



Desert Cross Daily Prayer, Scripture, & Devotion
Week of August 10—August 15, 2020

You are encouraged to gather with the members of your household and join the members and friends of the Desert Cross community; though we be in separate locations, let us worship together at 6pm.

(We will be reading and reflecting on texts from the daily and Sunday lectionary.)

Monday, August 10, 2020

Let us come before the Lord in worship and prayer; though physically distant, we are united into community by the power of the Spirit of God.

Let us pray,

Gracious God open our hearts and minds to your presence with us. Deepen our faith and help us to follow Jesus in the way of love. Amen.

A reading from 1 Kings 19:9-18

⁹At [Horeb, the mount of God,][Elijah] came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
¹⁰He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."
¹¹He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram."¹⁶ Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill.¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

Devotion:

Elijah is on the run from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Elijah has had his share of victories against Jezebel and her prophets of Baal, but he has struggled and wanted to die as his faith is assailed by doubts, and he has traveled a long time and distance seeking God. And it is in the sound of silence that Elijah finds God. Elijah has come to complain to God, he has come to lament the state of things in Israel.

We live in a world worthy of lament; even in normal times, loss exists. And these are certainly not normal times. The loss of our normal lives and schedules can weigh heavily upon us. During these days, as the hospitalization and deaths rates rise and fall around the country, as we struggle with the debate over how to best educate the children of our country during this vexing time, when normal celebrations in life are fraught with perilous choices, as the economic fallout from this virus continues, during this time, as we continue to live in our silos of silence, God is with us. Just as Elijah found God and God listened to his lament, God hears us.

It was in the silence that Elijah found God, and we too, need to have times of silence to take our personal lament to God. And in the silence, God will meet us and offer the comfort of God's presence. And in the silence, where it is safe to express our lament, we will come to experience the peace of the Lord, and after the lament has been expressed, joy will take its place.

Let us pray,

We pray for all those affected by this pandemic:

the medical professionals and all care givers,
scientists and researchers,
all who work in hospitals, elder care facilities, and prisons,
our nation's governors,
all our political leaders,
the poor, the unemployed and all suffering financial insecurity,
the children, youth and their parents and teachers as school begins,
parents, grandparents, and our extended families.
the anxious, fearful, and lonely
those who inflict violence
those upon whom violence is inflicted,
the angry and the misguided,

Gracious Father, Mother God, you know everyone's needs; provide for them according to your benevolent will. Deepen our faith and trust; grant us peace. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**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.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

We come before the Lord in worship and prayer, united by the power of the Spirit of God.

Let us pray,

God of grace, we place ourselves completely in your hands. There is still so much bad news, too much happening in the world that we can neither control nor fix. We come to you, O God, hoping for your mercy and your peace. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 85:8-13

⁸*I will listen to what the Lord God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.*

⁹***Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.***

¹⁰*Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

¹¹***Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.***

¹²*The Lord will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.*

¹³***Righteousness shall go before the Lord
and shall prepare for God a pathway.***

Devotion:

The psalmist gets creative here and personifies the virtues. That leads us to an interesting proposition – what if we lived our lives as the virtues the psalmist cites here? How would our days be lived differently if we intentionally tried to be walking and talking, live representations of faithfulness? What if faithfulness to all of the loving relationships in our life were our daily focus? If being a faithful spouse, partner, or friend was our most important value, how would our behavior be different?

The psalmist highlights steadfast love, righteousness, peace, and faithfulness and how they interact and support each other. If your primary focus were to be righteous, what would need to change in your behaviors to move you into right relationship with God and with the people in your life. What qualities are necessary for a right relationship with God to be evident in your life? What pieces of yourself are you hiding from God?

It might be interesting if you picked your weakness, the virtue which you most lack, and try to live into that virtue. Can you imagine the differences it would make in your life?

Let us pray,

Gracious God, in your mercy you love all that you have made and forget none. We bring before you this day the cries of the world and the concerns of our hearts. With deep gratitude for our many blessings, trusting in your continued care for all of humanity and your whole creation, we are so bold as to pray:

For all who are sick with COVID-19, for those who fear contracting this virus, as well as those suffering from other illnesses, we pray for healing and peace. Hear our prayer, O God.

For all health care professionals, hospital and health facility workers, that you might be their source of strength and hope. Hear our prayer, O God.

For the governors and our national leaders, as well as all the leaders of nations, grant them courage, wisdom, and compassion. May they be unfailing in their efforts to protect and provide for their citizens. Hear our prayer, O God.

For school administrators, teachers, students, and their parents, grant them common sense and wisdom to make safe decisions regarding education in their communities. Hear our prayer, O God.

For the unemployed, the homeless or those facing economic hardships; grant the leaders of this nation the compassion and ability of work together to provide for them. Hear our prayer, O God.

For those who are lonely, overwhelmed, fearful, or anxious during this continued period of COVID-19 social distancing and isolation, grant them a sign that you are with them and fill them with your peace. Hear our prayer, O God.

O compassionate God, guide us and give us wisdom during this time of COVID-19 to behave in responsible and safe ways for the love of our neighbor and ourselves.

