

**LORD JESUS,
ABIDE
WITH ME**

LENTEN DEVOTION #4

JESUS PRAYED FOR HIS ENEMIES

APRIL 2-3, 2019

Morning Devotion

OPENING RESPONSE

L: God, our Father, each day is a gift of Your grace.

G: Your mercies are new every morning.

L: Guide our steps by the light of Your Word.

G: Shield us from harm and keep us from evil.

L: Better than life is Your love.

**G: Put joy in our hearts and praise on our lips.
Amen.**

PRAYER FOR GRACE

L: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, You have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in Your sight, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

G: Amen.

Evening Devotion

OPENING RESPONSE

L: Lord Jesus, You are the light of the world,

G: The light no darkness can overcome.

L: Stay with us, for it is evening,

G: And the day is almost over.

L: Let Your light scatter the darkness.

G: Let it shine in our hearts and lives. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

L: Lord God, all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works come from You. Give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments. Defend us also from the fear of our enemies, that we may live in peace and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

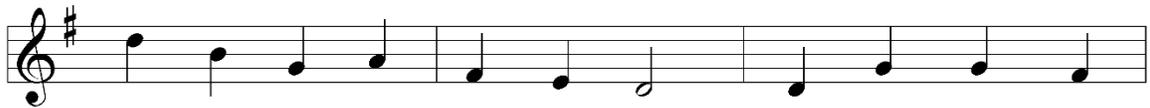
G: Amen.



1 Come to Cal - v'ry's ho - ly moun-tain, Sin - ners, ru - ined
2 Come in pov - er - ty and mean-ness, Come de - filed, with -
3 Come in sor - row and con - tri - tion, Wound-ed, par - a -
4 He that drinks shall live for - ev - er; 'Tis a soul - re -



by the fall; Here a pure and heal - ing foun - tain
out, with - in; From in - fec - tion and un - clean-ness,
lyzed, and blind; Here the guilt - y, free re - mis - sion,
new - ing flood. God is faith - ful; God will nev - er



Flows to you, to me, to all, In a full, per -
From the lep - ro - sy of sin, Wash your robes and
Here the trou - bled, peace may find. Health this foun - tain
Break his cov - e - nant of blood, Signed when our Re -



pet - ual tide, O - pened when our Sav - ior died.
make them white; You shall walk with God in light.
will re - store; He that drinks shall thirst no more.
deem - er died, Sealed when he was glo - ri - fied.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt.
Tune: NAAR MIT ÖIE (87 87 77) Ludvig M. Lindeman, 1812–87.

PASSION HISTORY READING

Trial Before Pilate - Luke 23:1-25

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:34a (NIV)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

DEVOTION – JESUS PRAYED FOR HIS ENEMIES

When Jesus was lifted up onto the cross, no doubt many of those who were present wondered at what He might say. Would He take back His teachings in order to save His life? Would His patience give out? Would He call down curses on those who had injured and mocked Him. Would he complain against or, perhaps even curse and rebel against God?

Not so. In fact, the very opposite was the case. He prayed. Yes, He prayed even for His enemies. His words flowed out of a heart filled with divine love. There was no bitterness, no anger, no impatience towards those who condemned Him. We marvel at this as we worship and adore Him who instead of revealing His wrath, interceded for His enemies. Tonight, on the basis of our brief text, let us consider that **Jesus prayed for His enemies**.

Father, forgive them. Such was His plea. A plea for the forgiveness of all those who caused His suffering and nailed Him to the cross. These people had committed the greatest of sins. For what sin could be greater than to lay hands on the sinless Son of God and crucify Him? What a horrible thing was taking place as the powers of darkness roiled with blasphemy and rage. Just the thought of the great injustice of the moment would cause one to conclude that this Jesus, who did no wrong, who helped a countless number of people, who patiently endured the scorn and mockery heaped upon Him before Caiaphas and Pilate, who had been unjustly condemned to death, would finally cry out for revenge and call down God's just wrath on the people. But this Lamb of God knew no bitterness. Rather, He pleaded for the people and said, **Father, forgive them**.

