

J e s u s i s
i n o u r c i t y



Hallowed Prayers

A daily prayer guide for the city of Salem (& you)

Oct 2023



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Dedicated to those who love Jesus & his city of Salem.



“You are the light of the world.
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Matthew 5:15



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[Jesus said] *“Pray then like this:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.”*

Matthew 6:9



HALLOWED PRAYER

“Hallowed be your name” is the first way Jesus begins teaching his disciples to pray. Why? “Hallowed Prayer” is prayer that directs our eyes towards God’s uniqueness in all the world. It is not only his *name* that is unique, but his whole *character*. God is omnipresent. He is all places at all times. He goes before us. He is with us. That’s unique!

So does that mean Jesus is really with us *in Salem*? We invite you this October to reflect on the reality that Jesus really is truly here in the city of Salem. He is in the ignored corners of the city, he is amidst the hustle & bustle of downtown, he is serving the “least of these.”

This prayer guide invites you daily to encounter Jesus Christ living right here among us. We truly believe “Jesus is in our city” now, that he’s been here long before us, & that he wants us to join him in his redeeming work here long into the future. It is our prayer that these Scriptures, prayers, & short reflections help you take the attention *off* yourself, your comforts, & even your needs, and *on to* what God is doing all around us, right here & now. Where is Jesus? What is Jesus inviting you into? How is God inviting you pray for Salem & serve alongside him here?

Yes, please pray for Salem. But also pray for your own heart to be changed by encountering the Living God. Right here & now. Join us on this journey of prayer.



The Bible references in this guide are all from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.



October 1

SUNDAY PRAYER

“A Liturgy to Begin a Purposeful Gathering”

“And so we are gathered here, uniquely in all of history, we particular people in this singular time and place. Accomplish your purposes among us, O God. Tune our hearts to the voice of your Spirit. Wake us to be present to you and to one another in these shared hours we are given. For it is you, O Lord, who have so gathered us from our various places, and you alone who know our hearts and our needs [. . .]

Breathe upon our gathering, O Spirit of God. Grant each of us a place to humbly receive and to faithfully serve, that we might know in this brief gathering a foretaste of that greater communion yet to come.

O Father, enlarge our hearts.

O Spirit, expand our vision.

O Christ, establish your kingdom among us.

Be at work even now, O Lord. May your will, in us, in these hours, be accomplished.

Amen.”

from *Every Moment Holy*, p. 110-11

October 2

MONDAY REFLECTION

"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." John 4:35

For each of the five Mondays this month you are invited to "lift up your eyes" alongside Jesus to see what he is inviting you to see before you. This is an opportunity for you to prayerfully reflect on what the Spirit is showing you & then to turn it into a prayer at the end of the day.

Morning. What is on your heart as you wake up today?

Midday. What/who did God open your eyes to see today?

Evening. What prayers are you invited to give to God?

October 3

JESUS IS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." John 1:14 (MSG)

Meditation:

No other God has done this. The Scriptures tell us the story of a God who took on human flesh & dwelled among the people of Israel, as a literal next door neighbor. The Message translation of the Bible helps us as modern day Americans understand this a bit easier, modernizing it by saying, he "moved into the neighborhood." Imagine that! God moving into your cul-de-sac, into your apartment complex, onto your street. He shops in the same grocery store, works out at the same gym, walks the same sidewalks. Truly, he is "God with us." Even though Jesus ascended back into heaven after the resurrection, he promised "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). He is still with us, living among us, with us everywhere we go. Do you sense his presence with us?

Prayer for Salem:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit — thank you for being with us here. Help us to see, feel, experience, & know you here in Salem. We pray for your presence, already here, to be known by all. Amen.

October 4

PURSUING RELATIONSHIP

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” Luke 19:5

Meditation:

Where is Jesus in our city? In today's story we find Jesus out & about. Then he spotted Zacchaeus, the tax collector, despised by many. Jesus not only saw & acknowledged Zacchaeus, but boldly invited himself over to his house! I can't think of anything more counter-cultural to a New Englander than this kind of reverse hospitality! Jesus invited himself over, & Zacchaeus said “yes” to the offer. I imagine Zacchaeus sensed what many throughout the ages have sensed as well — Jesus could do something for him that no one else could. Therefore, the self-invitation was worth the risk. God continues to do this today, even here in Salem. He is inviting himself into lives all around us, pursuing relationship with the despised or misunderstood. Because he loves us & desires to know us & for us to know him.

