone before the request has been granted? It's like a child going to their parent asking for a biscuit and then thanking them before it has been given. Like giving thanks for your meal before even tasting it. Jesus did this very thing – sort of like pre-thanking God.

One occasion when Jesus followed this different order was at the tomb of Lazarus. He made his request, then gave thanks even before the prayer was granted – he was so sure that Lazarus would return to life. When Jesus first heard that Lazarus had died, he told his disciples, ***“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” (John 11:11 NIV)*** Here Jesus was calling the shots in advance. It is one thing to promise something, but quite another to fulfil it. For us, it is very risky to state a prediction as an accomplished fact. How could Jesus be so positively sure that Lazarus would return to life? How could He thank God in advance of the event?

Jesus could be confident as he is part of the Trinity – he is truly God, just as he was truly human. Jesus has the authority in heaven and on earth and as the Son of God he could be confident that the Father, who was well pleased with him, would grant his prayer. So here, Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven, spoke a prayer of thanksgiving and then called dead Lazarus out of his tomb. Jesus also predicted his death and resurrection many times knowing God's purpose and will for our salvation. We too can be confident in asking God for we know he will hear us and will answer. The answer will come, not necessarily as our will wants, but definitely in God's will and for our good. For all that you have given and will give us – we thank you Lord!

***Prayer:*** Lord Jesus, You raised Lazarus from the dead and I know that you will also one day raise me and for this I pre-thank you. You are always good to me. Amen.

# A Child-like Faith

4th Sunday during Lent

Read: Matthew 21:14-17

***"At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit said, 'I praise you, father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.'" Luke 10:21a (NIV)***

The little four year old girl sat outside at a small table with a tea set and 3 of her stuffed 'friends'. A small biscuit on each plate and some juice was in each little cup. Before eating she closed her eyes and told each of her 'friends' to do the same. She said thank you to Jesus for the food and then sang "Jesus loves me". Only then were each of them able to eat and drink. This little girl was mimicking what she had been taught. Such a beautiful faith, a childlike trusting faith... so why does it change as we get older?

We can learn so much from Jesus and he often used children in his teachings, telling the disciples that they must have the faith of a child. But what is it to have the faith of a child? Robert Charles Sproul (1939-2017) an American Reformed theologian stated: "There is a vast difference, however, between childlike faith and childish faith, though the two are often confused. [Childlike faith calls the believer] to remain forever in a state of awe and trust of their heavenly Father, while a childish faith balks at learning the things of God in depth. It refuses the meat of the gospel while clinging to a diet of milk...The call of the New Testament is to maturity."

Jesus doesn't want us to have a childish faith that doesn't grow (only the milk), but wants us to develop in our knowledge of him and his love – grow deeper and savour the meat. As God's children, we can find love and security in knowing purely and simply that Jesus is our Saviour who died and rose for us so that we might live with him forever in heaven. Feast on the meat with a childlike faith!

***Prayer:*** *'Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so.' Thank you for your love to me. Amen.*

# Prayer for Strength

23rd Day in Lent (Monday)

Read: Luke 22:24-34

***"I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:32 (NIV)***

People are full of contradictions – they may say one thing and do another! Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. The impact of this story is such that the phrase 'Jekyll and Hyde' refers to a person with unpredictable dual natures: outwardly good but with a dark side, or someone who says one thing but does another.

The disciple Peter seemed at times to be two different people. When Jesus asked his disciples, ***"Who do you say I am?"*** Peter replied, ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*** This solid answer, showed Peter's firm conviction and stable character. It prompted Jesus to say, ***"You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church..."*** (Matthew 16:15-18 NIV)

We then see Peter on the evening before Jesus' arrest when Jesus announced that all the disciples would leave him and Peter said: ***"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."*** (Matthew 26:33 NIV). After which Jesus foretold that Peter would deny him three times. Because Jesus had foreseen Peter's collapse under the pressure, he prayed for him as he also prayed for his disciples, and he also prays for us. He prayed: ***"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their [the disciple's] message"*** (John 17:20 NIV). Jesus loves us all and for that reason not only prayed for them and us but also died for our salvation. The resurrected Saviour is our advocate with his Heavenly Father, praying for us who are his present-day disciples.

Jesus prayed that Peter would strengthen the people. This was fulfilled as Peter was reinstated with feeding the sheep and brought many wandering lost souls to know the saving love of Jesus. You as a disciple have also been given this strength!

***Prayer:*** Dear God, I pray for those around me who do not know your love and saving grace. Give me strength to stand up and share your message of love with them. Amen.

