

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: Lord of all times, we come into Your presence asking Your forgiveness. We have failed to live as people of the present. We have wasted our moments, wanting the future now, seeing our dreams as the answer to today's problems. Rather than seeing Your blessing in each day, we have looked backward to glory days that seem glorious only in their passing. Open our eyes to our mission at hand. Open our ears to Your message to us today, that we might share in bringing the good news of Your salvation to the world. In the Name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Do you know the Christmas carol, "O Come, All Ye Faithful"? At church this week, we are thinking about what all the words in that carol mean. Maybe you could sing it with your family to remind you of the words! When you sing the song, imagine yourself with the shepherds in the fields when Jesus was born, and being invited to come to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus along with them! What would you do when you got to the manger where Jesus was laying? Maybe you would want to bring gifts like the wise men did, but in this song, the invitation is to just come and be present with Jesus, to stay by the manger and "adore" Him! Have you ever tried to do that? Maybe you have a nativity scene at your house where you could pretend you were there, and just sit quietly for a little while looking at Jesus, silently telling Him how much you love Him in your heart. You might be surprised how calm it makes you!

MONDAY 11.28.22

Luke 2:15-20

Throughout this 2022 season of Advent, our sermon themes will be drawn from Living Word's favorite Christmas carols, as determined by our "Christmas Bracketology" contest earlier this fall! For our daily Scripture readings, we will be looking at where some of the lyrics to these carols are drawn from in the Bible. This week, we will look at the hymn, "O Come, All Ye Faithful," beginning with the invitation in the first stanza to "Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem." The author of this hymn (originally written in Latin as "Adeste Fideles") drew the invitation to come to Bethlehem from the story in today's Scripture reading from Luke, in which the shepherds in the field, having been informed of the birth of Jesus, make the journey to Bethlehem to praise the Christ child. Having done so, the Scripture tells us they then left praising God for all they had beheld ("seen and heard" in modern translations). The opening invitation of the beloved carol, then, is for all of us to join the shepherds on their journey to Bethlehem. And our journey begins by doing what the shepherds did—by simply beholding what God has done: by beholding the Christ child.

- How often do you take a step back to simply behold the baby lying in the manger? What emotions do you think the shepherds felt at the sight? What emotions do you have?

TUESDAY 11.29.22

Hebrews 1:1-14

The final line of the first stanza of "O Come, All Ye Faithful," and the entire second stanza, are concerned with the identity of the baby lying in the manger. Today, we read a passage from the book of Hebrews that elaborates on the carol's claim that the baby born in Bethlehem is "born the King of angels." In Scripture, angels are primarily messengers through whom God's guidance, protection, and justice are brought to earth, but in the time the book of Hebrews was written, many Jews and Christians alike were facing the temptation to honor and even worship angels as divine beings. Their logic went something like this: If an angel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary (as Gabriel did), if angels proclaimed His birth to the shepherds in the field (as Luke tells us they did), perhaps angels are actually superior to the human Jesus, whose life seems to have followed the path announced ahead of time by angels. But the author of Hebrews insists, throughout the beginning of his letter, that this is not the case. Seven different Old Testament Scriptures are quoted to demonstrate that as the exact representation of God's being, who sits at the right hand of God, Jesus is superior to the angels in every way. So much so, in fact, that He is rightly called "King of angels"!

- What (or who) are you tempted to worship above Jesus?

WEDNESDAY 11.30.22

Colossians 1:15-20

The second verse of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" keeps the focus on the identity of the baby beheld in Bethlehem, beginning with the claim that He is "True God of true God." In fact, the divinity of Jesus is emphasized throughout this stanza: the phrases "Light from Light Eternal" and "Son of the Father, begotten not created" also make the claim that this baby born in Bethlehem shares the divine nature with God Almighty. The apostle Paul emphasizes the same point in today's reading—the very first paragraph of the body of his letter to the Colossians, coming immediately after his customary prayer of thanksgiving. Paul claims that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God," "by Him all things were created," "in Him all things hold together," and that "God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him." Those who are tempted to view Jesus as simply a great human being who taught the way of love ignore a core teaching of the New Testament—Jesus is, as the carol proclaims, "True God of true God." The baby whose birth we celebrate is of the same divine nature as God the Father. When Jesus said, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:10), He made the claim for Himself.

- What difference does Jesus' divinity make to you? Do you believe what you say when you sing the carol?

THURSDAY 12.1.22

Philippians 3:17-4:1

The third stanza of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" invites the hearer of the carol to join the angels in heaven in singing praises to God for the blessing of Jesus' birth: "Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above." While we may be tempted to think that the phrase "citizens of heaven" is just another way to refer to the angels who are first commanded to sing ("Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation"), this is in fact a reference to all those who follow Christ on earth! In today's reading from his letter to the Philippians, Paul reminds us that as Christians, "our citizenship is in heaven." Paul's reminder is meant to encourage us to keep our minds on the things of God, and not the things of earth. If Jesus has been raised to the right hand of God in heaven, and if we have been made one with Christ, then we must now find our primary "national" identity in heaven, and not in any kingdom or nation on earth. As "citizens of heaven," our loyalty is first and foremost to the ways of God, not the ways of earthly governments. Following the example of the angels, the carol invites us, as citizens of heaven, to never stop praising God for the gift of Jesus: sing, citizens, "Glory to God, all glory in the highest!"

- Where do you place your highest loyalty? Is it in heaven or on earth? Whose glory do you sing of in daily life?

