



Desert Cross Daily Prayer, Scripture, & Devotion
Week of September 14—September 19, 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.)

Pastor Andrea Cain calls you to prayer this week.

Monday, September 14, 2020

Let us come before the Lord in worship and prayer united together by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray,

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you. Amen.

A reading from Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Devotion:

The main theme of the assigned readings for this week was forgiveness. It's a difficult topic! As the English poet, Alexander Pope wrote, "To err is human; to forgive, divine." Scripture tells us over and over from Old Testament to New that God calls us to pass on the divine gift of forgiveness even though we are so very human! It's a life-time challenge. And we learn in this Genesis text from the best: Joseph. He had every reason not to forgive his brothers for selling him into slavery, and yet, he chose life-time mercy. He set the example for the Israelites that for the community to survive, forgiveness was the key. That is why we talk about the forgiveness we have in Jesus as

new life! It sets us free to be people of God. Joseph set the stage for forgiveness as the example and the way of God's people. He shows that God works through people and can work bad for good. God used this opportunity to use Joseph to save many lives and to maintain unity in his family and community. Joseph precedes Jesus as the model of forgiveness. In order to create unity in our lives, Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer for us to pray together. It sets the example for the way we are to live. The prayer is dear to many and even in last hours of life, people are able to recite these precious words from memory. Reflect upon the meaning of Jesus' prayer when you say these words: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." How are these words both challenging and life-giving for you?

Let us pray together a Psalm Reflection: Forgiveness (inspired by Psalm 51:13, 15) by Steve Brown (Worship Ideas You Can Use).

Forgiveness is mercy.

Such pardon and kindness I cannot fathom.

Forgiveness is unfailing love.

Such patience and understanding I cannot comprehend.

Forgiveness is overwhelming compassion.

Such sympathy and warmth I cannot reciprocate.

Forgiveness is the blotting out of transgressions.

Such freedom and good will I do not deserve.

Forgiveness is the washing away of my iniquities.

Such purity and newness I cannot maintain.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

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, September 15, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to blessing of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

Let us pray,

Eternal God, you show perpetual loving kindness to us your servants. Train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 103:1-7

Of David.

- ¹ *Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.*
- ² *Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—*
- ³ *who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,*
- ⁴ *who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,*
- ⁵ *who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*
- ⁶ *The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.*
- ⁷ *He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:*

Devotion:

Psalm 103 is the lectionary response to Genesis 50 and the story of Joseph's example to the community for mercy and forgiveness. Written by King David, it is a song of praise for God's healing justice and mercy. Who better to write a song of praise to God than King David who is a prime example of a servant of God who needed lots of mercy and forgiveness? He served God and answered God's call, but he also was indeed very human making lots of mistakes and missteps along the way. Yet God still loved and used David for many faithful means. This Psalm also looks ahead to the day

when there will be no more tears, no more sickness, and no more death. These are the things we hope for when we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come." It is a mixture of joy for the good things God is doing and hope for the good things to come, giving us strength for the waiting. We are in a waiting time now looking forward to better days ahead. What songs of praise are you singing to God today? Times are difficult, and we are weary. Remember to take time each day to embrace the mercy and love that is yours in the Lord!

(A beautiful hymn we sing, "Where charity and love prevail" (ELW 359), fits well with our readings and is a prayer asking for community unity):

Let us pray,

- 1 Where charity and love prevail,
there God is ever found;
brought here together by Christ's love,
by love we thus are bound.
- 2 With grateful joy and holy fear,
God's charity we learn;
let us with heart and mind and soul
now love God in return.
- 3 Let us recall that in our midst
dwells Christ, God's holy Son;
as members of each body joined,
in him we are made one.
- 4 Let strife among us be unknown;
let all contentions cease.
Be God's the glory that we seek;
be his our only peace.
- 5 Let us forgive each other's faults
as we our own confess,
that we may love each other well
in Christian gentleness.

(Text: Latin hymn, 9th. cent.; tr. Omer Westendorf, 1916-1997, alt.)

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.