# The Ransom Price

24th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

Read: Matthew 20:20-28

***“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free” Hebrews 9:15 (NIV)***

While returning from the Third Crusade to the Holy Land, King Richard the Lion-Heart of England, was captured in Germany and held for ransom. The price was 100,000 pounds of silver. To raise this ransom, King Richard's mother decreed that all in England were to give a quarter of the value of their property, the gold and silver in the churches and castles were confiscated and additional taxes were raised on knights and land. It almost ruined England.

Jesus was the ransom price for us. Without him we would be ruined. He gave his life to redeem all humanity from sin, death, and Satan's power. The Son of God died on the cross so that the payment for all our wrongdoings could be redeemed. ***“For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed (ransomed) ... but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18a, 19a NIV)***

God had given Jesus the responsibility to ransom us all from our sin. In the prayer Jesus prays to his Father in John 17:1-5, Jesus says that his work had been accomplished. He was so committed to this assignment from God that he considered it finished even before his Passion began. By his obedience to death, even death on a cross, Jesus glorified the Father. He was not seeking glory or honour for himself, for he had come as a servant, but through his obedience: ***“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11 NIV)*** Thank you Jesus for paying the ransom price!

***Prayer:*** My Saviour, thank you for paying the ransom for all my sins. I pray that I may be a living sacrifice and disciple for you and your love. Amen.

# Keeping the Faith

25th Day in Lent (Wednesday)

*Read: 1 John 1:1-10*

***“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1 NIV)***

For Bible Study we are studying “Stuff they didn’t teach you in Sunday School”. It has been interesting going through the Bible hearing about the forefathers of our faith: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... who were these incredible followers of everything God did and said. In actual fact, they had flaws just like us, and didn’t always do what God commanded. The point is that God had promised blessings on them and was faithful to them and no matter what they did or where they went, God brought them back and forgave them. The whole chapter of Hebrews 11 is set aside to tell of the faith of these people and God’s faithfulness to them.

Jesus was greatly concerned about the followers he would leave behind and the many people who would believe in Him in years to come. In his prayer for all believers in John 17, he doesn’t pray for earthly goods or property. He doesn’t pray that his disciples find fame and honour or to shield them from the world, rather Jesus prays that humanity may be unified in their faith and knowledge of his love. ***“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:23b NIV)***

God reveals himself to us in the Bible, through the stories of his faithfulness to his people. So, we can also be assured that what God has promised us through the death and resurrection of his one and only Son Jesus Christ will come true – because God is faithful!

“You have learned it; keep it well fixed in your mind that a Christian heart is one which hears the Word of God concerning forgiveness of sins and believes it without doubting, though he neither sees nor feels it.” [Martin Luther, House Postil, Quinquagesima]

***Prayer:*** *Thank you for the gift of faith dear Lord. Continue to grow my faith in you by learning about the love you have for all your people in the Bible. Amen.*



# Prayer for Peace

26th Day in Lent (Thursday)

*Read: Ephesians 2:11-22*

***“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.” John 17:11b (NIV)***

I remember hearing and seeing movies about the feuding Hillbilly's from Kentucky and West Virginia, the Hatfield's and the McCoy's. The feud between these clans started over some stolen pigs in 1778 and ended with about 100 people dying over a 10 year period. This feud was for real, and there are many feuds which continue between and within families even in these times. It seems that when humans get together unrest is a reality.

Feuds are also mentioned in the Bible: between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, between Jacob and Esau, King Saul and David, Joseph and his brothers, etc. In the Early church there were also disagreements in regards to circumcision, to the clean and unclean food, and other points of contention. With the help of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Peter were able to smooth down these disagreements and feuds and point the early Christians to the peace that Jesus brought through his death and resurrection. This is the peace formula for the greatest of all feuds of which the Bible speaks: the rebellion of the whole sinful human race against God. The Mediator was Jesus who broke down the dividing walls of hostility by getting rid of all the old laws and paying the price for humanity's sins. He made peace through the cross!

We have all been bought with the blood of Christ and cleansed from all our sin and guilt therefore we can come to God with confidence knowing that in him we are accepted and loved without a doubt. The prayer Jesus prays to God in the above verse from John 17, acknowledges that Jesus has brought all together, making us one with God and each other. There is no need for feuds. We are at peace with God because Jesus reconciled and redeemed us with his blood!