Prayer for Salem:

Heavenly Father, today we pray Salem-ites to be surprised by your offer to come over. We pray for people we know by name, for them to have this Zacchaeus experience themselves, & to say yes to your “I must stay at your house.” Open hearts. Amen.

October 5

DINNER WITH THE KING

“While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner.” Luke 11:37-38

Meditation:

Opposite of yesterday, today’s reading shows a religious elite (a Pharisee) inviting Jesus over for dinner. Unlike yesterday, this is not so counter-cultural for us in New England. It’s very common to have folks over for dinner. For people we want to get to know better, are intrigued by or curious about, or even are a little skeptical of, a dinner is a good chance to discover someone. The Pharisee certainly discovered something about Jesus he didn’t expect... Jesus didn’t observe the customary washing before dinner. Not just the washing of his hands, but the ritual that all good Jewish people follow. The Pharisee was offended. Why wouldn’t Jesus wash like everyone else? He had to discover what we must also discover... when you have dinner with Jesus, you’re having dinner with the true King.

Prayer for Salem:

God we pray that people in Salem see you for who you really are. Not just another deity, or option, or good teacher. We pray people see you as King, who came to cleanse us from sin. Amen.

October 6

ON THE PLAYGROUND

“Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” Luke 18:15-16

Meditation:

Just by a quick Google search, there are at least 10 public playgrounds in Salem (& probably more). Throughout the year, these are the places where children & families of all backgrounds gather & where people meet. Jesus loved children. In the most pure way, Jesus pursued time with little ones, even infants, Luke tells us. While some (both in Jesus’s time & ours today) stay away from kids or refuse to get down on their level, Jesus valued them deeply. The greatest thing Jesus came to bring about (the Kingdom) he said belonged to the littlest & most innocent ones around.

Prayer for Salem:

Loving Father, today we pray for the families & children of Salem. We pray for children to know that you are their true Father, who loves them with an everlasting, unconditional love. We pray for broken families, orphaned children, & foster families. We pray for single parent homes. We pray for those who congregate at the many Salem playgrounds. In the laughter & play, Jesus show yourself to many. Amen.

October 7

IN THE RELIGIOUS SQUARE

"And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons." Matthew 21:12

Meditation:

Strange practices can creep into religious meeting spaces, houses of spirituality, & even church buildings. Whether it's poor theology, segregation or classism, or misplaced priorities, even the religious squares of our cities & towns sometimes things need to be shaken up. When Jesus walked into Israel's holiest place, the temple in Jerusalem, he saw deep distractions from prayer (v. 13). So Jesus took action & caused a scene. What might Jesus do if he walked into our religious meeting spaces in Salem? Are there things preventing our places from being a "house of prayer"? Are we also "robbing" people without knowing it?

Prayer for Salem:

Jesus, today we pray for the variety religious meeting spaces in Salem. We pray for a focus on true prayer, & (where necessary) reform. We pray for the Catholic churches, the UU churches, the mainline Protestant churches, the Satanic Temple, & the variety of other spiritual meeting spaces. Jesus, step into each space with your loving correction & bring peace.

October 8

SUNDAY PRAYER

Written Prayer — “For a Spirit of Evangelism”

“Almighty God, our Savior, you desire that none should perish, and you have taught us through your Son that there is great joy in heaven over every sinner who repents: Grant that our hearts may ache for a lost and broken world. May your Holy Spirit work through our words, deeds, and prayers, that the lost may be found and the dead made alive, and that all your redeemed may rejoice around your throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

from the *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 652

Prayer for Me:

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit, meet me today on this Sabbath day for worship & rest. Draw me out of complacency today & draw me into the community of a faithful church so that I may worship you with the company of others & find encouragement for my soul as well. I pray that you would give me a spirit of evangelism today. Reignite a fire within me to be sharing the Good News with those around me who have not heard. Give me courage & boldness & winsomeness & gentleness to be like Jesus in my neighborhood, on my street, & in my city. Help me to be salt & light today. All for the sake of Jesus I pray, Amen.

