



Introduction

When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus says: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Amid the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. In comforting words of scripture God grants us peace and sends us forth to be a sign of God’s presence to others.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God, Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,
whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts.

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us.

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through ✚ Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

How Can I Keep from Singing

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Psalmody: Psalm 85:8-13

- ⁸I 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.**
- ¹⁰Steadfast 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.**
- ¹²The 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.**

Second Reading: Romans 10:5-15

A right relationship with God is not something we achieve by heroic efforts. It is a gift received in the proclamation whose content is Jesus Christ. This proclaimed word creates our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Christian proclamation is an indispensable component of God's saving actions.

Read the text [here](#).

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

Matthew's gospel typically portrays Jesus' disciples as people of "little faith," who fail despite their best intentions. In this story, Matthew shows how Jesus comes to the disciples when they are in trouble and sustains them in their time of fear and doubt.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

This week in my devotional reading, I was reminded of a simple, but ancient prayer of the church that want to share with you. It is a prayer that we rarely hear in worship; but it is often taught as a prayer to accompany a deep breath in and then a slow, cleansing exhale.

The words are simple: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

The author reminded me that this is not just a plea for help in times of trouble. It is not just a way to calm our spirits when we are upset. This prayer is also a theological statement; a declaration about who Jesus is - and an acknowledgement that we are sinners in need of God's mercy.

Will you try it with me? Inhale slowly and deeply to the words of praise, filling your lungs with the Holy Spirit, the very breath of God: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God.* And breathe out slowly to the words of confession as we implore God for forgiveness when we have fallen short and for help in whatever difficulty we are experiencing: *have mercy on me, a sinner.*

In: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God...* Out: *have mercy on me, a sinner.*

Repeat as often and as many times as needed throughout your day. There is no danger of overdosing. Quite the opposite, in fact! It is a prayer that we may all find helpful on a regular basis.

In my study bible, the heading for the portion of Romans we read today is "Salvation is for All." That is a phrase which might trouble us, if we think that we are to be judged based on our worthiness, our behavior, our faithfulness, or our fitness as Christians.

Because by any standards, from adhering to the Ten Commandments, or all the civil laws of our land, or the two great commandments that Jesus taught - to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves - or even the simple Golden Rule - to treat others as we want to be treated ourselves - we all fall short.

WE ALL FALL SHORT. We lose our tempers and we hurt one another in an unending list of ways. In these ongoing days of mostly staying at home, we grow impatient with those we live with. With those we love most.

We fail to honor our parents and those in authority. We are just plain rude to those who don't believe exactly the same things we do. We are cruel to those who look or act or speak differently than we do. The list could go on and on indefinitely.

And we would all squirm uncomfortably as our own sins and shortcomings were highlighted, wondering who noticed those things we are guilty of. Because, as Paul mentions elsewhere, we all sin and fall short. (Romans 3:23)

Once we realize that, the phrase “Salvation is for All” becomes the declaration of God’s grace to all who – in spite of their faith in God, in spite of their usual love for others, and in spite of their well-meaningness – have fallen short. Sometimes rather spectacularly.

When Paul writes about salvation, he is declaring that we are all equal in God’s eyes, no matter our skin color, or our native language, or our political party, or even how well we TRY to follow God’s law.

Paul declares quite plainly: No one who believes in Jesus will be put to shame. NO ONE. Because God offers us the opportunity over and over to declare with our words and deeds that we believe Jesus is Lord – and that God the Father who raised Jesus the beloved Son from the dead will raise again all of God’s beloved children, too.

By the way, those beloved children? That includes all of us!

In Paul’s time, the major distinction or dividing line between Christians was between those who had been Jewish before they believed in Jesus and those who had been – horror of all horrors! - pagan or Gentile before they heard about and believed in Jesus.

Today we could probably readily identify other distinctions, that I don’t really need to name, because Paul declares that they are meaningless for those who live in faith. Even though we know in our hearts that none of us do that perfectly. Because of course, we all fall short. Over and over again.

There is good news inside of good news in this passage. First a reminder of just how simple it is to receive salvation. BELIEVE. And call on the name of the Lord. Believe in the good news you have heard and experienced; and praise God for what he has done. It’s that simple.

The extra dose of good news here is a word of encouragement for those who go a step farther and share the good news with others. They are – no matter their physical appearance – beautiful to God.

I pray that we each believe in this good news of salvation; and – perhaps using the simple words of the Jesus prayer - *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner* – call on God frequently to shower us with grace and mercy.

Then maybe we will venture one step farther: to share the Good News with others. In doing so, we will become truly beautiful in God’s eyes, and see that beauty in each other, too.

As Henri Nouwen wrote: *“To pray, to listen to the voice of the one who calls us the ‘Beloved,’ is to learn that that voice excludes no one.”* Amen.

Hymn of the Day

Eternal Father, Strong to Save
Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

For your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we see and hear Jesus calling: "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid." May we follow Christ wherever he leads. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of your creation. Protect waterways, forests, lands, and wildlife from exploitation and abuse. Help the human family endeavor to sustain and be sustained by the resources of your hand. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the nations and their leaders. In you, steadfast love and faithfulness meet. May nations in conflict know the peace that is the fruit of justice, and the justice that is the path to peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in need. Everyone who calls upon your name will be saved. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who cry out in anguish, and support those who are frustrated in their search for an affordable place to live. We pray for those suffering this day (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For us who you call together as your people. You have gathered us today and we give you thanks for this gift. We pray for those who are new to the community, for students and teachers preparing for a new school year, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. We especially lift up those working to safely gather at school, church, and other public spaces. Supply us generously with your grace for our life together. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks, O God, for the saints of the whole church from all times and places, and for the saints in our lives and in our community whom you have gathered to yourself. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.

Induction of Vicar Mike Lang

We welcome Vicar Mike to Mt. Zion and St. Stephen's as he begins his internship year.

Almighty God, bless and empower us in our ministry together. We humbly ask you to bless these congregations, and to further with your continual help all those who labor in them. As we diligently work together, submitting ourselves in obedience to your Son and guided by your Spirit, grant that our lives may be enriched and our ministries fulfilled with joy, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Closing Hymn

Spread, Oh Spread Almighty Word

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.