As our country confronts the sin of racism, forgive us, and heal our nation's brokenness. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
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Give us this day our daily bread;
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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.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

We come before you, Holy God, to offer worship and praise and prayer.

Let us pray,

Gracious Father, life is complicated. Grant us courage and wisdom for the living of these days. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

A reading from Romans 10:5-15

⁵Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them."⁶But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the

dead).⁸But what does it say?

"The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);⁹because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.¹¹The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame."¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.¹³For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Devotion:

'...**the same Lord is Lord of all**' – this is an essential facet of the good news of the kingdom of God, that we are united as children of God – '... **the same Lord is Lord of all**'

We live in a time of great divisiveness, when many are more focused on the differences that separate them from others, instead of what unites us. We separate people by race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, geographic location, and many other categories that divide and separate. In the human sphere, these divisions are important, but false because we share a common humanity.

We are more alike than different for we are all children of God, and all created in the image of God. In the kingdom of God, we celebrate that '**... the same Lord is Lord of all.**'

Let us pray, 'A Prayer for a Hundred Thousand Dead':

(A prayer posted on Facebook without attribution and edited to reflect the current number of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. and current conditions.)

As the ventilators turn off, a hundred sixty thousand last breaths blow through our towns like a hurricane. We feel the walls shake — feel the gale move through us, cracking the joists and struts that hold us together. It sounds like asking for forgiveness, a missing laugh, replaying a voice mail, again and again. There are so many people left behind like damaged homes, stained with waterlines of loss. Still, we keep standing.

We learn the lessons of grief: kindness, compassion, even — though it seems impossible — faith.

So on this day, when the bodies are too many to count and too heavy to carry, we lay them down and lift our voices.

We pray for every life now gone; every sibling, friend, neighbor; every childless parent and parentless child; for every American who has run out of prayers:
Give us the heart to heal and comfort each other through painful times.
Give us the strength to witness, when we want to look away.
Give us the courage to grieve, remembering that we are a family, no matter where we live or what we believe.
Give us the humility to know that our lives are a gift we give to each other and that we must work to make this better.
Give us the breath to use our voice, to pray without ceasing for the people we love, to speak true and kind words, to say you are not alone.
Give us the mercy to forgive ourselves, to see the rubble around us with clear eyes, to rebuild and reimagine a nation, finally, truly, of life, liberty and justice for all.
Amen.

Let us confess our faith in God,

We believe in God above us,
 Maker and sustainer of all life,
 Of sun and moon
 Of water and earth
 Of all of humanity
We believe in God beside us,
 Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,
 born in a woman's womb,
 servant of the poor,
 who walked the way of love
He was tortured and nailed to a tree
 a man of sorrows, he died forsaken.
He descended into the earth
 to the place of death.
On the third day he rose from the tomb.
He ascended into heaven to be
 everywhere present
 and his kingdom will come on earth.
We believe in God within us,
 the Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
 life-giving breath of the Church,
 Spirit of healing and forgiveness,
 source of resurrection and of life everlasting. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**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.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

Thursday, August 13, 2020

Let us come before the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, to offer worship and praise and prayer.

Let us pray,

Creator God, open our hearts to the possibilities in the dreams we have both when we are awake and asleep. Grant us the wisdom to know when our dreams are your will and when they are our ego; we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

A reading from Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

¹*Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan.*

²*This is the story of the family of Jacob.*

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

¹²*Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." ¹⁴So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.*

He came to Shechem, ¹⁵and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶"I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." ²¹But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²²Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; ²⁴and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agree. ²⁸When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Devotion:

We all know this story so well; there is even a musical based on this story of Joseph and the Technicolor coat. The familiarity of this story blurs our response to this so very painful story of familial betrayal, this story of perverse human brokenness. So, instead we teach our children about the coat of many colors and skim over the part that brothers were plotting to kill their brother, but then merely sold him into slavery and concocted a lie to tell their father.

Despite the cold-hearted and evil event described in this text, we find our hope at the end of the story in the reconciliation that brings the family together after so many years apart. Joseph is responsible for the reconciliation because he is willing to forgive his brothers. Not only does he forgive them, but he saves their lives and the lives of all his family members.

The usual human calculus is that betrayal requires a response of revenge and retaliation. However, the sartorially splendid Joseph teaches us that for the people of God, betrayal is met with forgiveness and reconciliation. And for that, we give thanks to the graciousness of God, as displayed in Joseph's actions. times.

Let us pray,

Gracious God, we give you thanks for our intellect and the power of our imaginations. We pray that we use our mental capabilities only for the common good. Grant us the humility to know the limits of our knowledge and to follow our dreams.

Give us the grace to know ourselves and our motivations so that all that we think and do will be for love of you and our neighbor. Grant us humility and the courage and the clarity to know that we can control and change only ourselves.

We pray this day for our nation, for forgiveness of the national sin of racism and the harm it perpetrates. Comfort and protect those who experience its evil effects in their daily lives.

We pray for healing for all those who are sick in body mind or spirit, from COVID-19 and all other illnesses.

