

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: Sovereign Lord, in spite of all we know of You, we are stubborn and rebellious still. We think ourselves wise – disregarding Your truth. We think ourselves strong – using violence to force our will. We think ourselves right – writing off others and refusing to learn from them. We think ourselves good – ignoring our corruption and evil; pointing fingers and wagging tongues at others. Forgive our arrogant minds, self-centered hearts, and ungracious spirits. Take away our hearts of stone; replace them with warm hearts of flesh, hearts that beat after Your own heart. In silent moments, hear us confess what we're too ashamed to name aloud – forgive and free us, Lord: We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever been in a situation where you had to do something that you didn't want to, but you had to because the person who told you to do it was in charge of you? Sometimes in situations like that, later on we learn that even though we didn't want to do it at the time, it really was the best and right thing to do! Our relationship with God is like that sometimes. The Bible teaches us that because God is the Creator of everything, God is "in charge" of everything in the whole universe. Jesus, being God in human form, also has this authority over everything ... including us! Sometimes, God might ask us to do hard things that take us away from things that would be fun, but we will always learn in the end that God was right! That's why it's so important to read our Bibles, and learn what kinds of things God would and would not ask us to do—so that we can know when to say "yes" to Jesus, the King of the Universe!

MONDAY 6.19.23

Isaiah 48:1-11

Jonah didn't particularly like learning the lesson, but by the end of his story he had learned that God's way is always best ... for everyone. We don't always celebrate that truth, but it is still true. God is sovereign over His creation, and His way always prevails in the end. God proclaims this truth loudly in today's reading from the prophet Isaiah: "I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass." Interestingly, God says that the reason He acts in this way is so that we can't misattribute the things God does in the world to the wrong source. But God also promises that He is also doing "new things" that have never been heard of before! For the original audience in ancient Israel, these words may have alluded to either Israel's release from Babylonian captivity or to the coming of Israel's long-awaited Messiah, Jesus. But notice that God says "From now on I will tell you of new things" - even today, God is still actively at work in the world doing new things, and now, as always, God's people should be prepared to acknowledge God as the source of the good things that happen in our lives and in the world.

- To whom do you usually attribute good things that happen in your world? Does God even make the list?

TUESDAY 6.20.23

Daniel 5:18-31

Powerful earthly kings often have trouble acknowledging the greater sovereignty of God, and that the power they wield pales in the face of God's sovereignty. This was certainly the case with both Nebuchadnezzar and his descendant Belshazzar, who both ruled over the Empire of Babylon during the time of Israel's exile in Babylon. The prophet Daniel, though, reminded Belshazzar that it was God who had used Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument of His discipline of the people of Israel, and that it was God who had driven Nebuchadnezzar away from Babylon until he would acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Daniel reminds Belshazzar of all this because Belshazzar, too, has refused to humble himself before God—"you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways." While Belshazzar rewards Daniel for Daniel's ability to read "the handwriting on the wall," which contained the prophecy of Belshazzar's downfall, it is not enough to prevent its fulfillment. The remainder of Daniel's prophecy promises that evil rulers will be judged, and serves as a reminder to all of us that God's sovereignty cannot be usurped. Even when we can't see it or don't acknowledge it, history is in God's hands.

- Do you ever struggle to believe that the world really is in God's hands? What gives you confidence that He does?

WEDNESDAY 6.21.23

Daniel 7:13-14

Daniel had many visions. These visions were full of obscure symbols that were almost certainly easier for the original reader to understand than they are for us. But the vision he describes in today's reading is much clearer than many—Daniel sees someone "like a son of man" to whom God extends God's own authority and sovereignty over the world. What's more, this sovereignty will be eternal, "one that will never be destroyed." In ancient Israel, to be called the "son of" something was to say that one fully shared in all of that "something's" attributes. It is no coincidence, then, that Jesus called Himself the "Son of Man." Jesus was God, coming to us in human form, fully sharing the attributes of human nature, but with all the authority and sovereignty of God's divine nature ... just as Daniel's vision had foreseen. Jesus perfectly demonstrates what a human life fully submitted to God's sovereignty looks like. Jesus followed God in obedience, even when it meant suffering, and even when it meant death. It was a full understanding of the sovereignty of Jesus, given to Him by God, that enabled the earliest Christians to proclaim, "Jesus is Lord." Jesus' way is best ... so they followed Him in full devotion.

- Is there any part of your life that is pushing back on the sovereignty of Jesus? What would it take to let it go?