October 9

MONDAY REFLECTION

"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." John 4:35

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Midday. What/who did God open your eyes to see today?

Evening. What prayers are you invited to give to God?

October 10

MAN OF THE STREETS

"And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Matthew 8:19-20

Meditation:

Jesus was homeless, in more ways than one. It seems Jesus willingly chose to live off the generosity & hospitality of others during his three years of public ministry. He was not worried about a mortgage or property ownership. He knew his mission & he was committed to simple living. But in large part *because* of this decision to be homeless, Jesus was able to encounter the many varieties of people he did (beggars, outcasts, marginalized, etc...). But he was even also homeless in another way; Jesus willingly left heaven, his true eternal home, in order to come to earth as a human. He laid his eternal home aside, so that he could lead us home. As one hymn says of Jesus, *"He is our Guide & Friend; To us he'll condescend; his love will never end."*

Prayer for Salem:

Lord, today we pray for the many homeless of Salem. We pray for Lifebridge, Witch City Action, & certainly others who are coming alongside the homeless in love. Jesus draw near & provide what each person needs. Show the Way home. Amen.

October 11

APPROACHING PROMISCUITY

“Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” John 8:11

Meditation:

Perhaps Jesus’s most radical story is found in John 8, when Jesus approaches a sexually-promiscuous woman under condemnation from the religious elites. What a test this was for Jesus! How would he treat this woman? The religious were ready to stone her, & yet Jesus turns the finger-pointers towards themselves. “Have any of you not sinned?”, he essentially asks. With that, they drop their stones & leave. But what about the woman? This is also perhaps Jesus’s most poignant example of his simultaneous commitment to holiness & grace. He frees her to “go” (*deep grace*), but with the serious urge to “sin no more” (*deep holiness*). She’s not off the hook. She has to change her ways going forward. What did the rest of her life look like? We don’t know for sure. We can’t assume it was easy for her to “sin no more.” But one thing we *can* assume — this woman would never forget the gentleness & love of Jesus shown to her that day.

Prayer for Salem:

God, today we pray for those in Salem stuck in sin & sexual sin specifically. We pray for your truth, gentleness, & grace. Amen.

October 12

HE KNOWS OUR NATIVE TONGUE

“Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” Mark 5:41

Meditation:

The phrase Jesus uses here is in the Aramaic language, Jesus’s native tongue, as well as the little girl’s native language. It was a loving expression, full of affection, akin to saying “little lamb” to the young girl. It is tender, intimate, & meaningful. Isn’t it amazing how much more meaningful something is when it is in our mother tongue? By saying what he did, in her language, Jesus was not only communicating in a way this little girl would understand & that would bring about her physical healing (she was literally dead by the way!). But he also was communicating to her on a deeply spiritual level, in a way only God can. To bring life from death requires a particular, special type of speech, one that only the living Word of God can speak (see John 1). This Jesus can speak to our deepest self in a way only he can. And his words brings life from death.

Prayer for Salem:

Holy Spirit, today we pray for non-English speakers in Salem. We pray for immigrants, refugees, & those who struggle to feel “heard” in this place. Assure them today that you know them intimately & hear them. Speak words of assurance & life. Amen.

October 13

FOR THOSE WHO ARE CURIOUS

"Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" John 3:3-4

Meditation:

Nicodemus was a very smart man, well-schooled in religion & Jewish law. But even he began to see the limits of what he knew. Jesus, this revolutionary new teacher, was pressing him to the depths of his learning & now his curiosity had peaked. "How...?" What a question! How can conversion really happen? When Jesus confounds you, or when spiritual questions arise in your mind, or when you feel you don't quite understand, you're actually in a pretty good place. That's the place of curiosity that Jesus loves to meet us in. Why? Because curiosity leads us to seek real answers. The prophet Jeremiah says, *"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart"* (Jer. 29:13).