With this prayer, Jesus asked His Father to grant His enemies forgiveness, to grant them a day of grace, so that they might recognize their evil deeds and repent of their sins. A terrible sin such as they had committed deserved a terrible punishment. If the earth opened up to swallow alive those who rebelled against Moses, if fire from heaven came down to consume those who sought to harm Elijah, if bears came out of the woods to destroy forty two youth who had merely mocked Elijah, how much more should not these men have been destroyed who performed such terrifying injustices to the only-begotten Son of God? But yet our gracious Savior prayed, **Father, forgive them**.

In these words, Jesus pleaded that God would not hold them accountable for what they had done, but that He would forgive their sins for the sake of Jesus' perfect obedience and vicarious atonement. He was able to plead for forgiveness for them because He was at that very moment paying for their sins which He had taken upon Himself with every ounce of His suffering. He would bring that payment to its completion with His impending death just as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, **He bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors** (Is 53:12).

Consider the prayer that Jesus cried out from the cross. Take a few minutes and write your own prayer to the heavenly Father in response to this prayer of your Savior Jesus.

For whom did Jesus pray when He said, **Father, forgive them?** First of all, the Savior prayed for His murderers, those who had laid hands on Him and nailed Him to the cross. He prayed for those who had cried out, **Crucify Him! Crucify Him!** (Lk 23:21) and who had said, **His blood is on us and on our children** (Mt 27:25). He prayed for the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law who were the instigators of this whole affair. He prayed for Pontius Pilate who did not have the courage to resist the demands of the people but had instead quickly condemned Him to death.

But Jesus prayed not only for those people who were immediately responsible for his death. His prayer embraced all people—from Adam to the end of this age. That included not only the Jews of Jesus' day, but their ancestors of old. The Jews had been blessed by God beyond all measure. They were the chosen people of God, the people through whom and to whom God had given the wonderful promise of the Savior. They were the people whom God in His grace had led out of Egypt, the land of bondage, whom God had miraculously lead through the Red Sea, for whom God had provided food to eat and water to drink in the wilderness when they had none, and to whom the Lord had given the land of promise where the Messiah was to be born. And yet, so often, despite His many blessings which He showered upon them so graciously, they rebelled against Him. They despise the statutes of the Lord; they gave way to idolatry; they killed the prophets God sent to them. And yet even still, Jesus prayed for them. The familiar words of our evening hymn come to mind, *And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile, Thou has not left me oft as I left Thee.*

And finally, yes, as Jesus prayed on the cross for those guilty of His death, He also prayed for us. Because of our sins we, too, are responsible. We are all the cause of His bitter sufferings and death. We, too, have rebelled against God; we are His enemies. We have often left Him to go our own way of sin, greed, covetousness, hatred, and jealousy. Jesus in His omniscience knew that the people around His cross were not the only ones who had sinned against Him, but the whole human race—including you and me—stood guilty before God and deserved His condemnation. Therefore, as the words, **Father, forgive them,** passed through His lips, we have the comfort and assurance that He also prayed for us.

These words are for all, regardless of race or occupation or of age or position. Hope beams from Calvary for the entire sinful world! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! As our great High Priest He offered up Himself as the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins, the full atonement for the sins of the world. He is also our Intercessor with the Father, the Mediator between God and man who intercedes for sinners. **Father, forgive them,** He cried. Here, in these words, the love of the Savior is so clearly demonstrated for our benefit. Jesus suffering the very pains of hell for us does not curse but blesses and calls to his Father for our forgiveness. Surely, **we have an Advocate** (one who pleads for us) **with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One** (1 Jn 2:1).

Why do we need Jesus plea to be directed not only toward those who were present that day, but also toward us?

What does it mean that we have Jesus as our Advocate before the Father?

But why did He plead for sinners? Jesus prayed, **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.** Once more, we get a glimpse into the heart of our Savior and the depth of His love for sinners. In spite of what had happened to Him, the ridicule, scorn, and abuse He endured at the hands of His enemies, Jesus pleaded for their forgiveness, because they did not know what they were doing. Jesus pointed to the spiritual blindness and to the lack of knowledge of these people to move His Father to have mercy upon them. No doubt the soldiers blindly carried out the orders given to them by their superiors. It's possible many of the people who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover were deceived and misled by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law. But the members of the Sanhedrin should have known better. Yet the Lord counted it all as ignorance. Accordingly, St. Peter later said concerning the Jews, **I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, saying that His Messiah would suffer** (Ac 3:17). Paul testified to the same truth when he wrote to the Corinthians, **None of the rulers of this age understood [God's wisdom], for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory** (1 Co 2:8).

