

**Worship Service**  
**Fourth Sunday of Lent: PRAYER**

**Welcome:** Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter, a time of reflecting on our humanity and God's glory. We use the color purple during Lent as the color of repentance and forgiveness. Today we'll be looking at the idea of **prayer**.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and especially forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

**Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1**

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Hymns:**

**Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3**

**Amazing Grace, p. 4**

## **Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5**

### **First Reading: Psalm 86: 1-7**

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.

<sup>2</sup> Preserve my life, for I am godly;  
save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.

<sup>3</sup> Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
for to you do I cry all the day.

<sup>4</sup> Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

<sup>5</sup> For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

<sup>6</sup> Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.

<sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

### **Hymns:**

**Jesus Loves Me, p. 6**

**Softly and Tenderly, p. 7**

**It is Well with My Soul, p. 10**

### **Second reading: Matthew 6: 5-8**

<sup>5</sup> “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. <sup>6</sup> But 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.

<sup>7</sup> “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. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

### **Hymns:**

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12**

**Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13**

**I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15**

- **Interactive Homily:** Let's think a bit about prayer. I wonder how you would describe or define prayer. What should we pray for? [generate as many ideas as possible]

[could focus on just one or two of these sections]

- One way to examine prayer is think about the Lord's Prayer, which we say every Sunday during church. What are the first words of the Lord's Prayer?
  - "Our Father, who art in heaven." So Jesus starts out right away by telling his disciples, this is how you pray: Identify God as what?
    - Our. Father.
  - What does it mean that God is our Father? closeness, family, caring, looking out for us, knows us; not anonymous, not detached, not a puppet master or disinterested stranger. Ours, and a Father.
  - "Hallowed be thy name." I wonder what "hallowed" means?
    - we sometimes hear the phrase "these hallowed halls" or a "hallowed Academy"; something special, set apart
    - the dictionary defines it as "to honor as holy" – so we honor and worship God as unique, in heaven, and OUR God
- What's next? "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
  - What kind of kingdom do you think God has in heaven? I wonder what it's like?
  - What kind of kingdom do we have here on Earth? Does it look particularly heavenly? All joy, no tears? Hardly ...
  - So this piece of the prayer, "thy kingdom come here," asks God to fulfill his purposes right here, where we live; purposes of peace, goodwill toward all
- What's next? "Give us this day our daily bread." Why do you think Jesus includes this in the prayer?
  - Daily provision; practical; admits dependence on God every day
- Then: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." What's that saying?
  - Forgiveness matters in bringing God's kingdom to Earth!
- Then: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." I wonder why Jesus includes this part about asking God to help us with temptation and evil?

- We try to do good, but we so often fail; and we are so often hurt by others, either intentionally or unintentionally. We ask God the Father's protection.

Jesus' instructions on prayer encourage us to pray daily in dependence:

- worship of God as Father
- asking for his good work to be accomplished here and now
- asking for provision for our physical and spiritual needs, especially forgiveness
- asking for his protection from evil

Especially because we are in the season of Lent, a time of reflection and repentance, let us pray together to acknowledge our dependence on God.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us say the Lord's prayer together:

**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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

**Hymns:**

**O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing, p. 16**

**My Jesus, I Love Thee, p. 17**

**The Old Rugged Cross, p. 18**

**Third Reading:** Quotes on Prayer<sup>1</sup>

Prayer is simply talking to God like a friend and should be the easiest thing we do each day. –American Author Joyce Meyer

“Thank you” is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding. –American Author Alice Walker

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/prayer.html>

Work is a prayer, and I start off every morning dedicating it to our Creator. –  
American Artist Joe Murray

My prayer is to learn new things, imbibe fresh insights. You must not take life too seriously. You must enjoy the process of living. –Indian Musician Sonu Nigam

As long as algebra is taught in school, there will be prayer in school. –NPR  
Commentator Cokie Roberts

### **Hymns:**

**When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, p. 19**

**Beneath the Cross of Jesus, p. 20**

### **Fourth Reading: A Lighthearted Story about Prayer<sup>2</sup>**

A very devout man was once caught in rising floodwaters. He climbed onto the roof of his house and trusted God to rescue him. A neighbor came by in a canoe and shouted, “The waters will soon be above your house. Hop in and we’ll paddle to safety.”

“No thanks,” replied the man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.”

A short time later the police came by in a boat. “The waters will soon be above your house. Hop in and we’ll take you to safety.”

“No thanks,” replied the man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.”

A little time later a rescue helicopter hovered overhead; a man let down a rope ladder and shouted through a megaphone, “The waters will soon be above your house. Climb the ladder and we’ll fly you to safety.”

“No thanks,” replied the man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.”

All this time the floodwaters continued to rise, until soon they reached above the roof and the devout man drowned. When he arrived at the Pearly Gates he

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<sup>2</sup> <https://storiesforpreaching.com/i-sent-you-a-rowboat/>

demanded an audience with God. Ushered into God's throne room, he said, "Lord, why am I here in heaven? I prayed for you to save me!"

The Lord replied, "I sent you a canoe, a boat, and a helicopter. Why didn't you get in??"

**Hymn:**

**Jesus Shall Reign, p. 22**

**How Great Thou Art, p. 23**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Doxology, reprise, p. 25**