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

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

Let us pray,

Speak to us through your Word today, that we may hear you calling us out of the wilderness places in our lives and into new places you have promised to show us. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 103:8-13

⁸ *The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.*

⁹ *He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;*

¹⁰ *he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹ *For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;*

¹² *as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

¹³ *As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;*

Devotion:

This is a beautiful and expansive reflection on God's amazing grace. The psalmist puts into words the Lord's character in a very personal way. This psalm takes us out of ourselves and expands God's love into the universe and beyond. In a time where selfishness, anger, and fighting are all around us, these words are a balm for our souls. This meditation on God's goodness and gracious love compares God to a loving father who has compassion on his children. Although God is surely troubled by our wrongdoing and missteps, the fact remains that God's love for us is eternal. God's grace is not fair but it is immeasurably generous. This imagery of God's love translates to Christ in the New Testament.



The apostle Paul writes that all people are made right with each other and God in one body, through the cross. Paul writes in Ephesians 3:18-19: "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that Surpasses knowledge..."

Gregory of Nyssa, a 4th century bishop preached that Paul was describing the cross. Gregory says, "*Think of God. Look down at the ground and then consider with your imagination the depths beneath. Look up to the sky and then reach out with your mind to the sides and corners of the universe, and consider what is the power which holds these things together ... like a sort of bond of everything, and you will see how the shape of the cross is engraved upon your mind by the thought of God. The shape of the cross shows its own power by closely watching over all that exists.*"

The cross of Christ is in the center of the world – crosses over us in every direction. There is no area of our lives that Jesus Christ does not touch. Jesus is available to us at the foot of the cross, our greatest physical picture of him. It represents both our broken human condition and our deliverance through his suffering and sacrificial love for us! Reflect on the cross of Christ in new ways this week.

Let us pray,

St. Augustine's closing prayer from the Confessions:

Through your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. Say to my soul, I am your salvation. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of you. 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, September 17, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the mercy and grace of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

Let us pray,

Praise the Lord! With all our hearts, we will praise God's holy name! Praise the Lord!
Never forget the good things God has done for us. Amen.

A reading from Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.¹¹ For it is written,

*"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God."*

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Devotion:

Paul has been expounding in Romans on God's special love as *agapē* or unconditional love. He addresses a community conflict applying this concept of sharing God's unconditional love we first received with each other. Gentiles and Jewish Christians were divided over observing festivals and dietary restrictions that differed. They were fighting and judging each other thinking their way was the best way and made them more faithful. Does this sound familiar? Paul could be writing to us today! Paul strongly advises this community to stop judging each other, leave the judgment to God, and start embracing the unity they have in Christ. He even goes so far as to say that the use of freedom to harm others is the opposite of *agapē*. He wants people to respect each other and their beliefs on open ended questions and matters while uniting around Christ to do good for each other and others. Our faith should allow us to still be loving in disagreement and allow for the conscience of others. How might we share some *agapē* in the days ahead for the healing of the wounds and divisions in our world? It is Christ who unites us not uniformity in thinking on issues. That can be heard as a word of life in difficult conflicts so we do not demonize those with which we disagree, but agree to disagree and still love each other knowing that we all belong to the Lord. Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you (Romans 15:7)!

Let us pray,

Lord of steadfast love and mercy,
Through your Word, you have set promises before your people.
Promises for good and not for evil,
Promises for care and not for harm,
Promises fulfilled through life and death,
Promises realized through sorrow and joy.

You have washed us clean, and guided us in righteousness.
Eternal is your Word and life-altering your love.

Still, we have strayed all too often and trusted too little.
Our words have been cold, and our hearts closed off.
In emptiness we have trusted and falseness we have acted.

Yet you have washed us clean, and guided us in righteousness.
Eternal is your Word and life-altering your love.

In these seasons of giving and thanksgiving,
remind us of that love which knows no bounds.
Guide us in your desire for justice and forgiveness.
And teach us to give, even as you are giving.

In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray.
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, September 18, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the unity of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

Let us pray,

With all our hearts, we praise the Lord. With all our hearts, we praise God's holy name! May the Spirit work the word in our hearts and send us out in love. Amen.

