

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Surprising God, you call us to love our enemies and to show kindness in the face of cruelty. Let our actions be a shining witness of your overwhelming grace for all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

As animals hibernate and fields lie dormant, let them be a reminder that life and faith are not static but always changing and growing. May we, with all creation, trust that the ending of one thing promises life in a new way. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for leaders and policymakers who work to reduce violence in our nations, cities, and towns. Give your wisdom and discernment amid heated arguments and differing viewpoints. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 38. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Elizabeth Fedde, deaconess, 1921) 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 27-33. **Wednesday** Luke 17:1-4. **Thursday** Psalm 99. **Friday** Acts 10:1-8. **Saturday** (commemoration of George Herbert, hymnwriter, 1633) Deuteronomy 9:15-24. **Transfiguration of Our Lord** (commemoration of John Wesley, 1791; Charles Wesley, 1788; renewers of the church) Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2; Luke 9:28-36 [37-43a].

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Celebrate

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
February 23, 2025

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

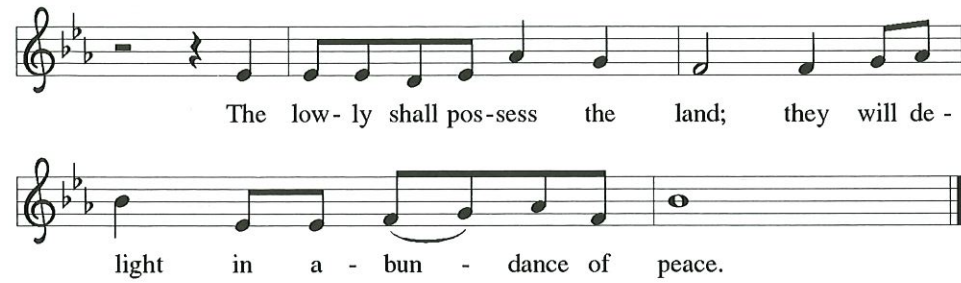
Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt." ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made

me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.'

¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.



- Do not be provoked by ¹ evildoers;
do not be jealous of those ¹ who do wrong.
- ² **For they shall soon wither ¹ like the grass,
and like the green grass ¹ fade away.**
- ³ Put your trust in the LORD ¹ and do good;
dwell in the land and ¹ find safe pasture.
- ⁴ **Take delight ¹ in the LORD,
who shall give you your ¹ heart's desire. R**
- ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust ¹ in the LORD,
and see what ¹ God will do.
- ⁶ **The LORD will make your vindication as clear ¹ as the light
and the justice of your case like the ¹ noonday sun.**
- ⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait ¹ patiently.
Do not be provoked by the one who prospers,
the one who succeeds in ¹ evil schemes.
- ⁸ **Refrain from anger, leave ¹ rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads on- ¹ ly to evil. R**
- ⁹ For evildoers shall ¹ be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD shall pos- ¹ sess the land.
- ¹⁰ **In a little while the wicked shall ¹ be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will ¹ not be there.**
- ¹¹ But the lowly shall pos- ¹ sess the land;
they will delight in abun- ¹ dance of peace.
- ³⁹ **But the deliverance of the righteous comes from ¹ you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in ¹ time of trouble.**
- ⁴⁰ You, O LORD, will help them and ¹ rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them,
because in you ¹ they seek refuge. R

In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it

is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰ What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Gospel

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

[Jesus said:] "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what

credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."