***Prayer:*** *Dear Jesus, help me to live in the peace that you gave me in the cross. Help me to act and be at peace with all my brothers and sisters in the world. Amen.*

# Our Spiritual Weapons

27th Day in Lent (Friday)

*Read: Ephesians 6:10-18*

***Jesus prayed: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." John 17:15 (NIV)***

When my son was young he liked to play with knights and he had a castle which was fortified with ramparts and catapults. The knights had armour and swords and spears and even the horses had armour. It was a fun game and many hours were spent having make-believe battles between the good knights and the bad knights.

In our spiritual lives we have similar battles raging within us, between the Godly and Godless. We seem to live in a world of opposites: up and down, left and right, hot and cold, good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. We are tempted every day in both big and little things to go against God's plan and will for our lives. Satan is real, and his biggest lie is in wanting people to believe he isn't real. If he is not real, then hell and punishment and sin are also not real. If this is the case, we have no need for a Saviour... Satan is very cunning!

God does not want us to focus on Satan and his lies, rather to focus on God's truth and love. He wants us to pray for help and strength for deliverance. But, he doesn't leave us without armour as we read in Ephesians 6. Like the knights of old, we have the sword of God's Word, the helmet of salvation, our shield of faith, shoes to bring God's peace to others, a breastplate of God's righteousness and God's truth as a belt. God tells us to put this armour on every day to help us overcome any form of attack by Satan, the world and sin. In Jesus' death and rising again he beat Satan once and for all and has given us freedom to live in God's presence and love. God's armour gives us the strength and power to live our Christian life every day!

***Prayer:*** *Dear God, 'Let your holy angels be with me so that the evil one may have no power over me.' Amen.*

# Prayer for our Holiness

28th Day in Lent (Saturday)

*Read: Ephesians 4:1-15*

***Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth... For them I sanctify myself, that they may be truly sanctified." John 17:17, 19 (NIV)***

I really love having flowers in my house and my family knows that I love the fragrance and the blooms bring a smile to my heart, so I usually receive flowers for my birthday. However, as much as I love seeing the prettiness of them, I am saddened when they start to droop and drop and brown off. For then they need to be thrown away. To truly see and enjoy them year after year, they need to be a growing plant attached to a root system and watered regularly.

Christians also look better when they are growing. Jesus prayed that we will grow and be sanctified by God's Word daily. 'Sanctify' means to make holy. Our sanctification as growth in holiness is a process. It begins when the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel, brings us to faith in Jesus. This faith involves relying on God and his grace and purpose to bring us to know Jesus' saving actions for us on the cross. With this birth of faith our heart is regenerated. We are justified before God by our faith alone, and thus are sanctified (made holy) and we look forward to our eternal home. All this happens through God's Word (the truth).

Like the growing of flowers, our growing in holiness (sanctification) is progressive. That is what God wants; that is what Jesus prayed for on the evening before he died. He prayed for it and also made it possible when he gave His life for us and continues to give His Holy Spirit to generate life in us. Lent is a time to re-evaluate our practices and foundational purposes to growing in our Christian life. Read the Bible and pray daily, help and serve our neighbours. Continue to grow in God's love and holiness!

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to grow in your truth and love to gain spiritual nourishment, so that I may bloom and grow in your grace and holiness and be a servant to my neighbour. Amen.***

# Jesus' Prays for Unity

5th Sunday during Lent

*Read: Romans 15:1-7*

***"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." John 17:20-21 (NIV)***

The United States Supreme Court has a tradition in which each high-court justice shakes hands with each of the other nine justices each time they gather for a meeting. Chief Justice Melville W. Fuller (1888-1910) started this custom, saying that it shows 'that the harmony of aims, if not views, is the court's guiding principle.' The justices can disagree without being disagreeable.

Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples. This prayer was quite necessary, for right up to the end of Jesus' ministry among them, they were given to disunity and disagreements. Not only John and James, who wanted to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in His kingdom, but also the others arguing as to who was the greatest. To settle all these disputes, Jesus had said: ***"But I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:27b NIV)*** He made servanthood the number one function of being a disciple of God. Not only did he teach humility, but he demonstrated it in his own life and ministry. ***"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45 NIV)*** Thus, Jesus prayed for a unified discipleship.

Through the centuries many have come to believe in Jesus through the Word written and proclaimed by the disciples and apostles and those following them. Jesus had anticipated that there would be disunity and so prayed for unity and oneness in love, fellowship and spirit. The Holy Spirit can work through even the most un-unified situation to bring harmony. We also pray for unity amongst our churches and members that peace would reign and that the Gospel be preached and spread to all corners of the earth, beginning with your neighbourhood. With one voice, preach the Gospel in love!

***Prayer:*** Lord God, bring our church and communities to be one in you. Thank you for my faith in believing in one Gospel and you as my one Lord. Help me to bring harmony to disunity. Amen.

