

A PRAYER VIGIL: THE PRESENCE OF GOD

This is a service of prayer, readings and psalms, with silence appointed for the prayers of your own heart and the contemplation of Christ with the world.

Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins. Christ's mercy endures forever.

Silence.

Most merciful God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what I have done,
and by what I have left undone.
I have not loved you with my whole heart;
I have not loved my neighbors as myself.
I am truly sorry and I humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on me and forgive me;
that I may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen me in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep me in eternal life. Amen.

A reading from Man's Quest for God by Abraham Heschel:

As a tree torn from the soil, as a river separated from its source, the human soul wanes when detached from what is greater than itself. Without the holy, the good turns chaotic; without the good, beauty becomes accidental. It is the pattern of the impeccable which makes the average possible. It is the attachment to what is spiritually superior: loyalty to a sacred person or idea, devotion to a noble friend or teacher, love for a people or for mankind, which holds our inner life together. But

any ideal, human, social, or artistic, if it forms a roof over all of life, shuts us off from the light. Even the palm of one hand may bar the light of the entire sun. Indeed, we must be open to the remote in order to perceive the near. Unless we aspire to the utmost, we shrink to inferiority. Prayer is our attachment to the utmost. Without God in sight, we are like the scattered rungs of a broken ladder. To pray is to become a ladder on which thoughts mount to God to join movement toward God which surges unnoticed throughout the entire universe. We do not step out of the world when we pray; we merely see the world in different setting. The self is not the hub, but the spoke of the revolving wheel. In prayer we shift the center of living from self-consciousness to self-surrender. God is the center toward which all forces tend. God is the source, and we are the flowing of that force, the ebb and flow of God's tides.

A period of silence.

Psalm 84:

- ¹ How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
- ² The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
- ³ Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- ⁴ Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.
- ⁵ Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
- ⁶ They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.
- ⁷ LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
- ⁸ Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.

- ⁹ For one day in your courts is better than
a thousand in my own room, *
and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- ¹⁰ For the LORD God is both sun and shield; *
he will give grace and glory;
- ¹¹ No good thing will the LORD withhold *
from those who walk with integrity.
- ¹² O LORD of hosts, *
happy are they who put their trust in you!

A prolonged period of silent prayer.

Let us pray.

You are great, O God, and worthy of highest praise: you stir in us the joy of praising you, since you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you. God of peace, let us rest this night in your presence, let us keep watch in your holy place, let our restless thoughts be stilled, let your peace sink deep into our souls, let your presence be sufficient for us and draw us closer to your love, and make us more faithful servants of your purpose. **Amen.**

A reading from the First Book of Kings:

At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and

after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

A period of silence.

Psalm 63:1-8:

¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.

³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.

⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

⁵ My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,^[a]
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips

⁶ when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

⁷ for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

⁸ My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

A prolonged period of silent prayer.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are hindered by our sins, let your grace and mercy help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

A period of silence.

Psalm 16:5-11

- ⁵ O Lord, you are my portion and my cup;
it is you who uphold my lot.
- ⁶ My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.
- ⁷ I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
my heart teaches me, night after night.
- ⁸ I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.
- ⁹ My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices;
my body also shall rest in hope.
- ¹⁰ For you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor let your holy one see the Pit.
- ¹¹ You will show me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

A prolonged period of silent prayer.

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening has come and the day is past; be our companion on the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. **Amen.**

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, and that in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength; now lift us, we pray, by the power of your Holy Spirit to your presence, where we may be still, and know that you are God. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord; thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**