

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our Refuge; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

PRAYER

Lord, I offer to you all my sins and offences, which I have committed before you, from that day I first could sin, even to this hour; that you may consume and burn them, one and all, with the fire of your love, and do away all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from all offences, and restore to me your grace, fully forgiving me all, and admitting me mercifully to the kiss of peace.

I offer up also to you all that is good in me, though it is very small and imperfect, that you may amend and sanctify it, that you may make it grateful and acceptable to you, and always perfect it more and more. Bring me also, slothful and unprofitable poor creature as I am, to a good and blessed end.

Thomas a' Kempis, *Prayers of the Middle Ages*, edited by J. Manning Potts

EXHORTATION

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

Congregation: who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

Congregation: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

CONFESSION OF SINS

Pastor: O almighty God, merciful Father,

Congregation: I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

INTROIT

Psalm 119:89–93; antiphon: v. 105

Pastor: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

Congregation: 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.

Pastor: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And with thy spirit.

Pastor: Let us pray:

Grant me your grace, most merciful Jesus, that your grace may be with me, work in me, and continue with me to the end.

Grant me always to want and desire whatever is most acceptable to you and pleases you best. Let your will be mine, and let my will always follow yours and agree perfectly with it. Let there be between you and me but one will, so that I may love what you love and abhor what you hate.

Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world and, for your sake, love to be despised, and not to be known by the world.

Grant that I may rest in you above all other things, and that my heart may be at peace in you. You are the true peace of the heart. You are its only rest. Outside of you, all things are hard and uneasy. In this peace, the same peace that is in you, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep, and I will rest. Amen.

Thomas A' Kempis, Prayers of the Middle Ages, edited by J. Manning Potts

FIRST READING

Acts 17:16–31

While Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "'for we are indeed his offspring.'" Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE

1 Peter 3:13–22

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 14:15-26

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fourteenth chapter.

Congregation: Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "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. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

APOSTLES' CREED (spoken in unison)

**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.**

How Great Is Our God

The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps Himself in light, and darkness tries to hide,
And trembles at His voice, and trembles at His voice.

How great is our God! Sing with me:
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
Beginning and the End, Beginning and the End.
The God-head, three in one, Father, Spirit, Son,
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb.

How great is our God! Sing with me:
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

Name above all names, worthy of all praise.
My heart will sing: How great is our God!

Name above all names, worthy of all praise.
My heart will sing: How great is our God!

How great is our God! Sing with me:
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

How great is our God! Sing with me:
How great is our God! And all will see
How great, how great is our God!

SERMON: *A King-Sized Comforter*

Jesus shares today's Scripture with His disciples over the Last Supper. He knows His arrest is imminent. He knows that He will soon be nailed to a cross. So, all of His words here carry a weighty importance. He wants to reassure His disciples. He wants to help them to keep going when, soon, they will be at their very lowest point. He wants them to know that, in the darkest times of their lives, God will still be very much present and at work. Jesus will not leave them alone. He will send them His Holy Spirit.

He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is peace.
He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is love.
He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is comfort in life's darkest hour.
He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is light and life.
He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is help.
He wants them to know that where His Spirit is there is power.

We read in John 15:26, "**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**"

The "sending" or "going out" which Jesus refers to here is not like a king sending out a servant. It is an extending of Himself. He is sending out Himself. The Holy Spirit is God. The third part of our Triune God. The Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father as another manifestation of Himself. In sending the Holy Spirit God is extending His own power to fulfill His own designs in this world.

I see three simple—yet profound—truths in today's scripture. They were true for the original disciples and they are true for us as followers of Jesus today.

NUMBER ONE IS THIS: God is for you. God is for you! In a world where it's sometimes hard to know who you can trust, you can always know that God is on your side.

As Paul wrote to the Romans, **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

God Himself is for us. We are liberated from the power of sin and death. We are “more than conquerors through Him who loves us.”

The hymn writer John W. Peterson expresses it so well:

No one understands like Jesus.
He's a friend beyond compare;
Meet Him at the throne of mercy;
He is waiting for you there.

No one understands like Jesus;
Every woe He sees and feels;
Tenderly He whispers comfort,
And the broken heart He heals.

No one understands like Jesus
When the foes of life assail;
You should never be discouraged;
Jesus cares and will not fail!

No one understands like Jesus
When you falter on the way;
Though you fail Him, sadly fail Him,
He will pardon you today.

No one understands like Jesus
When the days are dark and grim;
No one is so near, so dear as Jesus--
Cast your every care on Him!

Jesus promised His followers that He would send to them “another helper.” The word translated here as “helper” is the Greek word “paraclete.” It's a legal term. It means advocate. It has to do with one who comes to your defense. It means one who comes right alongside you. One who stands right next to you. One who is always right there, joined to you by the hip. It means one who encourages you. One who comforts you. One who helps you. One who walks with you every step of the way.

When life caves in around you, what is it that you need? Do you need a reason or do you need comfort? You do not need answers -- you need someone. Jesus does not come to us with an explanation; He comes to us with His presence. He said that He would send “another.” Jesus says, “I will send ‘another’ helper.” That tells us that Jesus Himself is our original helper. Jesus is for us. Jesus cares about us. He will not leave us alone.

The Apostle John, of course, was the author of his gospel. Many years later, he would write three short letters to the churches, what we call 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.

In 1 John 2:1, he wrote, **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have a “helper” with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”**

Jesus is our “helper.” He is our advocate before God the Father. He says, “This is your child, Father. I have bought them back to you for a price. For the sake of their faith in me- my innocent suffering and death on their behalf- Please forgive him or her.”

Jesus said, **“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name. He will teach you all things”**. The Holy Spirit of God will be your personal Teacher. He is the One who will guide you to apply these principles according to God’s will. He will be at work revealing God, His purposes, and His ways to you.

