

Prayers of the People. November 28, 2021. First Presbyterian Church, Portage.

During this time of advent as we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, may we experience a spiritual awakening. Let's approach the throne of grace in prayer. Let's join our hearts in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are thankful that You are all knowing, all powerful, and ever present. We are thankful that You are a God of mercy as well as justice.

Father God, we thank You that even when we don't do everything right, You see in our heart the desire to do so, and You bless us with answers to our prayers. We are grateful You look past our imperfections and see the perfect qualities of Your Son, Jesus, stamped on our hearts instead. Help us to live Your way so that our ways are pleasing in Your sight. Thank You that You are the God of love and mercy, and You hear our prayers when we cry to You for mercy to overlook our imperfections and help us always do the right thing.

We love You, Father, because You first loved us and sent Your Son to atone for our sins. And we stand amazed that Jesus, who by nature had always been God, did not cling to His rights as Your equal... That He laid aside all His privileges, to be born as a human being... That He totally humbled Himself, submitting to the death of a common criminal, enduring infinite humiliation and pain... That on the cross You laid on Him the compressed weight of all our sin and guilt and shame, of all our grief and sorrow's, and He became sin for us, dying the death we deserved.

And how much we praise You that it was impossible for death to hold Him in its power... That You raised Him from the dead to be our Savior, to make us righteous in Your sight... That You highly exalted Him, giving Him a position Infinitely superior to any conceivable command, authority, power, or control, both natural and supernatural. Thank You that He is the great high priest... That He is able to save us completely, For He lives forever and prays for us, for all of us who have come to You through Him. We glorify You, our Father with gratefulness and joy.

We bow at the feet of Him who was dead and He's now alive forever and ever. We exalt Him, we yield ourselves to Him, for He is worthy of the total response of our entire being. "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing."

Lord, we are Yours. Whatever the cost may be, may Your will be done in our lives. We realize we're not here on earth to do our own thing, or to seek our own fulfillment or our own glory. We're not here to indulge our desires, to increase our possessions, to impress people, to be popular, to prove we are somebody important or to promote ourselves. We're not here even to be relevant or successful by human standards. We're here to please You.

We offer ourselves to You for You are worthy. All that we are or hope to be we owe to You. We are Yours by creation, and every day we receive from You life and breath in all things. And we are Yours because You bought us, and the price You paid was the precious blood of Christ. You alone the Triune God are worthy to be our Lord and Master. We yield to You, our gracious and glorious heavenly Father, to the Lord Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us; to the Holy Spirit and His gracious influence and empowering.

God of glory, God of light, God of involvement in our predicament, we praise You for Your invasion into this fallen world – – this place of deep darkness, the place of inexcusable rejection and unbelief. You came and You were not welcomed. The darkness can never extinguish the light! Praise Your mighty name. The light of the gospel has penetrated our darkened minds. And now we see with holy appreciation some things surrounding Your incarnation. Father God we see Your presence overshadowing the arrival of the wise men to worship Jesus. We see Your presence with the angelic chorus, in the joyful shepherd, and the contemplative parents, and the beautiful baby. But it is difficult to imagine Your overshadowing presence in the soldiers appearance at Bethlehem. It is in the midst of tragedy, pain, and heartache that we imagine You are absent. This is really self-centeredness, short sightedness to think that You don't care – – that You have left us in the tough spots of life.

Isaiah makes it clear; the promised Saviour will bind up the broken hearted, comfort those who mourn, give a crown of beauty for ashes, give the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. That is Your promise for each of us today. Help us to grasp it, appropriate it, be changed by it, praise God for it. So we do praise You that what You have promised You have fulfilled. You have come to put away our sins... To utterly remove them from us as far as the east is from the west. Do so for each of us just now. Thank You, Father, gracious Savior, blessed Holy Spirit.

God of compassion, we bring this congregation, our church family, before You. Thank you for each one of them, for the meaning they bring to our lives. Continue to bless each one of us. For those that are dealing with difficult circumstances, those dealing with grief and loss, those dealing with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, those dealing with loneliness and aloneness grant them peace. We think especially of those that are experiencing anxiety due to the covid-19 virus, grant them peace and be near to them and help them to feel Your presence. Father, You know Your children are very weary of the covid-19 situation and for some it is creating real problems. We would wish it would go away and we leave it in Your hands. Lord hear our prayer requests as we offer them to You in silent prayer. (WAIT) Lord hear our prayers! Father, give us the faith to make our requests to You, knowing that You will answer them, not necessarily with the answers we

would want but in Your infinite wisdom and in Your love, and Your time, what is best for us. Increase our self-knowledge as we prepare for the coming of the Messiah a second time. Come Lord Jesus. Son of man, God of love, fill us with passion for You and for one another.

As our Father Your Word gives us practical guidance: we are to give and to live – prayers of intercession and thanksgiving for all. We are particularly called to prayers of intercession and thanksgiving for all those in authority so that good governance may give us conditions of peace and well-being. And so beloved God of the Kingdom, we offer our prayers for those who govern their respective lands, that they will be enabled by Your grace to transcend the temptation to govern for personal gain and instead govern justly and righteously creating an image of Your peace.

All knowing and powerful God. Thank You for Your ability to remove fear and reality from our lives and restore joy, celebration, and singing. In the midst of this sometimes dark and dreary world, continue to illuminate our paths that we might bring light to You and share joy with those we will meet throughout this week. Go with us now, bless us and make us a blessing and a conduit for Your love. We ask these things in the precious name of Your Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.