# United with Christ

29th Day in Lent (Monday)

*Read: Philippians 2:1-11*

***"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." John 17:24 (NIV)***

Last year, 'The Lutheran' magazine concentrated on the work of ALWS (Australian Lutheran World Service) as it celebrated 70 years of bringing the Gospel to the nations. In many of the articles we read messages of thanksgiving and praise to God as he led many workers into the fields where there were physical needs and in meeting these needs the Gospel of Christ was preached. The workers did this because they were united with the body of Christ.

Jesus prayed that his disciples and church would be blessed to see the glory that God gave him in love. We are then to be put to the God-appointed task of being Christ's witnesses and workers in the world. Jesus prays that we may be united with him, who is the head, and in faith and love continue the work that Christ began in his ministry. We are in fellowship with Jesus now, not only in church when we worship him, but also when we work and live for him in our daily life. When Jesus comes again to take us bodily into His presence in heaven, we will enjoy in fullness what we have experienced only glimpses of here on earth. In heaven we will behold his glory, ***"the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (John 1:14b NIV)

Before he could ascend to this glory, he had to go through inhumane suffering and death on a cross. This he did just for us so that we could be united with him. On the cross our sins were put to death where they could no longer have any hold on us. Once and for all we have received the forgiveness of all our sins and can now enter the pathway that Jesus opened for us in his resurrection. United with Christ forever!

***Prayer:*** Thank you Jesus for your selfless love for me. You made the way for me to be united with you now and in heaven forever. Amen.

# Pre-Pray for Battle

30th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

*Read: Hebrews 5:1-10*

***“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’” Matthew 26:36 (NIV)***

Within the armed forces, chaplains are held in high esteem. They have the ability to be able to calm soldiers' minds and hearts, giving courage through prayer before battle. King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden (1594-1632) customarily led his troops in public prayer before battle. His intervention in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) helped save the Reformation in Europe. There are many paintings of him praying before battle. He also prayed before the battle of Luetzen, July 16, 1632, in which he lost his life.

Jesus began in prayer before the battle with Satan in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had preliminary skirmishes with Satan in the Wilderness, but the battle for the salvation of all humanity was at stake. Realising this, Jesus prayed before the battle taking a few of his disciples with him for support. It was not unusual for Jesus to pray before important events. He spent the night in prayer before announcing his twelve disciples. After healing and teaching he spent time by himself in prayer to his Heavenly Father, refuelling and regenerating himself for what he knew was coming. Much time was devoted to prayer, especially when the hour was at hand for him to suffer and die for the salvation of us all.

We are thankful that Jesus prayed before the battle, for in answer to his prayer the heavenly Father strengthened him, enabling him to complete his task to defeat death and the devil. When times of decision and distress come to us, we need to remember to pray that we will be given the direction and strength to deal with all situations. So, before you face obstacles and trials remember to breathe a prayer to our loving Father. Our Lord God wants to hear our prayers and will answer them. Arm yourself with the Lord's strength and pre-pray!

***Prayer:*** Lord Jesus, I pray for strength to cope with any situation or battle that comes my way. I know you hear my prayer and will answer me. Amen.

# Overwhelmed

31st Day in Lent (Wednesday)

*Read: Matthew 26:30-39*

***“Then [Jesus] said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’” Matthew 26:38 (NIV)***

It was two days before the family was coming - six different families and their families, over 30 people all together. They were all coming for the Good Friday lunch and there was so much to do. Meat to pick up from the butcher, gas for the BBQ, house to clean, yard to tidy, last minute shopping of vegetables and salad to cut up, cakes and biscuits and slices to make, children to care for... how many others have experienced this overwhelming feeling of... I just can't do it all, it's too much!

Jesus was also overwhelmed, but not like my Good Friday dinner, he was overwhelmed to the point of death - so heavy was his heart and soul and so alone he felt. It seemed that an avalanche of rocks was beginning to roll over him, and so heavy with grief as wave after wave of anguish swept over him. He went off by himself and prayed as he lay on his face. He knew what was coming and it all overwhelmed him. He knew the suffering, the mockery, the shameful treatment, the whipping and the scourging that was to happen to him. He knew he was to die a painful death on a cross. He was obedient to his Father knowing that this was his plan to save humanity, but in his humanity he was scared.

In Jesus prayer in the garden of Gethsemane he refers to God as 'My Father', depicting his closeness to God. He was repulsed to the suffering and dying as a true human, but he had given over his will to the will of his Father. God's need was that his only Son would die and rise again so that all people, lost in sin, could become the sons and daughters of God. How blessed we are for Jesus' strength!

