

Home Worship for Lent

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMC)
Springfield, GA

OPENING PRAYER

The sign of the cross may be made in remembrance of your Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray. **Let the incense of our repentant prayer ascend before you, O Lord, and let your lovingkindness descend upon us, that with purified minds we may sing your praises with the Church on earth and the whole heavenly host, and may glorify you forever and ever. Amen.**

THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give him thanks and praise. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who led your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may his Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are merciful, and you love your whole creation, and we, your creatures, glorify you, Father, Son+, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LESSON James 5:13-18

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALMODY – from Psalm 141

O Lord, I call to you; come to me quickly;
hear my voice when I cry to you.
Let my prayer rise before you as incense;
the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.
Set a watch before my mouth, O Lord,

and guard the door of my lips.
Let not my heart incline to any evil thing;
let me not be occupied in wickedness with evildoers.
But my eyes are turned to you, Lord God;
in you I take refuge. Strip me not of my life.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

PSALM PRAYER

Lord, from the rising of the sun to its setting your name is worthy of all praise. Let our prayer rise before you as incense, and may the lifting up of our hands be as an evening sacrifice, acceptable to you, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew 6:5-8. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said] “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Our text is found in James 5:13-18. In these six (6) verses, James uses the word “*pray*” or “*prayer*” a total of seven (7) times; more than once per verse. In light of this fact, there must be something important and powerful about the act of prayer.

In verse 16, James, the half-brother of our Lord, wrote, “...the prayer of a righteous person has great power” or as the King James Version translates the passage, “...the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

As my professor, Dr. Doug Kelly wrote in his book on prayer, “Prayer changes the world...The God of the Scriptures has great blessings stored up for His people, but He has so planned it that these blessings can only be released by the prayers of His people.”

The question is, do we believe it? Do we really believe what Dr. Kelly has written? Or, better yet, do we really believe what our Lord and Saviour has said? Hear the words of Jesus as recorded in John’s Gospel, “But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you” (John 11:22), “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13), “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7), “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (John 15:16), and “Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (John 16:23).

I really love the story of the young pastor who was fresh out of seminary and recently ordained. He was visiting an elderly and very sick woman in the hospital. The doctors and the woman's family were all convinced she was on her deathbed. At the conclusion of the visit the pastor asked, "Is there anything special that you would like me to pray for?" With all the strength she could muster, the lady leaned over, barely speaking, and said, "Yes, there is one thing. Please pray that God will heal me."

The young pastor took the lady by the hand and prayed, "Almighty God, Heavenly Father, if it be Thy will, strengthen and restore my dear sister to that complete and perfect health that is only Yours to give. Heal her body and remove all infirmity from her. In the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour I pray. Amen."

Immediately, the woman opened her eyes, threw back the covers, jumped over the side of the bed, stood up, and yelled, "I am healed! I am healed!" She ran out the door of her room and up and down the hallway yelling, "Look at me! I'm healed! Praise the Name of the LORD! I am healed! I am healed!"

The young pastor left the room. He walked directly to the parking lot, stood by his car, looked up to heaven, and said, "Lord, please, please don't ever do that to me again! You almost gave me a heart attack!!!"

As modern-day followers of Christ, do you and I really believe what Jesus said in the Gospel? This is the question for each one of us to ponder. Do we really believe in the power of prayer?

In the epistle we read, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:13-15a). The obvious answer is "yes" – yes, there are people in our world, in our state and in our community that are suffering and sick. There are also those who are cheerful and both should pray! The point is, prayer is important and prayer is powerful.

James is telling us that our prayers are very important. They are important to us and they are important to God. James is instructing us. He is revealing to us the fact that there is something very important about prayer. As Dr. Kelly wrote, "Prayer changes the world: it makes good things happen because it gets God's will done and thus brings down His best blessings. This is the message of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the experience of God's people throughout the ages." This is the truth that we need to understand and apply to our daily lives. Our prayers, your prayers and my prayers, are important to us and to God!

G. K. Chesterton was an English author, critic, and philosopher. He wrote these words, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world will ever know." Martin Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands [through prayer], that I still possess."

James, in his epistle, is instructing you and me, God's people, in the absolute essential necessity and vital importance of prayer. As we see illustrated in the prayers of the Bible, God used the prayers of His people to accomplish His will and He still does this today. Our Heavenly Father uses our prayers to fulfill His will in and through us in our day.

