

Thoughts & Prayers

December 13, 2017

Prayer of the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, give ear to our prayers, and lighten the darkness of our hearts by your gracious visitation; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Gregorian Sacramentary, 6th Century)

Prayer Concerns

Let us pray that friends and family experience the joy, love and peace of our Savior Jesus Christ this Christmas season through each of us.

Thoughts on the Readings

The Common Thread

God causes righteousness, as he clothes us with both righteousness and salvation. He has restored our fortunes and caused great joy, bringing us home from the far land of sin and death. No wonder we are to pray without ceasing, always giving thanks. He is coming again; the way has been prepared. And God will cause us to be blameless in every way at his return. He will surely do it, for he is faithful.

First Reading - Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

This is the passage that Jesus would use in the synagogue as his public ministry begins in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30). The prophet Isaiah spoke here of the year of the Lord's favor for his people. God's will is for his people to experience healing, wholeness, and freedom. The poetic language of this passage depicts a nation rising-up out of the ashes of shame and destruction. Out of ruins will the Lord rebuild his people. Justice will reign over those who have been neglected, injured, and cast aside. Israel will turn away from their unjust actions and turn to the Lord who will renew his covenant with them. Salvation is made possible because of God's great love for his people who will be known because of the work of the Lord who is faithful

Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

God's will for us is sanctification. He begins this work in us through the prescription of verses 16-18 but we should also pay attention to the next four verses by fanning into flame the gifts within us, testing everything (Acts 17:11), and adhering to what is good.

Gospel - John 1:6-8, 19-28

John was a man, sent by God to bear witness about another, the light of the world (John 8:12). He did so by crying out in the wilderness. This location is purposeful to his mission. John's message was that the light from God, the Messiah, would lead people out of their sin. No longer will they wander aimlessly in a wilderness of sin. The Christ who John pointed to would lead them straight out of this wilderness.

Life Note

When Luther was particularly busy, he would start the day with a few hours of prayer just to be sure he would be effective that day. Often, we wait for a crisis to pray. The spectrum of suffering to joy should elicit our prayers, as should all the needs and experiences between these extremes. Invite God into all your experiences. Let all prayers begin with praise and end with thanks and the extremes are brought together in God.