***Prayer:*** *My dear Saviour, thank you for suffering the horrible death on the cross for my sake. I am thankful that your love for me is so great! Amen.*

# 'Take this cup from Me'

32nd Day in Lent (Thursday)

*Read: Mark 10:32-38*

***"[Jesus] went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.'"***

***Matthew 26:42 (NIV)***

When going for my boat licence, I went with a couple friends and we had to sit through a couple hours of talking by the police officer and then sent away to complete the written test. Going back once or even twice, my friends and I knew that until we had completed this correctly with no mistakes could we legally drive a boat on the river. It would have been nice to not have a written test, but then how would the authorities know that we knew the laws – it had to be done!

In the above verse we read that Jesus asked a second time not to have to do what God was having him complete. He knew that it had to be done as there was no other way of saving lost sinners than to suffer and die for them. But he prayed anyway for another way, but there was no other. The Father's will was now also Jesus' will; he put his heart and soul into the task lying before him. It was like drinking the bitter contents of a medicine. It has to be consumed for the medicine to heal. So also, for Jesus with the joy set before him in the resurrection, he had to first endure the cross.

In the Mark 10 text, James and John in their ignorance, said that they could go through what Jesus was about to experience. They felt that they understood everything. How wrong they were! How often do we feel we know better than God? That we can make decisions and know what God has planned for us. Some things in life can and ought to be changed; so we change them. Other things in life cannot be changed; so we accept them as the will of God. God grant us the wisdom to see the difference and listen to his words of guidance!

***Prayer:*** *Lord, teach me to know what I can and can't do. Thank you that you don't give up on me in my ignorance and guide me where I need to be. Amen.*



# The Father's Will

## 33rd Day in Lent (Friday)

*Read: Luke 22:39-46*

***"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42 (NIV)***

As a student graduates from High School, they are faced with many options and ways that they can get to their desired goals. One way involves applying to university, get a degree then apply in the desired field. Or take a Gap year and earn some money to then go where they want. Or get an apprenticeship and work your way up in the desired field. So many choices and so many ways to achieve the desired goal. But what to choose... such a dilemma!

For Jesus, his choices were extremely limited, in fact there was only one way and there was no way out of his dilemma. If he was to be the Saviour of the world, as God wanted, he had no choice but to suffer and die. His goal could only be achieved one way, there was no other option. He needed to do the Father's will! He wrestled with prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, while the people for whom he was planning to save from their sins had no idea of his agony. Most of the people in Jerusalem had retired for the night. The three disciples who were witnesses to Jesus' agony were also asleep, even though Jesus had urged them to watch and pray.

Even though all this was happening, Jesus was praying that the Father's will might be done for the salvation of all humanity. Strengthened then through prayer, he went to face his Father's plan. For Jesus the cup of sorrows did not get passed over; instead he drained its contents for us all. In doing so he filled each of us with so many blessings: forgiveness, peace, joy and closeness with God. Out of Jesus' dilemma came eternal life for us!

***Prayer:*** *My dear Saviour, thank you for submitting to your Father's will for the saving of my life. You endured all so that my sins could be forgiven. Amen.*

# Jesus' Unspoken Prayer

34th Day in Lent (Saturday)

Read: Matthew 26:47-56

***"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53 (NIV)***

'It is important to know as much as possible about what you want most of all, because sooner or later you are likely to obtain it,' said Goethe, the German poet and author. In the same way, we need to be careful for what we pray for, because our prayers can be answered and they could work to your disadvantage. King Solomon was wise when God asked him for what he desired. He could have prayed for health and wealth, the death of his enemies. But instead he was careful with his prayer and prayed for wisdom to discern what is right and wrong (2 Chronicles 1:11-12). God was pleased with this prayer.

Jesus told Peter to put his sword away in the garden of Gethsemane, for this was not the time for a defence. If that was to be the case, Jesus could have summoned superior angelic help with just one small prayer. What would have been the result if Jesus had actually asked for help? In immediate answer, God would have sent an army of angels to defend his Son. (One Roman Legion had 6,000 soldiers). When Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem at the time of King Hezekiah, one angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night (2 Kings 19). What could 'more than twelve legions of angels' do?