That love, that unspeakable love for sinners who caused His suffering and death, prompted Jesus to plead that His heavenly Father would look not upon their terrible act, but only on Him who carried their sins to His cross. **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.**

What incredible lessons there are for us here! Each day we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our sins," and immediately add, "as we forgive those who sin against us." This means that just as eagerly as we desire forgiveness from our Lord, we are ready and willing to forgive our fellow man, to show love not only to those whom we love, but also to our enemies and any who would sin against us. A forgiving heart is part of being a Christian who has graciously received God's pardon from every sin. The Apostle Paul admonishes, **Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you** (Col 3:13).

What final, vital takeaways can we take to heart from our Savior's prayer which He spoke from the cross?

Closing Prayer:

O Lord, abide with us in Your grace and mercy. Forgive us our many sins and trespasses with which we have rebelled against You. By the assurance of Your forgiveness fill us with Your love, so that we may put away all malice and evil thoughts and gladly and willingly forgive one another.

4 Thou on my head in ear - ly youth didst smile,
 And though re - bel - lious and per - verse mean - while,
 Tears for all woës, a heart for ev - 'ry plea;
 On to the close, O Lord, a - bidè with me.

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

G: O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy, and in Your faithfulness, come to my relief. Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide Your face from me, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.

Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a troubled and repentant sinner, confess that I have sinned against You in my thoughts, my words, and my actions. I have not loved You with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I am distressed by the sins that trouble me and am deeply sorry for them.

Silence for private meditation and confession.

L: Jesus says to His people: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven."
 His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?

G: Yes, I believe.

L: Because of the promise of our Savior Jesus, I forgive you all your sins. Be assured that you are a dear child of God and an heir of eternal life.

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. Into Your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING

May the love of the Lord Jesus draw us to Himself. May the power of the Lord Jesus make us strong to do His will. May the peace of the Lord Jesus fill our lives.

Amen.

LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into Your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING

May the blessing of the eternal God be upon us:
His light to guide us,
His presence to shelter us,
His peace to unite us.

Amen.

HYMN

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded | 105

Printed on page 8.

Text: attr. Bernard of Clairvaux, 1091–1153, abr.; German version, Paul Gerhardt, 1607–76; tr. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, St. Louis, 1941, alt.
Tune: HERZLICH TUT MICH VERLANGEN (76 76 D) Hans Leo Hassler, 1564–1612.



1 O sa - cred head, now wound - ed, With grief and
 2 Men mock and taunt and jeer you, They smite your
 3 Now from your cheeks has van - ished Their col - or,
 4 My bur - den in your pas - sion, Lord, you have
 5 What lan - guage shall I bor - row To thank you,



shame weighed down, Now scorn - ful - ly sur - round - ed,
 coun - te - nance, Though might - y worlds shall fear you
 once so fair; From your red lips is ban - ished
 borne for me, For it was my trans - gres - sion,
 dear - est Friend, For this, your dy - ing sor - row,



With thorns your on - ly crown, O sa - cred head, no
 And flee be - fore your glance. How pale you are with
 The splen - dor that was there. Grim death with cru - el
 My shame, on Cal - va - ry. I cast me down be -
 Your pit - y with - out end? Oh, make me yours for -



glo - ry Now from your face does shine; Yet, though de -
 an - guish, With sore a - buse and scorn! Your eyes with
 rig - or Has robbed you of your life; Thus you have
 fore you; Wrath is my right - ful lot. Have mer - cy,
 ev - er, And keep me strong and true; Lord, let me



spised and go - ry, I joy to call you mine.
 pain now lan - guish That once were bright as morn!
 lost your vig - or, Your strength, in this sad strife.
 I im - plore you; Re - deem - er, spurn me not!
 nev - er, nev - er Out - live my love for you.

6 My Savior, then be near me
 When death is at my door,
 And let your presence cheer me;
 Forsake me nevermore!
 When soul and body languish,
 Oh, leave me not alone,
 But take away my anguish
 By virtue of your own!

7 Lord, be my consolation,
 My shield when I must die;
 Remind me of your passion
 When my last hour draws nigh.
 My eyes will then behold you,
 Upon your cross will dwell;
 My heart will then enfold you—
 Who dies in faith dies well!