PRAY THE PSALM OF THE WEEK  Psalm 55:16-18, 22, 1, 4-5, 17, 16

As for me, I will call upon God, and He shall / hear my voice.*
He has redeemed my / soul in peace.
Cast your burden / on the Lord,*
and He shall sus / tain you.
Give ear to my / prayer, O God,*
and do not hide Yourself from my suppli- / cation.
My heart is severely pained with- / in me,*
and the terrors of death have fallen up- / on me.
Fearfulness and trembling have come up- / on me,*
and horror has over- / whelmed me.
I will pray, and / cry aloud,*
and the Lord shall / save me.

BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

SAY THE APOSTLES’ CREED
I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died
and was buried. He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven and sits at
the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of
saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life
everlasting. Amen.

SAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER

Morning. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger: and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening. I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this night; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Sing or Say the Hymn of the Week  TLH 1, LSB 901
Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty
Benjamin Schmolk

1. Open now Thy gates of beauty,
Zion, let me enter there,
Where my soul in joyful duty
Waits for Him who answers prayer.
Oh, how blessed is this place,
Filled with solace, light, and grace!

2. Lord, my God, I come before Thee,
Come Thou also unto me;
Where we find Thee and adore Thee,
There a heaven on earth must be.
To my heart, oh, enter Thou,
Let it be Thy temple now!

3. Here Thy praise is gladly chanted,
Here Thy seed is duly sown;
Let my soul, where it is planted,
Bring forth precious sheaves alone,
So that all I hear may be
Fruitful unto life in me.

4. Thou my faith increase and quicken,
Let me keep Thy gift divine,
Howsoever temptations thicken;
May Thy Word still o’er me shine
As my guiding star through life,
As my comfort in my strife.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER

Morning. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger: and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening. I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this night; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
THEME OF THE WEEK: The Worship of God Wrought by the Spirit

If worship were left up to us, we would certainly be lost. The sinner within us does not know the true God, let alone what good and proper worship is. The sinner wants to bring his own sacrifices to God, to make up his own rubrics, and to tell God how worship should be done. It is an earth-to-heaven transaction in which we hope to curry the favor of God. It is only through the Spirit that we learn true worship: not an earthly giving, but a heavenly one; not a heavenly receiving, but an earthly one. God gives and we receive, this is true worship. And so we pray that the Holy Spirit might lead us in this worship so that we might not be like the doubting Israelites at the door of the Promise Land, but instead be like helpless beggars with our sacks filled with Jesus.


It is Holy Week for Jesus in our text. He weeps over Jerusalem and prophecies that it will be turned to ruin. The Temple will be destroyed because of their unbelief in the One who is the fulfillment of the Temple. He then goes into the House of God, the place of prayer, and overturns it in His own way. The Temple had always pointed to Christ and He had now come to fulfill it. He is the place where God dwells with His people. He is the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering. He is Scapegoat for the Day of Atonement. He is the High Priest that stands in the stead of YHWH before the people and stands in the stead of the people before YHWH. He is it all. He is everything. And for that, He will end up a few days later on the cross. But, this was the plan from the beginning, and He fulfills it all willingly. Jesus, save us from ourselves and turn us to You. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 119:73-80—Faithful Afflictions

There is a curious phrase in this text where we pray, “and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.” Affliction coming from our Lord? Now that sounds a little off-putting. But at closer examination we realize that nothing could be closer to the truth. Our Lord afflicts us, but not as a tyrant or as a heartless child burning ants with a magnifying glass. No, according to His faithfulness our Lord afflicts us, as a loving Father chastises His children in order to draw them back to Him. We pray to our loving Father, Who has made and fashioned us and Who gives us understanding to learn His commandments and delight in His Word. So that in His mercy we may live and that we may love His law. Merciful Father, may we meditate and delight in Your precepts alone. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11—One Spirit, Many Gifts

Our Lord gives gifts. Some of His gifts are for the benefit of our individual souls, while other gifts are for the benefit of our neighbor. When we are talking about spiritual gifts and spiritual service, these are all for the good of our neighbor. We dare not glory in the gift apart from the Giver as if the gift is inherently ours and we are therefore better than the next. If that be the case, then we are misusing the gifts given to us and we are not only sinning against God, but against our neighbor as well. Delight in the gifts and service that the Lord has given you, whatever they may be. But delight in them knowing that your Lord has given those gifts to you so that He can serve your neighbor through them. Give thanks to the one Spirit who gives all gifts as He wills, and delight in the service to your neighbor. Holy Spirit, grant me Your gifts that I may serve my neighbor. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 11:16-24—More Tolerable for Sodom

That is some high praise for the most notorious city in the Old Testament. Or perhaps not so much high praise for them, but low esteem for Capernaum and places like it. Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum had heard firsthand the words of YHWH spoken through the lips of Jesus. They had witnessed His miracles and fulfills. And yet, this Jesus was not quite what they wanted. When John is the voice crying out in the wilderness, He is a brutish law-lover; and when Jesus eats with sinners, He is a lawless whoremonger. So it goes with this generation. No matter what Jesus says it will never be the right thing, because Jesus comes to speak against sin, death, and the devil, the very things our sinful flesh adore. But thanks be to God that Jesus came for the likes of sinners like us. Friend of tax collectors, save sinners like me! Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 3:7-15—The Day of Testing

The Exodus had started out to be a joyous event, but then the Israelites doubted at the Red Sea, complained about manna and quail and miraculous water, fashioned a golden idol and worshipped it, and then told God that His Promise Land couldn’t be had. YHWH returns in kind and says, “Your right, you will never have it, only your children will.” The writer to the Hebrews harkens us to remember the Israelites and their rebellion, lest any of us believe that we are better than them, that we would never doubt, that we would never turn astray, that we would never get to the point of unbelief. For today Christ is ours as long as we remain in His Word and faith. So we are to exhort each other with this promise so that we might not end up like the Israelites of old. Christ Jesus, may we forever hear Your voice that our hearts do not become hardened. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 144:1-2—For You Name’s Sake, O Lord

Hear our prayer, O Lord: none are righteous in Your sight, yet You remain faithful to us. Our souls lie vanquished and sin surrounds us: our spirits faint. May we remember all Your gracious deeds and wonderful works. Even now stretch out Your Fatherly hand upon us. Every mourning may we hear of Your steadfast love for us, lest we be like those who go down to the pit. Make Your path clear to us and deliver us from all our enemies of sin, death, and the demons. Your will be done, O God, even within us. Accomplish this for us, not, of course, for our sake, but for the sake of Christ and Him alone. In His righteousness judging our souls out of all trouble. Cut off all enemies. Destroy all adversaries. Enter not into judgment against Your servants, for the Judgment has already been laid upon The Servant. Amen.

To support the work of these devotions please visit www.whatdoesthismean.org/support