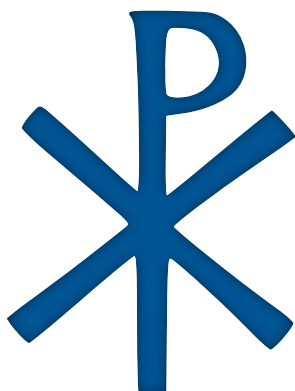


THE LORD'S MERCY
ENDURES FOREVER:



**40 DAILY DEVOTIONS
OF GOD'S COMFORT**

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

THE SHAPE OF PRAISE

“I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
 before the gods I sing your praise;
 I bow down toward your holy temple
 and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and
 your faithfulness,
 for you have exalted above all things
 your name and your word.
 On the day I called, you answered me;
 my strength of soul you increased ...
 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve my life;
 you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
 and your right hand delivers me.
 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
 your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
 Do not forsake the work of your hands” (Ps.138:1-3, 7-8).

I T IS EASY TO GIVE THANKS to God when prayers are answered as we hoped. A surgery is successful, a loved one recovers, a river in flood recedes and in response we readily and whole-heartedly join the psalmist in praise of God’s exalted name and Word. We pray, the Lord answers and our strength of soul is increased. Hope soars and faith is made strong. We give thanks and sing praise for answered prayers.

But what if our prayers are not answered as we hoped? We beg and plead and God does not give us the longed-for answer. A loved one dies, an illness continues, a storm does not change course and spare our property. Where is God? Is He listening as He promised? How can we praise God when He seems to be silent? At such times our praise continues, but it takes a different shape. Our praise does not ring with songs and rejoicing but is formed instead into obedient submission to God’s will and purpose. Our praise takes shape as humble trust.

On the night our Lord Jesus was betrayed, He spent time in prayer to His Father. Jesus prayed that He might not have to drink the cup of suffering that awaited Him, the cup of God’s wrath against human sin including ours. Yet Jesus also prayed that His Father’s will would be accomplished, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (LUKE 22:42). Even strengthened by an angel, the Savior continued to pray in anguish so great that His sweat “became like great drops of blood falling to the ground” (LUKE 22:44). The cup was not removed. Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to

death. The innocent Son of God was nailed to the cross. For us He drained the terrible cup of suffering and wrath.

Shortly before His death, Jesus had prayed, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you” (JOHN 17:1). The Son desired the Father’s glory and Jesus’ praise for His heavenly Father took shape as submission to His Father’s will; He became “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (PHIL. 2:8). On the cross He fulfilled His Father’s purpose — our salvation. Jesus stood in our place and suffered the penalty we deserved for our sins.

In His death and resurrection, our sins are swept away. Adopted through Baptism as God’s beloved sons and daughters, nourished by our Lord’s holy Supper, we receive strength to glorify our heavenly Father in all circumstances. When our prayers are answered as we hoped, we shout for joy and sing His praise, but when the answers are not as we asked, our praise will reflect the glory that Jesus brought to His Father through the cross. In humble trust, we place ourselves into our Father’s hands, “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have commanded us to pray and have promised to hear our prayers. When our prayers are answered as we hope, accept our joyful praise and thanks. When, according to Your gracious will, You answer in ways we did not seek, lead us by Your Spirit to conform our hearts and minds to the life of our Savior so that our praise takes the shape of humble trust. For Jesus’ sake, forgive our sins and fulfill Your purpose in our lives. Your steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

HYMN

When with sorrow I am stricken,
 Hope anew by heart will quicken;
 All my longing shall be stilled.
 To His loving kindness tender
 Soul and body I surrender,
 For on God alone I build.

Well He knows what best to grant me;
 All the longing hopes that haunt me,
 Joy and sorrow, have their day.
 I shall doubt His wisdom never;
 As God wills, so be it ever;
 I commit to Him my way.

(“All Depends on Our Possessing,” *LSB* 732, vs. 4-5)

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