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# THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

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*Daily Devotion at Zion + January 24, 2021 AD + **Epiphany Season***

## **This Week: Praying for God**

“If I were hungry, I would not tell you.” (Psalm 50:12)

With that blunt statement, God reminds us that He needs nothing from us. “I need no bull from your stall or a goat of your pens, for every animal of the forest is Mine” (Psalm 50:9-10). He is “immortal, invisible, the only God” (1 Timothy 1:17) of whom we sing, “Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might” (“Immortal, Invisible, God Only-Wise,” Walter Chalmers Smith). God certainly does not need us to pray for Him, for it is He who grants our prayers!

How amazing, then, that God still lets you pray for Him.

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” we say. “Hallowed be Thy name.” “You are worthy of all honor and praise.” In each of those prayers, we are praying *for* as well as *to* God. Although He will accomplish all things according to His own will and in His great power, He nevertheless welcomes us into His life and mission. He invites and receives our prayers for Him—that is, for His Name to be hallowed, His kingdom to come, His will to be done, His glory to be praised—to confirm in us that we are part of His gracious will. His kingdom and will are being done *for* and *among* us who pray for Him.

So what does praying for God look like? Read on!

### **About the Cover Art**

*Albrecht Durer was an artist who appreciated the writing of Martin Luther, mentioning in one letter that Luther’s teaching had consoled him after a period of great anxiety. In this painting, “Adoration of the Holy Trinity,” crafted in 1511 as part of an altarpiece in Landauer, Germany, Durer gives us a deeply concrete image of God: the Father, crowned in imperial style, receives His Son into heaven, the dove of the Holy Spirit over all, as all the saints adore Him. While not how God actually “looks,” it communicates a powerful message: God is at the center of all our devotion.*

## Prayer in God's Own Life

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 8, we read, "And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (verse 27). "He who searches hearts" is God Himself, and so here we see God and His Spirit relating to one another as two actors within the life of prayer. The Spirit raises up prayers for the saints, and God knows what the Spirit prays, because God and the Spirit are one. What this little insight tells us is that prayer itself is part of God's life—to put it differently, God prays. He does not "pray to a higher being," for none is higher than Himself. Rather, prayer is part of God's mind. Perhaps it is too much to say that prayer is God's manner of thinking, but it expresses something of the truth: as the almighty, all-active one, God is always working to bring about the new and glorious future of His Son, and therefore, His mind is full of hopes and longings, that is, it is full of prayers.

### Daily Readings for the Week of January 31 (Epiphany 4)

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| <b>S</b> Isaiah 51:9-16<br>Hebrews 11:8-16<br>John 7:14-31       | Galatians 5:1-15<br>Mark 8:27-9:1  |
| <b>M</b> Isaiah 51:17-23<br>Galatians 4:1-11<br>Mark 7:24-37     | <b>F</b> Isaiah 55:1-13<br>Galatians 5:16-24<br>Mark 9:2-13  |
| <b>T</b> Isaiah 52:1-12<br>Galatians 4:12-20<br>Mark 8:1-10      | <b>Sa</b> Isaiah 56:1-8<br>Galatians 5:24-6:10<br>Mark 9:14-29   |
| <b>W</b> Isaiah 52:13-53:12<br>Galatians 4:21-31<br>Mark 8:11-26 | <i>These readings correspond to pages 317-348 in Volume I of <u>For All the Saints</u>. To acquire <u>For All the Saints</u> or other devotionals, please contact the church office.</i> |
| <b>Th</b> Isaiah 54:1-17   |  |

## Ways to Pray “for” God

Again, we want to remember that God does not “need” our prayer, but He graciously invites it the way a parent sometimes lets a child help him, not so much for his sake, but for the child’s. So what does praying for God look like?

**Praising Him for Himself.** “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness” (Psalm 29:2). It is perfectly just and right to spend time simply praising God for Himself. He is worth all that praise, and therefore it is just and morally right to offer it. Consider who God *is* (almighty, gracious, kind, merciful, fearsome, worthy, strong, beautiful), and offer it up.

**Praying for His Name to be known and hallowed.** “This is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Pray daily for God’s Name to be known far and wide, not only or alone for the world’s salvation, but also and primarily for His glory.

**Praying for His will to be done.** “God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Because God is both almighty and gracious, His will is ultimately a *good* will for humankind. To pray, then, for His will to be done is nothing less than to pray for the salvation of all. Pray for His Word to be preached far and wide; for the Holy Spirit to accompany that Word with power; for all speakers of the Word to be faithful; and for a full harvest of faith to blossom.

**Praying for Him to do in you what He desires.** “We are the clay; You are our potter” (Isaiah 64:8). To pray “for God” ultimately becomes personal: to set aside your own self-governance and desires, and to pray “Thy will be done,” not for others, but specifically for you. Pray for God that He would do in you what He desires, and to be glorified in the resulting good works.