

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,

so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Prayers of Intercession

As people of faith, we pray for God's people everywhere. We pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

God of love, we pray for all churches near and far. Give your church the wisdom, the words, and the actions to announce good news to the people. Guide us and inspire us to proclaim the good news in words and in actions. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guide the nations of the earth to do your will, that all people may live in peace and have daily bread. We pray for an end to violence and war, terrorism and hatefulness. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who live in darkness and depression. Strengthen us and guide us to come to their aid. Send them messengers of hope, peace, joy, and love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community of believers. Help us to bear good fruit proclaiming your good news in word and in deed. Form us into joyful servants, and make us ministers of kindness and compassion. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the sick. Give healing and peace to all who suffer from illness of mind, body, or spirit. Send healing to all on our personal and church-family prayer lists. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remembering the death and resurrection of our Lord, fill our hearts with joyful expectation. Increase our faith and hope in the victory of eternal life, eternal joy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive our prayers, faithful God, as we watch and wait for your coming among us, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.