Prayer for Salem:

Triune God, today we pray for those who are genuinely curious, who are longing for truth & hope. Meet them in that special place, & guide them to community to find safe space to ask questions & find answers. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

October 14

WHILE YOU ARE HERE

“Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Luke 17:17-18

Meditation:

Go read Luke 17:11-19 in its entirety. The context is important. 10 lepers (people with a terrible skin disease) came to Jesus & were healed. Only one of them turned back to praise Jesus for being healed, & he was the Samaritan, the foreigner among the bunch. The story invites us to see how Jesus exalts those whom the rest of society disparages. So here, the enemy foreigner is uplifted, while the locals were condemned. As we peak into our modern times & our lives today, how might Jesus correct our posture towards foreigners, immigrants, & the diseased? Or how about even the visitors & tourists of Salem, who may look different than us, who crowd our traffic, & create a reputation for Salem? Jesus says, while you're here, let me introduce myself to you & change you.

Prayer for Salem:

Lord, today we pray for the “foreigners” in our midst in Salem. We pray for the thousands of visitors here this month. We pray for the immigrants (legal & illegal). We pray for healing & cleansing of hearts, & for transformed lives for all. Change our hearts. Amen.

October 15

SUNDAY PRAYER

Written Prayer — “The Savior”

“Thou hast given me a Saviour, produce in me a faith to live by him, to make him all my desire, all my hope, all my glory. May I enter him as my refuge, build on him as my foundation, walk in him as my way, follow him as my guide, conform to him as my example, receive his instructions as my prophet, rely on his intercession as my high priest, obey him as my king. May I never be ashamed of him or his words, but joyfully bear his reproach, never displease him by unholy or imprudent conduct, never count it a glory if I take it patiently when buffeted for a fault, never make the multitude my model, never delay when thy Word invites me to advance. May thy dear Son preserve me from this present evil world, so that its smiles never allure, nor its frowns terrify, nor its vices defile, nor its errors delude me. May I feel that I am a stranger and a pilgrim on earth, declaring plainly that I seek a country, my title to it becoming daily more clear, my meetness for it more perfect, my foretastes of it more abundant; and whatsoever I do may it be done in the Savior’s name.” Amen.

from *The Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, p. 78-79

October 16

MONDAY REFLECTION

"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." John 4:35

For each of the five Mondays this month you are invited to "lift up your eyes" alongside Jesus to see what he is inviting you to see before you. This is an opportunity for you to prayerfully reflect on what the Spirit is showing you & then to turn it into a prayer at the end of the day.

Morning. What is on your heart as you wake up today?

Midday. What/who did God open your eyes to see today?

Evening. What prayers are you invited to give to God?

October 17

SIGNPOSTS IN SALEM

*“Look at the birds of the air... Consider the lilies of the field...”
Matthew 6:26, 28*

Meditation:

In Matthew 6 Jesus is addressing *anxiety* (see v. 25). While medication, seeing a therapist, & other things are certainly helpful, Jesus doesn't first point his listeners to those. Instead, Jesus invites people to simply “look” around. Jesus teaches about God's care for them through what they can see all around them — birds & flowers particularly. For us, in a more urban context in Salem, what could God be inviting us to look around at to remind us of God's care? There are these “divine signposts” all around us — artwork on walls of buildings, changing leaves on trees, ripples in the ocean, unique people, etc... Look around Salem today & see how even the littlest things can be breadcrumbs that lead us to deeper truths. About God's love, grace, truth, compassion, care, & more. What is Jesus pointing you to see today in Salem?

Prayer for Salem:

God, today we pray for the beauty, architecture, culture, music, & diversity of Salem to point people to deeper truths. May something in Salem, “the city of peace”, create a holy longing in people today for the true “New Jerusalem” still yet to come.

October 18

PEACE-MAKING

“And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Mark 4:39

Meditation:

Jesus is the peace of God. Jesus entered into our chaotic world & rides the waves of life with us. When Jesus got on the boat with the disciples in Mark 4, a storm emerged soon after. The disciples were flustered & feared that they might die, but Jesus was unperturbed. In a simple word, he brought “peace” to the storm. And a “great calm” followed. This is what Jesus does. What are the storms of chaos in your life? In the city of Salem? What things might Jesus be willingly stepping into around us that we might be afraid of? Jesus comes to bring peace where there is chaos. And he then invites us to participate in his peace-bringing mission too. He invites us up into his heart, saying, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9).

Prayer for Salem:

Jesus, today we pray for those people & places & situations in Salem that are full of chaos or disorder. Bring your peace into stormy seas around us. Bring peace into broken families, into individuals stuck in cycles of addiction, into mental illness, & so much more. We trust in you as the Peace-giver. Amen.