But Jesus, the King of the angels, did not summon the heavenly troops, for that would have upset the entire plan of salvation. The time had come for Jesus to suffer and to die for the sins of the whole world. Had Jesus dodged his planned mission, he would have left us all in our sins and eternal condemnation. The prayer then that Jesus refused to speak kept God's eternal plan for our salvation intact. We can be thankful for Jesus listening to his Father's will. When you pray, try to align your prayers with God's will!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you Lord for showing me how to pray. You have taught me how to pray in the Lord's Prayer. Help me to be discerning with my prayers. Amen.*

# Prayers of Praise

## Palm / Passion Sunday

*Read: Luke 19:28-40*

***"The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'" Matthew 21:9 (NIV)***

Parades bring people. A few years ago when our family went to Disneyland, we stayed for the night parade. People had started to stake their place hours before the event, just so that they would see the incredible parade of all the famous Disney characters and maybe to touch one of them. There were also people just curious as to what was going on, not knowing what was happening. Our family found a good spot to see them all and shouted and clapped when they walked past, especially for Mickey Mouse!

The crowds in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday were of two kinds: those multitudes who knew of Jesus and then the curious people wondering, 'Who is this?' Those in the procession, the disciples, marvelled that Jesus' fame had spread and the immense gathering of people all shouting and waving clothes and palm branches. The prayers of praise from the people had been foretold in the Old Testament – ***"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.... With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession."* (Psalm 118:26a, 27b NIV)** The people regarded Jesus as the awaited Messiah as they called him the 'Son of David'. He was known and loved by the people who accepted him as their King as the prophets (Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9) had foretold.

Our Lord wants to be accepted in faith. Worship our Saviour as he comes to you riding on a donkey, fulfilling all the requirements set before him by God. Add your voice to the multitudes 2000 years ago as they celebrated with prayers of praise. Jesus is worthy of our praise and love. If you are curious about his life and gifts to you, spend time reading about Jesus' life in the Bible and in prayer. Give prayers of praise for the Son of God!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you Lord Jesus, I give you my prayers of praise. Thank you for coming into my life to bring hope, love and especially the forgiveness of all my sins. Amen.*

# The Mocking 'Prayer'

35th Day in Lent (Monday)

Read: Mark 15:16-20

***"And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!'" Mark 15:18 (NIV)***

At election time, it seems that there is nothing good that our leaders can say about each other. They are candidates for the leadership of our country and all they can do is deride and mock the others running for the position. In order to gain favour it seems that they must put the other candidate down so far that it is hard to get up from this position. There is backstabbing and those the candidate thought of as friends suddenly turn on them. What a state of affairs!

During holy week this is what our Lord experienced. He came as a King into Jerusalem, with the people singing, 'Hail to our King' on the Sunday and by Friday all he heard were the mocking remarks from the soldiers, Herod, Pilate and the crowds. The soldiers mocked him with the statement, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' The term 'Hail!' is a greeting or a salute. It is an honour to have someone say this to you; it is a wish for good health, but not when you are being whipped and struck with sticks.

The soldiers in Pilate's Praetorium however, acted and spoke in blasphemy and clothed Jesus in a purple robe, pressed a crown of thorns on his head, and saluted him with their mocking cry of, "Hail, king of the Jews'. They were also referring to Jesus' declaration before Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. The soldier's perverse 'prayer', their salutation of pretended homage and honour, added more pain to the many physical and mental sufferings that Jesus was already enduring.

Let us negate this mocking 'prayer' with our prayers of praise and glory to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is truly our King, as the inscription on the cross stated. He established His Kingship and Kingdom by conquering sin and death and rising from the dead. Hail our Saviour!

***Prayer:*** Dear Saviour and Lord, receive my prayer of praise and adoration, for you are truly my King. You took away the sins of the world – have mercy on me. Amen.

# Am I Forsaken?

36th Day in Lent (Tuesday)

*Read: Psalm 22:1-11*

***"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice.... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Matthew 27:46a, 46c (NIV)***

Recently, I read of a tree in the Inyo National Forest in California dated at 4,852 years old. It has been named Methuselah. This ancient Bristlecone pine tree is as old as the great pyramids in Egypt and older than Abraham in the Bible. This tree has been through quite a bit in its almost five millennia – droughts, floods, fire, pestilence and I'm sure it will go through more, but one day it will die. All things in nature one day will die.

Only one tree will never die, not because it is somehow magical, but because Jesus died on it to redeem us. The tree of the cross will live forever, not only to remind us of the pain and suffering Jesus went through to save us, but also to show us the glory of God who chose this way to make us his sons and daughters. During the six hours of agony that Jesus spent on the cross, he cried out with prayers and pleas to God to help him in his need. This prayer of Jesus on the cross is a prayer of abandonment, feeling forsaken by his Heavenly Father. Separation from God is the greatest of all miseries. God allowed his Son to be separated from him for three days to fight the devil on our behalf.

