

LWML Prayer Service 2008

Secure in Jesus, My Rock and Fortress

I STEP OUT IN FAITH TO DECLARE HIS PRAISE AND SERVE OTHERS

Authored by Reverend Barry J. Keurulainen

*In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.*

*Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.*

*Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me (Psalm 31:1-3).*

INVOCATION

Leader: In the Name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People: Amen!

Hymns of Praise and Adoration

RESPONSIVE READING (Based on Acts 13:32-39)

Leader: “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus.”

People: “**The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’**”

Leader: “Therefore... I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

People: “**Through Him everyone who believes is justified!**”

“I Love to Tell the Story” (public domain)

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story because I know ‘tis true,
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

Refrain:

I love to tell the story! ‘Twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet;
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

Refrain

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Refrain

“My Faith Looks up to Thee” (*Stanzas 1-2*) LSB 702; LW 378; TLH 394

OPENING PRAYER:

I find such joy and love in You, O Jesus. There is no one like You. You are the Rock and Fortress of my life. Others may fail me, and they do. Things in my life may get shaken, and they have, but Your love for me and Your Word are rock solid. Nothing can budge them. What peace I find in calling You my Rock and Fortress.

Forgive me. Cleanse me. Strengthen my faith and trust in You. Fill my being with Your love, until it overflows before others with the joy and peace that I have tasted in Your kindness. I do love You. Only help me each day to love You more with all of my heart, my soul, my mind and my strength. In Your holy Name, I pray. Amen.

STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

Reflection #1

The Word

1 Peter 2:9-10

The Prayer of God's People

(Silent prayers or public prayers may be offered asking God for courage and humility to step out in areas of our lives to “wash feet.”)

The Prayer of Confession and Submission (Psalm 51:1-13).

Leader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

People: **Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.**

Leader: *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.*

People: Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Leader: *Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.*

People: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean: wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Leader: *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*

People: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Leader: *Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

People: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you

DECLARING HIS PRAISE

The Hymn “Praise to the Lord the Almighty” *LSB 790; LW 444; TLH 39*

The Word of God Romans 11:33-36

The Reflection #2

The Prayers of God’s People

(Public prayers or silent prayers may be offered for areas of our life where God might be glorified and praised.)

The Prayers of Adoration and Praise

Leader: You are holy, Lord, the only God, and Your deeds are wonderful. You are strong.
People: You are great. You are the Most High,

Leader: You are almighty. You, Holy Father, are King of heaven and earth.
People: You are Three and One, Lord God, all good. You are good, all good, supreme Good, Lord God, living and true.

Leader: You are love, You are wisdom.
People: You are humility, You are endurance.

Leader: You are rest, You are peace.
People: You are joy and gladness. You are justice and moderation.

Leader: You are all our riches, and you suffice for us. You are beauty.
People: You are gentleness. You are our protector.

Leader: You are our guardian and defender. You are courage.
People: **You are our haven and our hope. You are our faith, Our great consolation.**

ALL: **You are our eternal life, great and wonderful Lord, God almighty, Merciful Saviour.**
(St. Francis of Assisi, 1181-1226)

The Hymn of Praise
“To God be the Glory”
“Majesty”

The Prayer

There is nothing that satisfies my deepest longings but You, O Lord. Help me, O God, to not be satisfied with the attractions of this world and to fall into the temptation of looking for comfort in created things. You alone are the truth and the life and the way everlasting. If you are not at the center of my life, the friendship of others can offer no comfort, the teachings of the learned will offer no guidance and the treasures of this earth will deliver no happiness or joy. You alone, O God, are worthy of all praise. You are altogether lovely and gracious and powerful. You are my God and I will praise You! Help me, I pray, to abide in Your Word. Open my mouth that my lips might declare your Praise. Help me to *“do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*, and may the glory be His. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

SERVING OTHERS

The Hymn **“Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling”** *LSB 827; LW 318; TLH 496*

The Word of God Mark 12:28-31
 Matthew 5:13-16

The Reflection #3

The Hymns of Praise and Commitment

(songs may be selected according to preference or time)

“Take My Life and Let It Be” *LSB 783; TLH 400*; **“Take My Life, O Lord, Renew”** *LW 404*
“Have Thine Own Way”

The Prayer

O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are from everlasting to everlasting. Before the world came to be, You were present. In Your Word, give me a glimpse of what You have prepared for all who are Your children, who You have made to be Your heirs. Then, in this certain hope, keep me steadfast until that great and glorious day when I shall at last stand before You with all the saints in heaven. In the holy Name of Jesus, I ask this. Amen.

The Prayer of God’s People

(Public prayers or silent prayers may be offered for areas that we are called to serve within our lives or for areas of healing and forgiveness)

The Lord's Prayer

The Word Psalm 31:1-5

The Blessing

Leader: May the grace of Jesus Christ, our Rock, and the love of God our Father who is our fortress, and the fire of the Holy Spirit fill you with peace as you serve Him in joy.

