

Devotions – January 3-9, 2021

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Sunday, January 3, 2021

The days of this week all orbit around January 6, The Epiphany of Our Lord. The scripture reading for each day will be a psalm verse (Evangelical Lutheran Worship translation) appointed for morning prayer in the Lutheran Book of Worship. The ancient hymns of the people of Israel became the heart of daily prayer in early monastic communities and continue to guide the daily prayer of the church in our own day.

Text: Psalm 111:1

Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

In the daily prayer of the church, variously called the prayer of the hours or the divine office, our hearts and voices are joined with the whole people of God in every time and place. The generations past, present, and future are as one and distance is no barrier to our oneness.

During our days of Covid 19, I have felt this oneness as more than an idea. With or without Zoom, I have often experienced greater connectedness even while socially distanced.

Today pray for the oneness of the people of God and the whole human family.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all that we do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



Monday, January 4, 2021

Text: Psalm 20:1

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend you;

In the shadow of deep pain, in the confusion of chaotic times we long for words to explain – a voice with which to speak and bring order to what seems incomprehensible.

The ancient and ever new scripture of our tradition and particularly the psalms give us a language that we can borrow until we find words of our own. While we search for the words we long for it may be helpful to remember that God's first language is silence. So, when we find ourselves speech-less, it may be that we are closest to the Holy One who is always near.

Today pray first by keeping silence to allow another voice to speak.

Let us pray: *Lord God, you accepted the perfect sacrifice of your Son upon the cross. Hear us during times of trouble and protect us by the power of his name, that we who share his struggle on earth may share in his victory in heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



Tuesday, January 5, 2021

Text: Psalm 99:9

Proclaim the greatness of the LORD and worship upon God's holy hill; for the LORD our God is the Holy One.

The psalms give structure and substance to the daily prayer of monastic life. They are the first songs of the Hebrew people. We continue to sing them in our liturgy on Sunday mornings.

I suspect one of the reasons for their central enduring value is that there is no human emotion not experienced and expressed in Israel's song book – the psalms. Whether anger, fear, sadness, hope, joy, or peace – they are all there in these 150 songs. Our ancestors experienced all that we experience before us and now with us. We are indeed surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

Today pray and give thanks for the saints, past and present, in your life.

Let us pray: *Everlasting God, the radiance of all faithful people, you brought the nations to the brightness of your rising. Fill the world with your glory and show yourself to all the world through him who is the true light and the bright morning star, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



Wednesday, January 6, 2021 – The Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord

Text: Psalm 72:18-19

Blessed are you, LORD God, the God of Israel; you alone do wondrous deeds! And blessed be your glorious name forever, and may all the earth be filled with your glory. Amen. Amen.

God in flesh made manifest. Jesus of Nazareth revealed as the Christ of God. God made human – incarnate. Now we know just who this God is – how far the God will go to be with us (Emmanuel) – and with the whole creation. We also know in and through this Christ what it means to be human, fully human, to live and love and die.

It has been said by an ancient teacher of the church (Athanasius 296 – 373) that God became human so that the human might become divine. Not that we actually become God, but that it is possible for us to live more fully into the image and likeness of God in which we were created and for which God became human. Welcome my friends to the divine, human, holy, baptized life.

Today give thanks for this human life in all its divine glory.

Let us pray: *Lord God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



Thursday, January 7, 2021

Text: Psalm 97:1

The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad.

The psalms are songs first. You know that when words are joined to rhythm and melody both music and words are multiplied in their effect.

After a lifetime of preaching, I am quite certain that all those who heard my homiletical ramblings can remember more hymns than they can sermons (enlightened as they may have been). Everyone knows their favorite hymns. I have several, but there is one that echoes in the ears of my heart these days.

It is a 19th century hymn set to two different hymn tunes in ELW. I am particularly moved by the version that is hymn 332 by 16th century composer Thomas Tallis, and the third verse of it.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say, ‘I am this dark world’s light;

*look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright.
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk till trav'ling days are done."*
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Hymn 332)

Today pray for the Epiphany light to shine in all of the corners of this often dark world.

Let us pray: *Almighty and ever-living God, you revealed the incarnation of your Son by the brilliant shining of a star. Shine the light of your justice always in our hearts and over all lands and accept our lives as the treasure we offer in your praise and for your service, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



Friday, January 8, 2021

Text: Psalm 51:10, 12

Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me.... Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Among the items bequeathed to me after my paternal grandmother's death was a little book of devotions for each day of the year. She was a faithful Southern Baptist who took prayer seriously.

In the back of the book she had a list of individuals she was praying for. As the years passed new grandchildren and great grandchildren were added. As arthritis cramped her handwriting the names became more difficult to decipher. Seeing my own name in her prayer book was and remains a humbling moment.

The act of intercession, like that of the prayer of the church in the Sunday liturgy, joins our prayers with the ever merciful and healing activity of our God. What to us seems like a prayer that we have initiated is actually God's Spirit grabbing the wheel of our mental car and inviting us to participate with God's Spirit in those very same acts of divine love and care.

Today, pray for one person you know who is suffering in body, mind, or spirit.

Let us pray: *We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected us through the night from all danger and harm. We ask you to preserve and keep us, this day also, from all sin and evil, that in all our thoughts, words, and deeds we may serve and please you. Into your hands we commend our bodies and souls and all that is ours. Let your holy angels have charge of us, that the wicked one have no power over us.*



Saturday, January 9, 2021

Text: Psalm 104:33

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being.

The seventh day of this week that orbits around the Epiphany brings us in a similarly circular way back to the reflection which began this week. How connected we all are. Albert Einstein the great physicist once wrote in a letter of condolence to a friend that the notion that people are ever separate from one another is an “optical delusion of consciousness.”

This God created us to be one (John 17). And how connected we all are when we have eyes to see. When the apostle Paul encouraged those first Christians at Thessalonica to pray without ceasing, I suspect he was addressing them as a community. I wonder if he meant that no individual can pray every moment of every day, but together, taking turns WE can pray without ceasing.

With that possibility in mind and heart WE can together, with the help of a gracious God, pray faithfully.

Today pray for all those partners in prayer around the world and over the generations that keep up the unceasing prayer of God’s people.

Let us pray: *God of all light, life, and love, through the visible things of this world you raise our thoughts to things unseen, and you show us your power and your love. From your dwelling-place refresh our hearts and renew the face of the earth with the life-giving water of your Word, until the new heaven and new earth resound with the song of resurrection in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