Bless and protect medical professionals, first responders, health care workers, and all whose jobs are considered essential.

Help us to make wise decisions that keep us and our families safe; especially be with school administrators, teachers, students, and their parents.

Bless and protect the unemployed, the poor and those experiencing financial insecurity.

We pray for the children and youth, the widows and the powerless; all who are fearful, anxious, and stressed by the limitations imposed on their lives by this pandemic.

We pray for our leaders; give them wisdom and compassion so that their focus will be to provide for and protect their citizens.

We pray for the church, during this time when we must maintain physical distance because of love for our neighbor. May we be patient and make wise decisions based on care of our community.

Deepen our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen us in love; we pray this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**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.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

Friday, August 14, 2020

We come before the Lord, to offer our worship and praise and prayers of intercession.

Let us pray,

Creator God, give us clarity of vision to see and a sensitivity of spirit to appreciate all of the beauty and intricacies of your created order. In each sunrise and sunset, in each flower and insect, may we see your power and your imagination. Open our hearts to accord honor and dignity to all of humanity since all people are created in your image. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 105:1-6

¹*Give thanks to the Lord and call upon God's name;*

make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

²***Sing to the Lord, sing praises,
and speak of all God's marvelous works.***

³*Glory in God's holy name;*

let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

⁴***Search for the strength of the Lord;
continually seek God's face.***

⁵*Remember the marvels God has done,*

the wonders and the judgments of God's mouth,

⁶***O offspring of Abraham, God's servant,
O children of Jacob, God's chosen ones.***

Devotion:

The psalmist encourages that we 'continually seek God's face.' Where do you see the face of God? Bonhoeffer saw the face of God in every human being. In Genesis 1, we read that human beings are created in the image of God and so each person embodies the face of God. Richard Rohr points out that the sacred – the holy presence of God – is everywhere around us. St Francis of Assisi saw God in the animals and the birds.

What we need is an awareness of the holy, a clarity of vision that helps us see the imagination of God in the diversity of creation. In the days and weeks ahead, may you see the people you encounter and the natural world around you as signs of God's presence and power.

We confess our faith,

You, O God, are supreme and holy.
You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do.
You have always been with us.
You are God.

You, O God, are infinitely generous,
Good beyond all measure.
You came to us before we came to you.
You have revealed and proved
Your love for us in Jesus Christ,
Who lived and died and rose again.
You are with us now.
You are God.

You, O God, are Holy Spirit.
You empower us to be your Gospel in the world.
You reconcile and heal;
You overcome death.
You are God.
We worship you.

Let us pray,

Almighty and merciful God, you are the only source of health and healing; you alone can bring calmness and peace. Grant to us, your children, an awareness of your presence and a strong confidence in you. In our pain, our weariness, and our anxiety, surround us with your care, protect us by your loving might, and permit us once more to enjoy health and strength and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

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**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.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

Saturday, August 15, 2020

We come before you, Holy God, to offer worship and praise and prayer.

Let us pray,

Gracious God, keep us in your truth, deepen our faith and strengthen us in love, we pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 105:16-22, 45b

¹⁶*Then God called for a famine in the land
and destroyed the supply of bread.*

¹⁷***The Lord sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.***

¹⁸*They bruised his feet in fetters;
his neck they put in an iron collar.*

¹⁹***Until his prediction came to pass,
the word of the Lord tested him.***

²⁰*The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free,*

²¹***setting him as a master over his household,
as a ruler over all his possessions,***

²²*to instruct his princes according to his will
and to teach his elders wisdom.* ^{45b} *Hallelujah!*

Devotion:

This psalm recounts the story of Joseph after he is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. Joseph rises to prominence in the Pharaoh's household. Joseph, always the sage interpreter of dreams, wisely plans for the coming famine and saves the nation of Egypt from starvation.

Joseph showed himself to be an honorable man and he resisted the persistent seductions of the Pharaoh's wife. It is in this way that Joseph was tested and he resisted falling into sin. Joseph would not steal another man's wife, especially since the Pharaoh trusted him with so much power in his household.

Many are tempted to take what does not belong to them. Greed for more and

more is perhaps the most universal and basic sin that besets human beings.

Joseph models a life that accepts that there are limits and boundaries that need to be respected. Joseph is able to resist temptation. The psalmist describes this as wisdom.

Let us pray,

Loving God, in whom we place our trust, we pray for our nation and the world as we face continued uncertainties during this pandemic. Give wisdom and compassion to world leaders, and especially the leaders in our country as they make important and difficult decisions that affect all of us.

We pray for all affected by this virus: the front line medical providers, the EMTs, all hospital and care facility workers, scientists and researchers, all who are ill with this virus, all who are ill in body, mind or spirit from any cause, the homeless, unemployed and those with inadequate financial resources, the lonely and the anguished, the fearful and the despairing. Comfort all who mourn.

Help us make safe decisions; guide school administrators, teachers, students, and their parents. May our choices be prudent and motivated by love of neighbor.

Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting in the promise of new life through our Lord and Savior, Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

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