People: Amen

The Hymn

“Savior, Thy Dying Love” *LW 374; TLH 403*

“Here I Am, Lord”

A Prayer for the Week Ahead

(Sir Francis Drake) – public domain)

“Disturb us, Lord,
when we are too well pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true
because we dreamed too little; when we arrive safely because we sailed too close to the
shore.

Disturb us, Lord,
when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst
for the Waters of Life; having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of
eternity; and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new
heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord,
to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery;
where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the
horizons of our hopes, and to push us in the future with strength, courage, hope and
love.”

Blessed Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are the One who works in us the love to care for others,
the desire to serve you, and strength to finish the tasks set before us. Remind us of your presence
this week as we remember the promises we have heard in your Word. In the name of Jesus,
Amen

Acknowledgements

Scripture readings taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.
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SONG SELECTION – choose as few or as many as you like

“I Love to Tell the Story” (public domain)

“Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling” *LSB 827; LW 318; TLH 496*

“Have Thine Own Way”

“Here I Am, Lord”

“Majesty”

“My Faith Looks up to Thee” *LSB 702; LW 378; TLH 394*

“Praise to the Lord the Almighty” *LSB 790; LW 444; TLH 39*

“To God be the Glory”

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“Majesty” Jack Hayford ©1981 Rocksmith Music/Trust Music Management

“To God Be the Glory” The Hymnal ©1986 Norman Clayton Pub. Co./Word Inc.

Reflection #1

They gathered together after a hectic day. The week had been a roller coaster of emotions. But each of them had looked forward to this moment for different reasons. They were in the midst of dinner and everyone seemed to be ignoring the two objects that had been laid out over to the side but, as of yet, were untouched. It almost seemed as if each of them was waiting for the other to pick them up and put them to use. No one budged. Finally, He did. He took off His outer garment, picked up the towel, wrapped it around himself and carried the basin to the first of the twelve and began to wash their feet. No one in the room had wanted to do this lowly task—why should it be Him of all people?

The answer to this question is found in the account of John who saw this unfold. John writes: *It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love* (John 13:1).

Jesus was secure in knowing who He was and where He was going. This security freed Him to serve in this lowly way. When He finished washing all 24 feet, He said to them:

Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:12-17).

Ever since that time, the gentle splashing of water has been heard and lived out by those who follow after Him. Taking on the posture of a servant, whether it be washing feet or any lowly task, is hardly ever easy. Leslie Weatherhead, a British minister, whose church was gutted by Nazi bombs, wrote:

“When I am hot and rebellious, bitter and cynical and sarcastic; when it seems evil can win in the world and the battle is to the strong; when it seems as though pride possesses all high places and greatness belongs to those who can grab the most; when it seems that faith is mocked and humility is trodden in the dust, when pity seems weakness and sympathy folly, when a foul egotism rises up within me bidding me assert myself; serve my own interest and look out for number one; then, O my God, as I listen down the corridor of the years for the voice of the Almighty, may I hear the gentle splashing of water in a basin and see the Son of God washing His disciples’ feet.”

The world is sick of power that struts. It is hungry and searching for power that serves. Through whom in your life have you heard the gentle splashing of water? Who in your life has heard the gentle splashing of water through you?

Several years ago Dr. Richard Halverson left his long-term pastorate at the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland, to become chaplain of the United States Senate. He described his first day at the powerful institution: “I felt like a non-person, a mascot to one of the most powerful political bodies in the world. I wondered what I was doing there.” That evening he

read the words of Jesus: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...And surely I am with you always* (Matthew 28:18-20). As he meditated on those words he realized, “I am a garment which Jesus Christ wears every day to do what he wants to do in the United States Senate. I don’t need power; my weakness is an asset. If Christ is in me, what more do I need?”

We, too, have heard the gentle splashing of water by means of the water of another basin—*Baptism*. There, He has not only washed our feet but our entire being. He has claimed us as His own, forgiven our sin, and raised us to new life in Him – to serve like He served. Now, as His children and His holy priesthood, He asks us to step out and serve, secure in Him as our Rock and Fortress.

Reflection #2

“I step out in faith to declare His praise and serve others.”

What does this look like – a life that is lived declaring His praise? In order to get a handle on this, one must reflect on “the glory of God” which is central to any praise offered to Him. The glory of God is who He is. It is the beauty of His being. The glory of God is seen in the demonstration of His power and the revealing of His wisdom. His glory is the uniqueness of His being. He is like no other. He is Almighty. He is good. He is just. He is merciful. The glory of God is the sum total of His importance and the vastness of His presence within our lives and within the universe. His glory is revealed within the perfect balance of all His characteristics into one eternal, infinitely beautiful, transcendent and personal being.

That is a lot to digest. Don’t feel bad if you have a hard time understanding all of that. We cannot. His glory is beyond our understanding, our imagination or our explaining. We are, however, called upon to acknowledge His glory, honor His glory, praise His glory, and live for His glory in every aspect of our lives.

