

Devotion for the Fourth Friday of Easter

Psalm 119:1-8

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in His ways.

You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes.

Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.

I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

*Glory be 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*

Old Testament Reading: Leviticus 18:1-30 *Sexual ethics*

New Testament Reading: John 17:1-26 *Jesus prays for the church*

Jesus Prays

Jesus prepared for His arrest, trial and crucifixion by praying. Jesus was a man of prayer. The gospel writers say He would go into lonely places and pray. When He was about to heal a person, or set someone free from the oppression of sin and the devil, He would often pray. He said some evil spirits can only be cast out with much prayer. Jesus counselled the disciples to pray, saying “*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for the fulfilment of His ministry, saying, “*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.*” Jesus’ prayer was so fervent and intense that Luke says, “*His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*” His Heavenly Father answered His prayer, by giving Him strength. Jesus went from the garden to the place of the skull, where He suffered and died to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus prayed for His disciples. He told Peter that Satan had asked to sift him like wheat, referring to the trial Peter would experience after Jesus’ arrest, when he denied three times that knew Jesus. Before He went to the cross, Jesus spent much time praying for the disciples and for all who would believe in Him through their words and follow them in faith. Jesus prayed for you, me and for believers of every time and place. He prayed for believers to be united in faith in His name. He prayed that believers would faithfully share the gospel with others that the world may believe God sent Him as Saviour. He prayed that believers would love each other as He loves us. He prayed that all believers would be preserved in faith and come to see His glory in life everlasting. We can truly say that as He prepared for the cross, Jesus had us on his mind.

Jesus’ great prayer for the church is that it would one day dwell in the fullness of His presence and behold the glory He has with the Father from eternity. He prayed, “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you gave me before the world began.*” Jesus wants us who see Him through faith, to come to that time and place where we will see His face and hear His voice as clearly as Mary Magdalene, when Jesus called her name in the garden. As they gathered in the upper room to celebrate the Passover, Jesus told the disciples, “*I am going to prepare a place for you that where I am, you also may be.*” Jesus’ prayer for you, me and all believers is that we will come to that blessed place and see Him in His glory. The Father answered all Jesus’ prayers. He will answer this prayer and bring us to that blessed place.

“NEARER MY GOD TO THEE” (Public Domain)

**Nearer, my God, to thee, Nearer to thee!
E’en though it be a cross That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be: Nearer my God to thee,
Nearer my God to thee, Nearer to thee!**

**Nearer, my Lord, to thee, Nearer to thee,
Who to thy cross didst come, Dying for me!
Strengthen my willing feet, Hold me in service sweet
Nearer, O Christ, to thee, Nearer to thee!**

**Nearer, O Comforter, Nearer to thee,
Who with my loving Lord Dwellest with me!
Grant me thy fellowship! Help me each day to keep
Nearer, my Guide, to thee, Nearer to thee!**

**But to be nearer still, Bring me, O God,
Not by the visioned steeps Angels have trod.
Here where thy cross I see, Jesus I wait for thee,
Then evermore to be Nearer to thee!**

Prayer

Lord Jesus as you prayed for your church in the garden, you continue to intercede for us and all believers in heaven. We praise you for your faithfulness and your kindness in our lives. We thank you for the Holy Spirit, the word and the sacraments through which you strengthen and nourish our faith. Bless us to respond to your kindness with love for you, love for one another. Encourage and empower us to share your love with people who do not yet know you as Saviour that they too would come to know the joy of your salvation. In your Name we pray. Amen

THE LORD’S PRAYER

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 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

Benediction

John 14:23

“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”