The cross is so precious to us, for it was in his agony of prayer and suffering that our salvation was bought. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus suffered the pain and torment of separation from God for us, compensating for our disobedience and sin. In rising from the dead Jesus overcame the power of the devil and its hold on us. The cross is our tree of promise and life eternal!

***Prayer:*** Lord Jesus, you were abandoned and forsaken on the cross and left to die just for me. Thank you for your gift of life that you won for me on the cross. Amen.

# Forgive them

37th Day in Lent (Wednesday)

Read: Luke 23:32-38

***"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"  
Luke 23:34a (NIV)***

In the story of Cinderella, a girl who comes from a wealthy home is forced into servitude when her father marries another woman and then fatefully dies, leaving her future in the hands of her wicked step-mother. Cinderella is cruelly treated by her step-mother and step-sisters, but remains kind and treats them with love. Her heart was pure and lovely. We know the ending (as most Disney princess stories end) with the handsome prince seeing her for who she is and gives her a life where they live happily ever after. We don't know what happens to the wicked step-family, but Cinderella being so kind, I'm sure they were all forgiven.

Jesus prayed on the cross to forgive all those who had done wrong to him. He asked God to forgive them which is exactly what Jesus fulfilled in his death on the cross. God does forgive because Jesus bore the guilt and punishment of all humanity's sin. The debt owed for this sin had been paid in full. ***"God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:13b-14 NIV)***

This prayer of Jesus on the cross shows his great love for all people, even to his enemies. There is no doubt of his love for us. Our forgiveness is signed, sealed and delivered with Jesus death on the cross. Our eternal life is given to us in Jesus' resurrection. With our forgiveness and love assured, like Cinderella we also need to love and forgive those who hurt us. We shall live happily ever after forever in heaven!

***Prayer:*** *Forgive me my sins as I forgive the sins of those who hurt me. Help me to do this, my loving Saviour who died that I may live. Amen.*

# The Holy Eucharist

## 38th Day in Lent (Maundy Thursday)

*Read: Luke 22:14-23*

***“After taking the cup, he gave thanks .... And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them” Luke 22:17a, 19a (NIV)***

The last week of Jesus life was very much a time of prayer for him: In the Garden of Gethsemane, during his trials and on the cross. Jesus also prayed during the final celebration of the Passover with His disciples. He spoke the words of thanks which have now become our words of institution for Holy Communion. This sacrament is known as the Eucharist, which means thanksgiving. With the consecrated bread and wine Jesus gave his true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and he did this with thanksgiving.

The Passover supper was a religious meal for the Jews consisting of the meat of a lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and ceremonial wine. This supper celebrated the Old Testament deliverance of God's people from bondage in Egypt and the passing over of the houses marked with blood from the angel of death. This festival also pointed to the future, to the coming Messiah, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, of whom Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 53. Jesus and his disciples observed the Passover in an Upper Room somewhere in Jerusalem. During the celebration various prayers of praise and thanksgiving from Psalms 113-118 were normally spoken by the head of the family. We can assume that Jesus also spoke these prayers growing up in his Jewish family. When later Jesus, for the first time, celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion with his disciples, He spoke prayers of thanksgiving before distributing the consecrated bread and wine.

Prayers of thanksgiving are indeed proper as we celebrate the sacrament instituted by Christ. During this time of Lent and on this special day of Maundy Thursday we especially are thankful for Jesus being the sacrifice for our sins and giving us new life in him. Holy Communion joins us in Jesus' life and death – Let's be always thankful!

***Prayer:*** *Thank you Lord Jesus for the gift of your body and blood to strengthen and preserve me in my daily life. Help me to always be thankful. Amen.*

# Into your Hands

39th Day in Lent (Good Friday)

Read: Luke 23:44-49

***“Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’” Luke 23:46a (NIV)***

There is a legend about a bird which sings only once in its life, more sweetly than any other creature on the face of the earth. This ‘thorn bird’ searches for a thorn tree from the day it is hatched. Once it finds the perfect thorn tree it sings the most beautiful song before impaling itself on the longest, sharpest thorn. One most excellent song is the purpose of its existence. But the whole world stops to listen, and God in heaven smiles. For the best is only bought at the cost of great pain.... or so says the legend.