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?"
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:33-36).*

We might not be able to fully comprehend His glory, but we do see glimpses of it. Look at creation. Go out on a starry night or pause and enjoy a gorgeous sunset and consider what the Psalmist said:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Psalm 19:1).*

For another glimpse, look in a mirror. Okay, maybe wait until you have showered, but look in a mirror. The glory of God is revealed through lives that are being transformed and changed each day.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

For another look at His glory, look at the church. Not the building, but the community within. Paul talks about this in his letter to the Ephesians:

he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves (Ephesians 1:5-6).

in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:12-14).

But nothing reveals the glory of God more fully, more powerfully, more gracefully than Jesus.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Jesus and the cross are His glory. On the cross, Jesus revealed all of His mercy and justice, His love and wrath, His humanity and holiness.

“Stepping out in faith to declare His praise” is a life that is centered on the cross where God is to be seen in all of His glory. Jesus was humbled for us on the cross, but it becomes a glorious event for us. It is a hidden glory in God’s salvation. Look no further for one’s purpose in life then to live life in the shadow of the cross.

We were created for this purpose. We were created in the image of God so that people would be reminded of Him when they saw us. Yet, we stubbornly refuse to honor Him. Why? Go back to the tower of Babel. Here you will see the essence of sinful nature.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4).

Like our ancestors we are more concerned about making a name for ourselves. The very nature of sin is like this. Sin always points back to itself. The reality of our sins, each and every one of them, will always find its root in what God said in Romans:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Incredibly, even in light of this, God does not abandon us. He certainly could and no one could blame Him. Rather, He comes among us as a servant to wash our feet, suffer our punishment, carry our sorrows and die in our place so that one day we could share in His glory.

What manner of love is this? Who is there anywhere, that is a god like this? Praise be to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It makes perfect sense then that Paul would be led to write these words about reflecting the glory of God:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).

Reflection #3

(The leader can read this or, if feeling bold enough, sing it and ask others to join in)

“This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine, this little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine, This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine, let it shine all the time, let it shine.”

It makes for a cute song that many of us grew up with as a child. There is, however, a lot of theology packed into these words, not the least of which is the truth that our light shines not only through what we believe but what we do. Jesus said; *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16).

This passage reminds us the light does not originate in us, but comes from the presence of God who shines in-and-through our lives by faith. In this context, “we step out in faith to declare His praise and SERVE OTHERS.” We are called to faith, which includes living our lives to the glory and praise of God. As part of that calling, we are to live in such a way that when others observe the actions of our lives in the day to day routine, they are moved not to applaud us, but the God whom we serve and love.

What does this look like in our daily lives? Each of us has been given certain gifts by our Creator and Father. For some it is the gift to teach. For others it is the gift of helping others to accomplish their goal, even though we do not desire or receive the credit for what is accomplished. For yet others it is the ability to encourage and care for those who are hurting.

It is God who says, *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit...Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good* (1 Corinthians 12:4 & 7).

Being gifted by the Spirit is one thing. How we use those gifts is another. Think of Jesus back in the upper room with the basin of water and the foot washing. When Jesus washed those twenty-four feet, He knew that they would let him down. It was not only Judas that evening who would betray Him. He was offering them grace before they even knew they would need it. Later, when they would hang their heads in shame, maybe looking down at their feet, they would be reminded how Jesus had cleansed them before they even knew what they would do to Him. Such is the way with the love of God and His grace offered to sinners.

So it is with us as we serve others. We are to serve others in our day to day life, using the gifts He has given us as a way of dispensing His grace to a hungry and thirsty world.

It is never a matter of simply serving others to help them. Rather, it is about using our lives with the gifts that He has given us as a vessel that contains the treasure of His love in Jesus Christ. *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us* (2 Corinthians 4:5-7).

You and I are clay. He is the Potter. He has and is shaping each of us in a different way, with different shapes and different uses.

(The leader of the prayer service may want to illustrate this point with some clay or play dough at this point in the talk. It might even be fun to ask each person to take a piece of clay and mold it into some shape that they could then take home with them as a reminder of this thought. Some other passages that might be helpful for illustrating this point would be Jeremiah 18:6, Isaiah 45:9, Isaiah 64:8, Romans 9:21 and 2 Tim.2:20)

We are all different. We have different abilities, different gifts, different personalities. What we have in common, however, is the treasure within. That treasure is nothing less than the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Think for a moment about all those who have impacted your life in the perspective of eternity. What do they have in common? I would imagine that it is not what is on the outside but on the inside – the treasure within. Those who have blessed me in my life are those who have washed my feet with the same grace and love that Jesus did with His disciples.

“Secure in Jesus my rock and my fortress, I step out in faith to declare His praise and serve others.”

Say it with me again if you will. Let this be our closing thought and prayer for this moment.

“Secure in Jesus my rock and fortress, I step out in faith to declare His praise and serve others.”