October 19

3 MILES AN HOUR

“And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.” Mark 10:32

Meditation:

It may be easy to forget that Jesus literally *walked* everywhere. So for all the interactions that Jesus had that are recorded in Scripture, Jesus *walked* to meet them. For those of us that drive a car or take public transportation, we are used to living life going at least 30 miles per hour. But the average walking speed is only *3 miles per hour*. The Japanese author Kosuke Koyama describes Jesus as the “Three Mile an Hour God” & even wrote a whole book with that title. So when Jesus is in a city with us, he is far less hurried than many of us are today. Productivity or the next achievement is not his primary goal. He’s going at his pace, seeing things that we normally miss when driving or biking. Jesus is present, patient, & un-rushed. He walks “ahead” of us. May we follow him at his pace, & dare to slow down.

Prayer for Salem:

Holy Spirit, today help us to spiritually walk at your pace. We want to see what you see, be un-hurried like you are, & we want to follow you where you’re going. Be with those in Salem today who are flustered with busy-ness. Invite them into your rest. Amen.

October 20

INTERRUPTIONS WELCOME

"While he was saying these things to them..." Matthew 9:18

Meditation:

Matthew 9 is a fast & frenetic chapter. Jesus heals a paralytic, calls the tax collector Matthew, & corrects the Pharisees. But then the most urgent matter arises — a little girl dies. Certainly this is the priority of Jesus — to bring the dead to life! So Jesus immediately starts to walk toward the house where the girl is. But on the way, a suffering woman, desperate for cleansing, *interrupts* Jesus. All she wanted was to touch Jesus, in belief that a touch alone would heal her. Did Jesus frenetically keep going, ignoring this "simpleton", knowing that a more pressing issue was before him? Shockingly, no. Jesus stopped, turned to the woman, spoke to her, & restored her to health. Jesus welcomed the interruption, for she too was meaningful to him. What interruptions might be divine opportunities for you? Unexpected phone call? Unexpected traffic? Seeing someone in need. Take the approach of Jesus, & stop. Lean in to the interruptions of life & listen for his voice.

Prayer for Salem:

Father, today we pray for the "simpletons", those with basic needs or requests that we can help with. Help us to not be too busy to stop or to care. Open our hearts & eyes. Amen.

October 21

IN SCHOOL

“About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” John 7:14-15

Meditation:

Schools are often the heartbeat of cities & communities. They help shape the future. Jesus didn't go to the “Harvard” of Israel; rather, he was taught in the ancient version of the public school system. Yet, in his early thirties, Jesus went into the temple & began teaching. He taught in a way they had never heard before — it made them marvel. He taught truth. He taught out of love. Jesus was not just a healer, but a teacher too. He desires true understanding would come to all. In our world today of “post-truth” or “alternative facts” a renewed commitment to discovering God through study is needed. God created us as learners & calls us to love him with not just our whole heart, soul, & strength... but even also our whole mind (see Mark 12:30).

Prayer for Salem:

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit, today we pray for the Salem Public Schools — for teachers, administrators, & students. We also pray for Salem State Univ., & everyone involved there. Use these places of learning to build foundations for faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 22

SUNDAY PRAYER

“In the Garden” (hymn by Austin Miles, 1913)

I come to the garden alone
while the dew is still on the roses,
and the voice I hear falling on my ear
the Son of God discloses.
*And he walks with me, and he talks with me,
and he tells me I am his own;
and the joy we share as we tarry there
none other has ever known.*
He speaks, and the sound of his voice
is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
and the melody that he gave to me
within my heart is ringing
I'd stay in the garden with him
though the night around me be falling,
but he bids me go; thru the voice of woe
his voice to me is calling.

Prayer for Me:

“Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice — in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence. Teach me, Lord, to listen. Amen.” (John Veltri, S.J.)

from *Silencio: Reflective Practices for Nurturing Your Soul*, p. 121

October 23

MONDAY REFLECTION

"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." John 4:35

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Midday. What/who did God open your eyes to see today?

Evening. What prayers are you invited to give to God?