Jesus ended his life on the cross, after the sweet singing of his ministry on earth. His final prayer on the cross was a quote from Psalm 31:5, in which King David prayed, ***“Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.”*** Now that Jesus’ work of redeeming all humanity from sin, death and Satan’s power was finished, he commended himself into his Father’s hands. This was prayed with a ‘loud voice’ from Jesus, showing that the Lord still gave him strength even at the end. He was crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross, and suffered great pain, but this prayer was his swan-song. Like the thorn bird, he sung his best before he died.

On Good Friday we remember and reflect on the passion of Jesus at his final hours. Jesus knew that he was soon to be in the hands of his Father, where all pain and suffering would cease. Even during his life Jesus committed himself to God’s loving hands... do we place our lives in God’s loving, caring hands? Our lives are important to God for he even knows how many hairs are on our heads and always wants to protect and care for us. Today commit your life into the Father’s hands!

***Prayer:*** Dear Lord Jesus, I place myself into your hands knowing that you love and bless all I do. May your love shine through me so that others too may come to know you. Amen.



# Death has no Hold

## 40th Day in Lent (Holy Saturday)

*Read: Psalm 16*

***“But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” Acts 2:24 (NIV)***

After Jesus had died on Good Friday, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were given permission from Pilate to take his body down from the cross. They wrapped it in linen cloths and put it in a new tomb. Holy Saturday finds Jesus in the grave battling death and the devil. In Psalm 16, the reading for today, King David moved by the Holy Spirit speaks of the Messiah's death, ***“because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” (Vs. 10)*** (Peter also quotes from this Psalm in Acts 2:25-28.) In David's prayer, he states that God will not allow the grave to rob the Messiah of life. Death has no hold on God's Son!

On Easter morning Jesus rose again, even though he still had the wounds from his death on the cross, his body suffered no decay. He was raised to life in all his glory.

The burial of Jesus and his resting in the tomb has drawn special attention since 1988 when the Shroud of Turin was carbon-dated to be around the time of Christ's death. [It had been preserved since 1578 in the royal chapel of the cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Turin, Italy.] This has renewed the claim that the linen cloth assumed to have wrapped the body of Christ has the 'imprinted' image of Jesus on it. While we cannot be sure of this, we can be sure that Jesus' image is imprinted on all who are baptised. Those who have also died in the faith can be assured of the resurrection from the dead and that we will all be raised to be in God's presence on the Last Day. There we can see Jesus' face in all its righteousness and glory – death can have no hold on us!

***Prayer:*** Heavenly Father, you have imprinted me with your love and glory at my baptism. Thank you for defeating death and raising me to have life with you on the last day. Amen.

# The Glorified Son

## Easter Sunday

*Read: John 20:19-29*

***“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.’” John 17:1 (NIV)***

Virtus was a specific virtue of men in Ancient Rome. It suggested the virtues of valor, manliness, excellence, courage, character, and worth, which were perceived as masculine strengths and was a crucial component for a man to have a political career. This definition described then the qualities that the Roman people idealized in their leaders. A Roman political man would only need to show his battle scars to prove that he has worth and to boost his credentials.

On Easter evening the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples. He showed them his hands and feet as evidence that he was the same Lord whom they had seen die on the cross. The marks were also evidence that Jesus had been in battle. The wounds of Christ's crucified body were the same as he had in his resurrected body, but these were marks of victory (his virtus). If on Easter Day someone had appeared to Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the other disciples claiming to be Jesus but without the wounds, this person would be considered an imposter. The nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet, and the wound in his side, were his credentials. By raising Jesus from the dead, God told the world that His Son had defeated death. The prayer that Jesus had prayed in John 17 was answered: the Father had glorified the Son.

This Easter Sunday and on all the days that follow, let us glory in the wounds of the risen Christ. We suffer in this life, but we know that we shall also be glorified with Jesus. He has conquered sin, death and the devil for our salvation. It is not a phantom Christ who has allegedly emerged from the tomb; it is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, wounds and all!

***Prayer:*** *Heavenly Father, thank you that you raised your Son on this Easter Day. He has beaten death for me. I praise you for glorifying your Son. Amen.*

## **The Lord's Prayer:**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.**

**Amen.**

## **Luther's Morning Prayer:**

**I thank you heavenly Father, through your dear Son Jesus Christ, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I ask you to keep me this day too, from all sin and evil, so that in all my thoughts, words and deeds I may please you. In your hands I place my body and soul and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the evil one may have no power over me.**

**Amen**

## **Luther's Evening Prayer:**

**I thank you, heavenly Father, through your dear Son Jesus Christ, that you have graciously protected me today. I ask you to forgive all my sin and the wrong which I have done, and graciously keep me this night. In your hands I place my body and soul and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the evil one may have no power over me. Amen.**



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