Next, James reminds us that as we pray, there is power in prayer. James wrote, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16).

James says, "confess your sins to one another." He also says, "pray for one another." James is urging us, he is commanding us, to help one another. We are our brother's keeper and we have a duty to pray. Do you recall the 2nd greatest commandment? Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

There was a certain couple who had been arguing about everything for years. It seemed as though all they ever did was argue. They argued about anything and everything. Both the man and his wife reached the point that they were simply tired of living in such a perpetual state of conflict. So, they sat down to talk. As they talked, they began to argue.

Finally, the wife said, "I have been praying and petitioning God to help us stop all of this arguing. I've just asked that He take one of us to heaven and end this constant strife and I want you to know that when you're gone, I'm moving in with my sister."

As much as you and I may be tempted to pray like that at certain times, that is not exactly a righteous prayer. James wrote, "... The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16b)

Her name was Monica. She lived in North Africa in what is modern day Algeria. Her life was anything but a happy life. She was a devout Christian but her husband was not and he did not appreciate her Christian devotion. Her eldest son was lazy, rebellious, selfish, and lived a life of selfish pleasure that reflected his love of wine, women, and song. To this son, life was one big unending party. Yet, this son was loved deeply by his mother.

Monica always prayed for her son fervently and daily. One day, Monica sought out a godly man and requested that he talk to her son about life and the Gospel. The man knew her son to be an intellectual and well-educated. He refused and Monica wept bitterly. The man then looked at Monica and said, "Don't worry. The child of such tears shall never perish."

Monica continued to pray for her son and she never gave up. Even in the darkness she kept praying for God's light to shine upon her son. One day, in response to her prayers, her son experienced the grace, presence, and power of God. The experience was life changing! Monica's son embraced the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His entire life changed because of the power of the Gospel and the power of his mother's prayers for him.

Perhaps you have never heard the story of Monica and her son before but you have heard about her son. His name is Augustine and you know him as the Bishop of Hippo or St. Augustine. The power of the Gospel and the power of his mother's prayers for him changed him and he became one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Church.

As a matter of fact, it was partly due to the writings of Augustine, a thousand years later, that another young Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther came to discover the truth that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, as revealed in the Bible alone. This truth not only changed the course of Luther's life but that of the entire world. The prayers of Monica touched her son and the life of Augustine touched and continues to touch the entire world.

Prayer is important to us and it is important to God's plan. Prayer is more powerful than we can imagine. Therefore, let us not just talk about prayer, read about prayer, learn about prayer, and study prayer. Let us become a people of prayer and like James and the saints of God through the ages, let us unite our hearts and voices in prayer to Almighty God, King of kings, Lord of lords! Thanks be to God.

THE LITANY OF PRAYER

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors and clergy in Christ, and for all servants of the Church, and for all the people, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our public servants and for our government, that they may be upheld and strengthened in every good deed, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who serve in our nation's military and especially for all those deployed, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who work to bring peace, justice, health, and protection in this and every place, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our sister congregation, Reformation Lutheran Church and for all their needs, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who bring offerings, those who do good works in this congregation, those who toil, those who sing, and all the people here present who await from the Lord great and abundant mercy, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and need, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the faithful who have gone before us and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Silence for personal prayers.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever. **Amen**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

THE CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray. Almighty God, grant to your Church your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from heaven, that your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve you and in the confession of your name may abide to the end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless us and preserve us both now and forever more. **Amen.**

ANOUNCEMENTS

SUSPENDING OF WORSHIP SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY

The Church Council has decided that in light of the present health crisis and the covid-19 virus threat in Effingham County, it is wise for us to suspend all worship services and church related gatherings until further notice. Your Council will remain on top of the situation. Just as soon as it is safe for us to assemble for corporate worship again, we will let you know.

A NOTE ABOUT OUR LENTEN OFFERING

The Lenten Offering All of this year's undesignated offerings received on Wednesday evenings and during Holy Week, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, will be given to Reformation Lutheran Church (LCMC) in Cataula, Georgia (near Columbus.) You also have the option to designate your Lenten offering as you desire.

A NOTE ABOUT TITHES AND OFFERINGS

The Council encourages you to mail in your tithes and offerings to:

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 353
Springfield, GA 31329

Or drop off your gifts to the church office, Monday – Wednesday, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Or you can place insert your gifts through the slot in the church office door.

Thank you for your support of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.