

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As we await the coming of Christ, we pray in hope for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Equip your church, merciful God. Secure our roots in the soil of your eternal word. Ease our worries and remove our shame. Grow our faithfulness and let your steadfast love blossom among us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Sustain your creation, holy God. Water the parched soil. Restore depleted fields. Send farmers, forest rangers, and gardeners to care for fig trees and wheat fields, gardens and arboretums. Increase our love for the land. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grow peace within us, abundant God. Raise up leaders in every community grounded in your justice and mercy. Increase their love for all people. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, 1552) Psalm 90. **Tuesday** (commemoration of John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, c. 749) Revelation 22:12-16. **Wednesday** Luke 11:29-32. **Thursday** (commemoration of Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 342) Luke 1:68-79. **Friday** (commemoration of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 397) Malachi 3:13-18. **Saturday** Luke 9:1-6. **Second Sunday of Advent** Malachi 3:1-4 or Baruch 5:1-9; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6.

Feed the hungry, living God. Gather our harvest into a feast for our neighbors. Move us to nurture those who are bereaved and lonely. Empower those living with HIV/AIDS and all who are sick (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Increase our joy, wondrous God. Plant thanksgiving in our hearts and multiply the good fruit of our outreach ministries and creation care programs (*especially*). Guide us in our service to local and global neighbors. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving, we remember all who have died and now rest in your glory. Hold all who mourn in the comfort of your eternal light, and bring us to delight in the new life you promise. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Confident that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we bring to you these prayers and those unspoken, in the name of Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**



Celebrate

First Sunday of Advent
December 2, 2018

Advent is about the “coming days.” God’s people have always lived in great expectation, but that expectation finds specific, repeated enunciation in the texts appointed for these four weeks. The ancients anticipated a “righteous Branch to spring up for David.” The Thessalonians awaited “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints.” Our Lord’s contemporaries hoped for the time “to stand before the Son of Man.” With them we eagerly await the coming days: another Christmas celebration, a second coming, and the advent of our Lord in word and supper.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

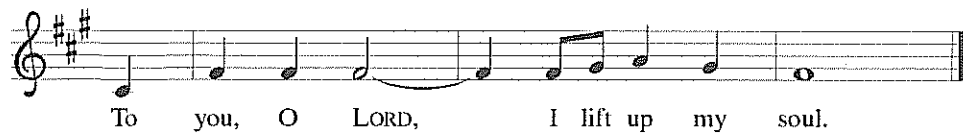
First Reading

Jeremiah 33:14-16

In the Old Testament, “righteousness” often has to do with being faithful in relationship. God acts righteously both in punishing Israel for its sin and in having mercy. In today’s reading, Jerusalem’s future name—“The Lord is our righteousness”—proclaims that the Lord is even now working salvation for Israel.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for

David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”



To¹ you, O LORD,
I lift¹ up my soul.
**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be¹ put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph¹ over me.**
Let none who look to you be¹ put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame¹ who are treacherous.
**Show me your¹ ways, O LORD,
and teach¹ me your paths. R**
Lead me in your¹ truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all¹ the day long.
**Remember, O LORD, your compas-¹ sion and love,
for they are from¹ everlasting. R**
Remember not the sins of my youth and¹ my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love
and for the sake of your good-¹ ness, O LORD.
**You are gracious and up-¹ right, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners¹ in your way.**
You lead the low-¹ ly in justice
and teach the low-¹ ly your way.
**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast¹ love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your¹ testimonies. R**

Upon Timothy's report from the congregation at Thessalonica, Paul is exuberant with gratitude for them. In this passage from his letter, Paul voices overflowing thanks, joy, and blessings for the people of this growing church.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct

our way to you.¹²And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.¹³And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Gospel

Luke 21:25-36

God will fulfill God's purposes and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. On that great day there will be dismay, perplexity, confusion, and terror, but God's people shall be given strength to stand boldly and receive God's promised redemption.

[Jesus said:] "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.²⁷ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory.²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees;³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.³¹ So

also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly,³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."