

'Penitence: Who to wait for and why'

Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then the God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give new life to you through his indwelling Spirit. – Rom.8,11

Collect:

Almighty merciful God, you have assured the human family of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in him, who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Father God, the Lord, Creator

- 1 Father God, the Lord, Creator,
by whose hand we all are fed,
in Your mercy re-create us
at the breaking of the bread.
- 2 Christ our Lord, be present with us,
risen victorious from the dead!
In Your mercy may we know You,
in the breaking of the bread.
- 3 Holy Spirit, God's empowering,
by whose life the Church is led;
in Your mercy, send us strengthened
from the breaking of the bread.
- 4 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
hear our praises – sung and said.
From our hearts comes our thanksgiving
for the breaking of the bread.

Words by John Richards

Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD; 2 Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. 3 If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

5 I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. 6 I wait for the LORD more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.

7 Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. 8 He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD

I am grateful, Lord God, to have these words. They give me a voice when I didn't think I had one or would hope to raise it before you. I am filled with fear and worry about many things. Much lies in darkness that I wish I could see. The remembrance of the missed opportunities of love and faith lies heavy on my conscience, acts of careless pride and selfishness I know attach to my name as it is known to you. Worst, I can't seem to help being distrustful of your word, sceptical towards your promises and suspicious of your goodness. Desires for what is not right nor good keep running away with me and I lose my way. I have neglected your will and gone against it, nor can I say in my defence that I didn't know. And now I serve another will, one which takes away my freedom to walk in your way. When I consider that you are holy and just, that you can not even so much as look at sin, the depths become even more imposing. The more clearly I see that you are holy, the more clearly I see how far short of this I fall (how deep indeed that fall!). Can I come before you, living and almighty God, when all I can present to you is the cry: "Have mercy on me, a sinner"?

2 LORD, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy

Lord God, the guilt of my sin is no longer a light matter, brushed aside with a quick acknowledgment of grace and a bit of religious wordery. How such a thing makes a mockery of your name! And how such a thing would leave in place sin's hold over me! I have abused your name in word, thought and deed, and have I now any right to call upon it? Any right to be heard?

Yet I need you to hear my voice and reach down to me, and have nothing for it other than that you are merciful. I draw on the hope – for which you yourself give reason! – that you help the helpless who call on you, not because of any merit in them but because of the mercy that is in you.

3 If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, LORD, who could stand?

Lord God, without your mercy my sin must remain and forever keep me captive. If in your mercy you do not save, I must remain lost.

4 But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you

Lord, but you are the Saviour-God and yours are ways to put our sins away from us. And when you do, it is so that we may abandon the ways in which we walk which are contrary to your will. By your mercy we find the beauty and power of your gift of forgiveness of sins, whereby the heart learns to love and serve you and darkness retreats as at the coming of light.

5 I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope

I leave to one side the cheap offers and words that promise relief and ease without addressing -or if, only lightly - the problem of the guilt of my sin and the need to hear God speak the word of forgiveness. I need his word and I need it with all my being, for the burden of my sin is the longing to serve him with all my being. So I wait and let nothing dislodge my hope from where I have put it and where it belongs – in his word.

6 I wait for the LORD more than the watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning

There is no exaggerating the importance of waiting for the LORD, of insisting and hoping that he will turn in mercy to the sinner and make a way to reinstate him to full fellowship, to life in the light and heights of grace and peace. And neither is there exaggerating the compassion and faithfulness of God which ensure that all such waiting is crowned with success.

7.8 Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins

Therefore, let us all be pointed to Israel's God, who came to his people to show them his unfailing love and offer them full redemption, as he did through his Son Jesus Christ who bore in his body God's judgment on sin and was raised from the dead to be once and for all God's word of forgiveness to all who call on him. Salvation is indeed from the Jews for it was through the Jewish people that came the One (descending as far as the depths would go!) who is the Saviour of all: *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4,12)

There is no depth so deep that his love and grace is not deeper still, that his ear cannot hear and his hand cannot reach and save. Christ, the Lord, is the 'here and now' of God's redeeming purpose and will. Let us 'seek the LORD while he may be found, and call on him while he is near.'

AMEN

With all my heart I thank you, Lord.
With all my heart I thank you, Lord.
For this bread and wine we break,
for this sacrament we take,
for the forgiveness that you make,
I thank you, Lord.

With all my soul I thank you, Lord.
With all my soul I thank you, Lord.
For this victory that you've won,

for this taste of things to come,
for this love that makes us one,
I thank you, Lord.

With all my voice I thank you, Lord.
With all my voice I thank you, Lord.
For the sacrifice of pain,
for the Spirit and the flame,
for the power of you name,
I thank you, Lord.

Words: Paul Field

- time of prayer / intercession – [we give thanks for God’s mercy and faithfulness, for the compassion and steadfast love he has for all that he has made, that all his judgments are just and righteous, that he is our refuge and the helper of all who call to him; we pray for those who have become ill, are fighting illness or are recovering from it, for those who care for the needs of others; for those in positions of leadership and authority: that they may rule wisely and seek peace, that they may guard the values by which a society can flourish, that they may lead with courage and wisdom, for a turning to the light that is God’s Word; for those who have lost loved ones, need comfort into their grieving and the loving presence of friends; we give thanks for all the help we have received and still experience, for grace and answered prayers; we pray for the despondent and the hopeless, for those who seek light, for the wisdom to comfort the suffering; we pray for our sister church in Northern India and for the body of Christ worldwide and here, for our church, the church’s leadership; we think of the situation in India, Nepal and other places, the suffering of the people there and elsewhere, the attempt of the authorities to regain control; we give thanks for the help that is being delivered; we pray for the situation in Israel, the rift between the Palestinians and the Jews; for perseverance in the determination to share our means with those who lack them; we pray for God’s blessing on the preaching and teaching of His word, for people to respond in repentance and faith, for freedom and liberty and courage to stand for what is good and true and honours His name;]

‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

Now to him who loved us, gave us every pledge that love could give, freely shed his blood to save us, gave his life that we might live, be the kingdom, power and glory and thanksgiving evermore.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you. AMEN