

Faith Lutheran Church, First Presbyterian Church, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Sunday, May 24, 2020
Seventh Sunday of Easter



Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

O God of glory, Your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to Your right hand. Unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into Your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** (from the Seventh Sunday of Easter, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Readings and Psalm

- **Acts 1:6-14** *Jesus' companions at prayer after His departure*
- **Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35** *Sing to God, who rides upon the clouds. (Ps. 68:4)*
- **1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11** *God will sustain and restore those who suffer*
- **John 17:1-11** *Christ's prayer for His disciples*

The Holy Gospel according to John 17:1-11, NRSV

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>)

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prays to His heavenly Father, asking that those who continue His work in this world will live in unity.

¹After Jesus had spoken these words [to His disciples], He looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You, ²since You have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴I glorified You on earth by finishing the work that You gave Me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had in Your presence before the world existed.

⁶“I have made Your name known to those whom You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷Now they know that everything You have given Me is from You; ⁸for the words that You gave to Me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom You gave Me, because they are Yours.

¹⁰All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as We are one.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on this Seventh Sunday of Easter. Amen.

A while back, my colleagues and I were gathered together for Text Study, what used to be in-person on a weekly basis. Now we continue having Text Study but meet via Zoom. It certainly isn't the same as being in the physical presence of one another but, as we know, adjustments to our routine have been necessary during this time of pandemic.

So, after we were finished talking about the upcoming Sunday texts and we were getting ready to leave, one pastor asked another pastor who was experiencing some health issues, "Could we pray for you?" Of course, the answer was "yes", and so about 6 of us pastors stood around the one for whom we were going to pray. We laid our hands on his shoulders and prayed. We prayed for healing and strength. We prayed for the diagnosis and the unknown. We prayed for Jesus' love to surround him, his family, his ministry, and us all. What a powerful witness in the middle of a coffee shop!

There are many times that we may ask for prayers; when facing a serious illness or an upcoming operation. When faced with a challenging decision or personal crisis. The list of prayer needs goes on. Churches have prayer groups where names are shared and prayers are said. Oftentimes someone on social media will ask for prayers. Many people respond by typing, "I'm praying for you" or other words of encouragement. Some actually offer a prayer right then.

It is a powerful feeling when you are being prayed for, when prayers are being said specifically for you and your situation.

In our gospel reading for today, it is the night before Jesus' crucifixion. He had already shared the Last Meal with His disciples. He had washed their feet and had foretold of His betrayal. He had given them many instructions throughout His time with them and quite extensively on this last night. And now Jesus, surrounded by His disciples, prays. And what a prayer He prays!

He prayed first for Himself and in that prayer, prayed for His Father as well. "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all the people, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him." Jesus had come into the world to tell about the love of God and to show it. His work on earth was complete. Jesus' path was now to the cross to fulfill God's plan. Jesus came from God and would soon return to God.

Jesus prayed for His Father, for the work that was now complete. He prayed for giving Him the truth and the words so that God's name – and God's love - would continue forever.

And Jesus prayed for His disciples. He prayed that God would give them the strength to carry the message of Christ to the world. He knows that this will not be an easy task. The disciples will face ridicule and hatred, persecution and death.

Jesus prayed for unity among His disciples and His people. Among you and me. “Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You have given me, so that they may be one, as We are one.”

It is a wonderful experience to pray for another one of God’s children. But, do you ever stop and think that Jesus is praying also? That during the time you are praying for Mildred’s cancer diagnosis or Shirley’s accident or Hank’s recent loss of his wife, that during your prayer, Jesus is praying with you? And right now, as we lift our prayers for all those affected by the coronavirus, whether through illness or loss of income or depression and anxiety, Jesus is praying with us. And Jesus is praying for all of us. Right now. Right this moment.

Just like us pastors gathered in a coffee shop with our hands placed on our colleague’s shoulders, Jesus prayed with us. Jesus prayed for that same healing and strength. He prayed for that diagnosis to come and the unknown to us. He prayed that we would continue to love and support our colleague and one another in all ways possible known to us.

Jesus prays with us. Jesus prays for us.

As restrictions are being lifted in our countries, our states, and our communities, know that Jesus’ prayer is for health and safety and wisdom as we venture from our homes. Jesus’ prayer is that we will continue to reach out to our families and our friends and our church members to help them as we have been during this pandemic. Jesus’ prayer is that we continue to spread God’s love to the world. And Jesus’ prayer is that, through our words and our love, people around the world will hear and will know the gift of eternal life promised through Christ’s death and resurrection.

I continue to pray for you. Know that Jesus prays for you as well. **Amen.**

Blessing

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

O God, call Your people to be one, as You are one. Unite Your church in the truth of Your gospel, the love of our neighbor, and the call to proclaim Your reign to all people.

Breathe life into Your creation. Guide Your people as we explore the mysteries of the universe. We pray for the work of scientists and mathematicians whose skill enriches our understanding.

Make Your justice known among the nations of the earth. Protect the vulnerable. Redirect those who use violence and greed as weapons.

Come to the aid of your children. We pray for those engulfed in grief, those without supportive families, and for all who are isolated, powerless, or afraid, that all may rest their anxieties in Your care.

Give comfort and relief to all who suffer in any way; in body, mind, and spirit, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices...(please name your prayer concerns). Bring healing to all affected by the coronavirus.

Guide and protect all those who would have graduated this weekend and in the time to come. Help them to understand that, though times are different and celebrations have to be delayed for a bit, they are ready to take the knowledge You have given them out into this world. Protect them with Your loving hands as they work to better our nation. We especially pray today for Steven Brown, Kilian Maki, Grace Obey, and Jordan Thorp. Fill their lives with love toward You and toward all humankind.

Give courage to all who embark on new ventures. We especially remember this day those who risked their lives to serve in our armed forces. Grant safety to those serving at home or abroad, and assure them of Your never-failing strength.

Raise all Your saints to eternal life. Until that day, we give You thanks for the faithful examples of those who have listened to Your voice and now rest in You.

With bold confidence in Your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into Your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (prayers from the Seventh Sunday of Easter, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Our Lord's Prayer

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Offering

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

Offertory Prayer

"I tell you the truth, whatever you have done for one of the least of My sisters or brothers, you have done it for Me." Help us, Faithful God, to see You in the needs that confront us daily. Help us to see You in those who are weak, and lonely, and hungry, and afraid. And as we offer ourselves to those who need love may we know that we are touching You. **Amen**

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace to serve our Risen Lord! **Thanks be to God!**