

## Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 23, 2024

### Weekly Prayer

Christ be with us, Christ before us, Christ behind us,  
Christ in us, Christ beneath us, Christ above us,  
Christ on our right, Christ on our left,  
Christ where we lie, Christ where we sit, Christ where we arise,  
Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of us,  
Christ in every eye that sees us, Christ in every ear that hears us.

Salvation is of the Lord, Salvation is of the Christ,  
May your salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.  
(*The United Methodist Book of Worship #529*)

### Monday, June 24

#### Scripture: Matthew 16:13-18

Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human One is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." He said, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus replied, "Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. I tell you that you are Peter. And I'll build my church on this rock. The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand against it.

#### Observation

Jesus had fewer than 100 followers, was under great threat from those in power, and still, this did not deter him from his mission. He looked to his followers, and with a bold vision declared them the church, noting they would be more powerful than even the "gates of the underworld."

#### Application

Jesus was not building a structure; he was building a community - a lasting legacy and movement that would change the world. How are you part of the community of Christ? How does church make an impact in your life?

#### Prayer

Lord, give me courage, creativity and focus to live as a member of your beloved community. Help me to build your church and love all the world. Amen.

### Tuesday, June 25

#### Scripture: John 13:31-35

When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—"Where I'm going, you can't come." "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

#### Observation

Regarding this passage, Bishop Michael Curry noted: "This was not long before Jesus' death, when he would show what love looks like; giving of the self, even sacrificing the self for the good and well-being of others" (Curry, Bishop Michael. *The Power of Love* (p. 19). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.). "As I have loved you" was a whole new level of love. Jesus' followers saw that they couldn't love that way on their own.

#### Application

Imagine you were one of Jesus' followers. After three years of daily contact, he said he wouldn't be physically with you anymore. But he would send the Holy Spirit, and "as I have loved you, so you also must love each

other.” Could you accept the sincere love of other disciples as a sign of Jesus’ love for you? Can you today? How is it that you express Jesus’ love to others?

### **Prayer**

Jesus, make me to love as you love. Let me love from my heart as your love overflows to bless others. Amen.

### **Wednesday, June 26**

#### **Scripture: Psalm 32:1-7, 11**

The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered over, is truly happy!  
The one the LORD doesn’t consider guilty—  
in whose spirit there is no dishonesty—  
that one is truly happy!  
When I kept quiet, my bones wore out;  
I was groaning all day long—  
every day, every night!—  
because your hand was heavy upon me.  
My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought. *Selah*  
So I admitted my sin to you;  
I didn’t conceal my guilt.  
“I’ll confess my sins to the LORD, ” is what I said.  
Then you removed the guilt of my sin. *Selah*  
That’s why all the faithful should pray to you during troubled times,  
so that a great flood of water won’t reach them.  
You are my secret hideout!  
You protect me from trouble.  
You surround me with songs of rescue! *Selah*

You who are righteous, rejoice in the LORD and be glad!  
All you whose hearts are right, sing out in joy!

### **Observation**

The opening verses invite us to confess our faults and sins to God, and to receive the freedom and forgiveness that comes with that vulnerability. But in verse 6, we’re reminded that the whole church, “all the faithful,” are called to be in prayer together. Not only in times of praise and celebration, but in times of trouble so we can be protected and cared for.

### **Application**

Prayer, and especially confession, is not only a “personal” act, but is something that strengthens our community and relationships. “All the faithful” prayed and all God’s people praised God (vs 6 & 11). How do you “show up” within the faith communities you are a part of? How has Messiah encouraged and supported you in faith?

### **Prayer**

Thank you God for Messiah Church, and for giving me this faith community to help me grow in my love, worship, and service of you. Help me to show up faithfully and confidently, knowing you are with us. Amen.

### **Thursday, June 27**

#### **Scripture: Galatians 6:1-10**

Brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual should restore someone like this with a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted too. Carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are important when they aren’t, they’re fooling themselves. Each person should test their own work and be happy with doing a good job and not compare themselves with others. Each person will have to carry their own load. Those who are taught the

word should share all good things with their teacher. Make no mistake, God is not mocked. A person will harvest what they plant. Those who plant only for their own benefit will harvest devastation from their selfishness, but those who plant for the benefit of the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit. Let's not get tired of doing good, because in time we'll have a harvest if we don't give up. So then, let's work for the good of all whenever we have an opportunity, and especially for those in the household of faith.

### **Observation**

Paul often calls the church "brothers and sisters" as a way of referencing that we are one family in Christ. We are to be siblings in Christ. And like most siblings we will sometimes agree, sometimes disagree, but always we are connected by the one who loves us.

### **Application**

This passage illustrates a faith family who cares for another by carrying each other's burdens, seeing value in one another, and lifting one another up in love. What are ways that the church has helped you carry and care for one another? What have you learned about being in community through Messiah?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank you for the privilege and the challenge of being a member of your family. Teach me how to keep valuing and serving my brothers and sisters in this spiritual family. Amen.

## **Friday, June 28**

### **Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38**

Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest."

### **Observation**

Jesus worked tirelessly to restore people to physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness. He must have amazed the disciples by saying, "The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine." Messiah's congregational "DNA" springs from Jesus' actions and teaching. Like him, we believe the harvest is plentiful—bigger than we can even imagine. God calls us to be Jesus' "body" in the world—to continue the work that he did using the gifts that his Spirit places in our lives.

### **Application**

Jesus yearned for God to "send out workers into his harvest field." Are you willing to become one of the workers Jesus wished for? What abilities and resources has God given you that you can use to help reach troubled, helpless people with the good news of Jesus?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you didn't give me gifts to make my resume more impressive or my ego bigger. Shape my life into a living testimony of your goodness and grace that makes the lives of others better. Amen.

## **Saturday, June 29**

### **Scripture: 1 Peter 2:4-10**

Now you are coming to him as to a living stone. Even though this stone was rejected by humans, from God's perspective it is chosen, valuable. You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple. You are being made into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Thus it is written in scripture, *Look! I am laying a cornerstone in Zion, chosen, valuable. The person who believes in him will never be shamed.* So God honors you who believe. For those who refuse to believe, though, the stone the builders tossed aside has become the capstone. This is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Because they refuse to believe in the word, they stumble. Indeed, this is the end to which they were appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people

who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Observation**

God has used many buildings in history as instruments to build a spiritual temple in human lives. Messiah has a beautiful sanctuary, and an active and beautiful online community. But our faith is never about buildings. When Peter wrote today's passage, there were no churches, just groups that met in people's homes. Yet the apostle saw God's people as "living stones" God was building into the "real" temple. Peter said all God's people are "a spiritual temple" called to "tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you." (*The Message translation*)

### **Application**

Christ has made his church in you. How has this process shaped your life? How did you become a "living stone"? What "mortar" connects you with other members of this "temple" God is building?

### **Prayer**

O God, thank you for what you are building in my life and in my church. Thank you that in your grace you claim me as one for your possession. Amen.