Jesus said, **‘If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak My own authority’** (John 7:17)

God is always at work around you. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. God’s number one purpose in your life is to make you like Jesus.

NUMBER TWO: God is with you. God is with you. Jesus describes His Spirit as being “with us forever.” He says the Holy Spirit “lives within you.” He assures His followers that they will not become orphans. Even though He may have to leave their side, He will send another—one they already know—for indeed it is the Spirit of Jesus himself who will be with them, so that they will never be alone.

This is how Jesus can promise, right before His ascension to heaven, **“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”**

Doesn’t it give you comfort to know that God is with you? God says in Isaiah 41:10, **“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”** Whatever you have to face, you will not have to face it alone. When your heart is broken, God grieves with you. When you celebrate, God celebrates with you. When you are lonely, God is with you. When you are depressed, God is with you.

When you’re angry, God is with you. When you’re tired, God is with you. When you feel like giving up, the Holy Spirit is at your side.

We so often pray to God to take away our hurts, our difficulties, our trials. But God in His wisdom knows what is best for us. We don’t need to understand, we need to believe. I’ve had the following in many files for a long time:

“I asked God to take away my pain. God said, ‘No. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.’
I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. God said, ‘No. His spirit is whole, his body is only temporary.’
I asked God to grant me patience. God said, ‘No. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn’t granted, it is learned.’
I asked God to give me happiness. God said, ‘No. I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you.’
I asked God to spare me pain. God said, ‘No. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me.’
I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, ‘No. You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful.’
I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, ‘No. I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things.’
I asked God to help me love others as much as he loves me.
And God said, ‘Ahhhh – finally you have the idea.’”

NUMBER THREE: God is in you. God lives in you. How can our minds grasp that? That our Almighty God actually lives within each of us? It’s mind-boggling, if we think about it. Jesus says to His disciples that the Holy Spirit “lives with you and will be ‘in’ you.”

Everything will change at Pentecost.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, His followers gathered together in prayer as instructed. There, the Spirit descended upon them and appeared like tongues of fire above each believer’s head, and the believers find themselves doing things they could never do before. They speak in foreign languages, proclaiming God’s love to everyone in the crowd in a way each can understand. The believers speak boldly, without fear, and they know exactly what to say. They sense that God is using them miraculously. And from Pentecost forward, the book of Acts records this new pattern: whenever someone accepts Jesus as their Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into their life and gives them power to do what they could not otherwise do on their own. Thus, God gets the credit.

In today’s passage, Jesus gives an early hint of things to come. The Holy Spirit is not only for us, He is not only with us; the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ is actually in us. The moment you turn over your life control to God, He puts his Spirit within you.

Let us pray: **Father, thank you for this beautiful gift of yourself that somehow You reside in each one of us who are Yours, through Your Holy Spirit within us. For someone here today not yet Your child, please help them to turn over life control to You, confessing to You their sinful rebellion; humbly asking for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to cover all their sins; and inviting the Holy Spirit to come in and take charge. Help us to not take Your presence for granted. And help us not to grieve Your Holy Spirit, but to fully cooperate as we follow Your prompts, celebrating that You are for us, You are with us, and You are in us. Amen.**

Heaven Is My Home

**I'm but a stranger here, heav'n is my home;
Earth is a desert drear, heav'n is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand round me on ev'ry hand;
Heav'n is my fatherland, heav'n is my home.**

**What though the tempest rage, heav'n is my home;
Short is my pilgrimage, heav'n is my home;
And time's wild wintry blast soon shall be overpast;
I shall reach home at last, heav'n is my home.**

**Therefore I murmur not, heav'n is my home;
Whate'er my earthly lot, heav'n is my home;
And I shall surely stand there at my Lord's right hand;
Heav'n is my fatherland, heav'n is my home.**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. For the faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him that through hearing the Word of the Lord many may be brought to faith and to the knowledge of the truth let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: For the Church of God here and everywhere, that all who confess Jesus Christ may be united in doctrine and witness, defended against all the assaults of the enemy, and eager to gather together in love for one another, let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: For Zion Lutheran Church, for the work of the Kingdom in our community, and for the resources to accomplish all that God desires, that His name may be glorified among us and His purpose fulfilled in our words and works, let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: For the agencies and institutions through which we love our neighbor and provide for those in need, for the destitute and homeless, and for everyone who suffers unemployment and under-employment, that we may aid them in their needs and assist them to find honorable labor to supply all their needs, let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: For the lonely who suffer the burdens of life without friendship or family, for those depressed or wary of pandemic measures, and for the fellowship of the Church, that we may bear one another's burdens and live in community with Christ as our head, let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: For the sick and those who suffer, (*especially*_____,) that God would grant healing to their bodies, peace for their minds, and consolation in their grief and sorrows, let us pray to the Lord:

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: O Lord, our God, as we recall the obedient life and life-giving death of Your Son for our salvation, we pray You to strengthen our faith and to make our hearts bold, that we may not fear but address our prayers to You in all humility. Hear us on behalf of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who even now stands before You on our behalf, pleading our cause with His own blood, until that day when we are delivered from the changes and chances of this mortal life and stand before You in heaven.

Congregation: Lord, have mercy.

LORD'S PRAYER (spoken in unison)

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.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: 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 ☩ give you peace.

Congregation: **Amen.**

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

**My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,
O let me from this day be wholly Thine!**

**May Thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me, O may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire!**

**While life's dark maze I tread and griefs around me spread, be Thou my guide;
Bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away,
Nor let me ever stray from Thee aside.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book
Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
Created by Lutheran Service Builder © 2018 Concordia Publishing House.