October 24

IN THE PARK

“Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.” Matthew 15:29-32

Meditation:

Jesus loved spending time outside in the common areas of Israel. He was publicly present there, allowing himself to be approached by anybody for conversation or (in the case of today’s verses) even healing. We read of 4+ types of people who came up to Jesus & found healing. This would not have been as possible if Jesus were cooped up inside a religious building somewhere. Not only did God not stay up in heaven, far removed from human experience & suffering, but he went out into the open & made himself accessible & approachable to all.

Prayer for Salem:

Lord, we pray today for the desperate to find healing. Thank you for being the approachable God! Mobilize your church to be “out in the open” & to show Jesus’s approachability to all. Amen.

October 25

WHAT DOES HE SEE?

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9:36

Meditation:

Today we see Jesus’s deep heart poured out in words on a page. Jesus has *compassion* — for the hurting, the helpless, the harassed. Those who are deeply misunderstood, troubled, on the outside, abused, battered. Jesus has *compassion*. The city of Salem certainly has many people who are this way. Maybe even *you* feel this way. Jesus is our True Shepherd (see John 10), & you are a sheep. Jesus wants to be *your* Shepherd, to guide *you* into green pastures & still waters (see Psalm 23), & to protect *you* from the harms of this world. If you get lost, he will run after *you* (see Luke 15:4). But the big point is this — Jesus sees *you* in whatever condition *you* are in today. He will not leave *you* harassed. He sees & he has compassion for *you*.

Prayer for Salem:

Heavenly Father, we pray today for the harassed & helpless in Salem. We pray for specific people you are opening our eyes to see, & for specific names of people we know who are struggling. Draw near to them today, show them your shepherding heart. Give us your heart of compassion as well. Amen.

October 26

LOVING

“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.... So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” John 11:5, 36

Meditation:

Jesus is famous for his love. “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” But what does that mean? In John 11, the story is about Jesus & a family he knew. Jesus came to know Martha, Mary, & Lazarus maybe through growing up together or maybe they developed a close connection later on as young adults. It’s uncertain. But what is certain is that Jesus allowed himself to be attached to them closely. So much so that when Lazarus suddenly died, Jesus wept deeply (even though he knew he would later raise him). Jesus’s heart was connected to them. His love for them wasn’t fake or conditional; it was true & easily evident, so that even the onlooking Jews noted it aloud. Now hear this — Jesus’s love for *you* is the same. He has a history with you, his heart is connected to yours, & he longs for your resurrection too. Nothing can separate his love from you.

Prayer for Salem:

God, we pray today for the un-loved or un-loveable in Salem. We pray for the lonely, for those without family, for those without friends. We pray for those who dread birthdays or holidays because the void is felt. Show them your truest love today. Amen.

October 27

ABOVE ALL SPIRITUAL POWERS

"Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan!... Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me... behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." Matthew 4:10; 16:23; Luke 22:31-32

Meditation:

We've talked about a lot of areas where Jesus is present in our city over the past few weeks. But one that certainly can't be overlooked is Jesus's presence in the spiritual realm. There is an unseen spiritual world that often is unacknowledged in our modern Western world. But Jesus came, not only in flesh & blood, but also to engage in the spiritual world, in order to show his sovereignty & power *over & above* all spiritual powers. Many times throughout the Gospels, Jesus drives demons away, acknowledges the present spiritual world, & even interacts directly with Satan himself. All of it is to show Jesus's ultimate authority over it all. He is the One True Living God. And so you too are free from spiritual oppression. In Jesus' name, darkness flees.

Prayer for Salem:

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, today we pray for spiritual protection from the evil one. We pray against forces of darkness at work in our city. We pray for deliverance from evil in Jesus' name.

October 28

UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER SEEN

"And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light."

Matthew 17:2

Meditation:

We've seen each day that Jesus is so uniquely present in every corner & crevice of our city, & our personal lives. He is with us. As we approach the end of this month, now we confront the deepest reality of who Jesus is. Namely, there are moments in life when we get glimpses of Jesus & we begin to see that he is truly unlike anybody in human history & unlike anything we've ever seen. Peter & John got one such glimpse at the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus transfigured from ordinary man to resplendent brilliance before their very eyes. His full Glory was before them. Have you had a moment where Jesus revealed himself to you in an unmistakable way like this? How did you respond? These two disciples were terrified, because of the *holiness* before them. When we get a glimpse of *that* Jesus, we fall down in worship. They were truly on hallowed ground. Yet, even still, Jesus invites them (and you & I) to "rise."