A reading from Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21

¹⁵ Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

*"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.*

² The Lord is my strength and my might,^[a]
and he has become my salvation;

*this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

³ The Lord is a warrior;
the Lord is his name.

⁴ "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea;
his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea."^[b]

⁵ The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.

⁶ Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power—

your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy.

⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries;
you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.

⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;

the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.

I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

¹⁰ You blew with your wind, the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹ "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?"

The Song of Miriam

²⁰ Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹ And Miriam sang to them:

*"Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."*

Devotion:

After the Israelites escaped slavery and Pharaoh by crossing the Red Sea miraculously with God's power parting the waters, they sang songs of thanksgiving to God. There is a song of Moses and a song of his sister, Miriam. They are filled with praises and assurances of God's power, love, and presence. God was always present with the Israelites in all their trials and provided signs along the way to reassure them. They certainly survived through very challenging times but in one way or another, God provided. The Israelites are known for their grumbling. But their songs of praise are inspiring and remarkable! As we face this pandemic which is challenging us and causing us to grumble and moan, where can we sing a song of praise to God? If we are present in each moment with God, we may listen and see ways that God is worthy of our praise. Write a song of praise to God to help you to see where God is your strength, and your might, that might even set you to dancing!

Let us pray,

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Nurture new ministries of education and growth.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bring healing and justice to the world. Provide freedom for all who are oppressed. Feed all who hunger, and thirst. Heal the sick and provide a way through the pandemic. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Teach us to forgive as you forgive. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our 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,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
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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.

Saturday, September 19, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the healing of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

Let us pray,

God of light, shine the light of Christ into our hearts, quiet our spirits, and illuminate our minds as your Spirit works your word in our lives.

A reading from Psalm 114

God's Wonders at the Exodus

¹ *When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,*

² *Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.*

³ *The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.*

⁴ *The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.*

⁵ *Why is it, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?*

⁶ *O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?*

⁷ *Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,*

⁸ *who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.*

Devotion:

The psalms are worship songs that convey every human emotion from joy to sorrow, love to hate, praise to condemnation and everything in between. They are a safe way to cry out to God, thank God, praise God, question God, and love God. The section of psalms between 113-118 are special Praise psalms called the *Hallel*. Do you recognize that word? It begins *Hallelujah!* Praise the Lord! These verses begin and end with Hallelujah and were recited by the Jewish people at important Jewish feasts and festivals and even the children knew them! It is believed that Psalm 114 was sung before the Passover meal. When Jesus and the disciples celebrated the Passover meal in the upper room, it tells us they sang a hymn which was most likely Psalm 114! How wonderful that we read, sing, and worship with the same scriptures that Jesus and the disciples used. Psalm 114 tries to put into words the Wonder of God's amazing ways of saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It praises God's faithfulness and power in creation. It reminds the Israelites how God used Moses to strike water from a rock when they were thirsty in the wandering wilderness times. There is much to praise God and much to wonder about! The psalms can help us express our wonder in no other

When you read or sing the psalms, remember Jesus said these words. They are special and help us worship and praise the Lord in an ancient way and share the faith stories of those who went before us. How are you sharing your faith story and the wonderful things God has done for you?! Come and worship!

Let us pray,

Loving Lord, We give you thanks for the week that has been and for each day in it. We lift up ourselves, our lives, our church, our neighborhoods, country, and world into your loving hands. We have much that might worry, concern, or cause anxiety in our world of pandemic, social injustice, and political division. We ask you to guide the leaders of the pandemic response, government and social service agencies, and churches, schools, teachers and administrators. We have so very much to pray about, Lord. And yet, we ask you to help us rejoice. Help us rejoice in you and your promises to be with us always. Help us rejoice in the forgiveness and new life we have each day with Jesus. Help us rejoice together with our families and friends, as we give thanks for the time that we have together, even if apart. Help us serve you to bring about a just and peaceful world. Thank you for hearing us and for the grace that we receive through faith. 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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