THURSDAY 6.22.23

Psalms 2

Psalms 2 is all about the vanity—and the foolhardiness—of denying the sovereignty of God and His Son. The psalm insists that however much the powers of the world reject God's power over the universe, the more they try to break free of God's rule, the more God scoffs and laughs at the futility of their efforts. When God's Son comes wielding God's authority, the psalmist writes, it would be wise to submit to Him. As we saw yesterday, as Christians, we believe that it is Jesus Christ, as Son of God in the form of a Son of Man, who has inherited God's authority over all the nations of the earth. Our calling as Christians, then, is twofold—to grow in our ability to acknowledge and submit to this sovereignty in our own lives (what we call "sanctification"), and to be an active part of helping the entire world to recognize, acknowledge, and submit to it (what we call "evangelism"). Serving God through obedience to His Son is the wisest thing any of us can do. People can conspire, plot, and speak against this truth, but in the end, it will be those "who take refuge in Him" who are blessed. According to the psalmist, everyone else should consider themselves "warned."

- Why do you think the world, in general, rebels against the idea of God's sovereignty and authority?

FRIDAY 6.23.23

Colossians 2:6-23

In his letter to the church in Colossae, one of Paul’s primary themes is the supremacy of Christ over all creation. Notice the strong contrast Paul draws, in today’s reading, between the “basic principles of this world,” the “powers and authorities” of this world, and Jesus. “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” Christ is “the head over every power and authority.” “Having disarmed the powers and authorities, Christ made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules?” The entire passage is introduced with the reminder that the reader has received Jesus Christ *as Lord!* What that implies is that our allegiance shifts from the powers, principles, and authority of the world to Jesus Christ. Following Christ as Lord means we might be judged—perhaps not by the cultural standards of Paul’s day that he refers to, but by whatever the standards of today’s world might expect. Christ’s sovereignty, though, means those concerns should be, in essence, dead to us.

- Which basic principles of the world are still luring you in?

SATURDAY 6.24.23

Hebrews 12:14-29

In light of the awe-inspiring sovereignty of God, ultimately revealed in the coming of Jesus Christ, the author of Hebrews implore His reader to live Godly, holy, lives. We, the readers, are implored to make sure no one misses out on the grace of God, the way Esau did even though he later changed his mind about receiving his father’s blessing. The Kingdom of God, to which we belong and over which Jesus Christ is sovereign, is not like earthly kingdoms. Earthly kingdoms are easily “shaken,” but the heavenly Kingdom to which each believer in Christ is now subject cannot be “shaken.” If deciding whether or not to give obedience and allegiance to earthly things can be a weighty decision, the writer says, how much more serious is the decision whether or not to give allegiance to “He who warns us from heaven”? When Judgment Day comes, the writer of Hebrews insists, we do not want to be found on the wrong side of the Sovereign of All Creation. The material universe will pass away, but the Kingdom of God is eternal. If you continue reading into chapter 13, you will find a long list of behaviors in this world that will give evidence of where you have placed your allegiance. The eternal sovereignty of God in Christ is the core theme of this entire chapter.

- How might you still be refusing our Sovereign God?



Daily Study Guide

June 18-24, 2023

Sermon Series: Caution, Summer Approaching

Week Five: “Have It Your Way, God” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, June 18: Jonah 4:1-11(CEB)

“But Jonah thought this was utterly wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, ‘Come on, LORD! Wasn’t this precisely my point when I was back in my own land? This is why I fled to Tarshish earlier! I know that You are a merciful and compassionate God, very patient, full of faithful love, and willing not to destroy. At this point, LORD, You may as well take my life from me, because it would be better for me to die than to live.’ The LORD responded, ‘Is your anger a good thing?’ But Jonah went out from the city and sat down east of the city. There he made himself a hut and sat under it, in the shade, to see what would happen to the city. Then the LORD God provided a shrub, and it grew up over Jonah, providing shade for his head and saving him from his misery. Jonah was very happy about the shrub. But God provided a worm the next day at dawn, and it attacked the shrub so that it died. Then as the sun rose God provided a dry east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah’s head so that he became faint. He begged that he might die, saying, ‘It’s better for me to die than to live.’ God said to Jonah, ‘Is your anger about the shrub a good thing?’ Jonah said, ‘Yes, my anger is good—even to the point of death!’ But the LORD said, ‘You “pitied” the shrub, for which you didn’t work and which you didn’t raise; it grew in a night and perished in a night. Yet for my part, can’t I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than one hundred twenty thousand people who can’t tell their right hand from their left, and also many animals?’”

Things that really impacted me from today’s message:

Prayer Requests

- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Nini Schneider
- Tammy

The Roshier family on the passing of Jim Roshier

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org