Prayer for Salem:

Jesus, we pray for us & the city to see you for who you truly are. We long to see your glory. Give us personal, intimate moments like John & Peter had. Change us. Amen.

October 29

SUNDAY PRAYER

Jeremiah 29:4-9

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel... Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.”

Reflection:

Like Israel exiled in Babylon, living as strangers in a land of different gods, so in our time too is God calling his church to be faithful & prayerful where we are. May we be his “faithful presence”, even when the minority in the city.

Prayer for Salem:

Lord God, today we pray for you to make your church faithful while living in a place where following you is uncommon. We pray for Salem’s peace & welfare today. We put down our roots here, in faith that you will use us for your Kingdom purposes. Amen.

October 30

MONDAY REFLECTION

"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." John 4:35

For this final Monday, we invite you to look back at what you've been invited to pray during the month of October. Reflect on what has done in you this month.

What prayers have you prayed repeatedly this month?

What prayers has God specifically answered?

How do you feel called to pray for the city of Salem & the people around you going forward?

October 31

PROVIDING FOR THE THOUSANDS

“Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” John 6:5

Meditation:

We made it to Halloween, the pinnacle of October in Salem. No doubt, today tens of thousands of people will descend on the city for all different reasons. What possibly can we do?! We're just a small church! Well, we see Jesus today, in John 6, similarly with thousands of people around him & just a few disciples. The 12 only had a little bit of food they could offer people. What would Jesus do with their little bit? Famously, we learn of course that Jesus uses just a few fish & loaves of bread to feed the masses. Might Jesus be inviting us to do the same? With our faith, our love, our prayer, our presence, and our little bit of Halloween candy & apple cider? We too can be used by Jesus, in faith, to show that he provides for those who need it & who come to him.

Prayer for Salem:

God, we pray today for the hundreds of people we'll meet at our church — the trick or treaters, the college kids, the tourists. We also pray today for those physically hungry in Salem. We pray for the Salem Food Pantry & their good work providing food to thousands each week. Bless their work. And we pray for the spiritually hungry in Salem. Direct them to “the bread of heaven” Jesus, who enables us to never go spiritually hungry again. Amen.

November 1

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS

"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops."

Matthew 10:27

Meditation:

Jesus brings the good news of salvation everywhere he goes. In the park, to children, to the marginalized, in schools, at religious squares, around dinner tables. He comes to our city with the gospel that saves sinners forever. By his grace, through faith in his name. That is what Jesus does, because Jesus himself *is* the Good News himself.

Therefore, as we step away from October & into the rest of our lives, Jesus invites us to take what we've seen him doing in our city & what we've heard him saying to us, out into our world continually. Let us serve our city with the love & justice of Jesus. Let us share the hope of the good news with courage & gentleness. Let us befriend our neighbors with compassion & presence. Let us be joy-filled to share the greatest news ever told. There is freedom from sin & eternal life forevermore offered freely in Jesus!

Prayer for Salem:

We pray for _____ to put their trust in you Jesus. Amen.

The Invitation

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

How do you follow Jesus? Jesus invites all people to recognize the sin & brokenness all around us & all inside us. We are broken & needy people, in need of someone or something to put us back together. God sent Jesus, his very self in human form, to live the life we needed to live but can't. Jesus lived the perfect, righteous life. And he willingly substituted himself in our place, to die the death that we all deserve, so that we would be set free from the curse of sin forever. He is our ransom. But because he was perfectly righteous, the grave could not hold him down. Jesus rose victoriously from the grave, resurrected on the third day, thus forever defeating death forever. Now the grave has no hold on you or me or this world any longer. Though we all will physically die, if we look upon Jesus & recognize what he has done for us & commit to following him, we will rise again after death & live eternally with him. This is what it means to trust & follow Jesus.

Shockingly, Jesus came not to be served, though he deserves it, being God himself. But instead, he came as a servant, to give us what we need the most. He came to offer us the free gift of New Life forever. Will you allow Jesus to come into your life to serve you?



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