

Devotions for the Third Week of Pentecost – June 15-19, 2026

Monday of Pentecost 2 – Prayer for the Week

Almighty, eternal Word, in the Word of Your apostles and prophets You have proclaimed to us your saving will. Grant us faith to believe Your promises that we may receive eternal salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Have you ever received a summons to court or a note from the IRS that you are being audited? If you have, you might remember the terrible feelings such a communication can evoke. I once got a letter from the IRS. I was pretty young at that point and had been doing our taxes for a couple of years but was never quite sure I understood the complicated forms generated by the IRS. Imagine my surprise and relief when I opened the envelope and discovered not an invitation to appear before an auditor but a check, a rather substantial check at that. I had indeed made a mistake on my tax forms, but the IRS had caught it and refunded me the money I had overpaid.

I have something of the same reaction to this prayer. It speaks of God's will. Usually, when I hear of God's will, words like "submit" and "obey" come to mind. I do not like those words very much. Even worse, when I look around me, see the sin in my world and in my life, I am really wondering just what God's will is. This situation seems to be broken. Does God want that?

Re-read the prayer again and notice the word which describes God's will. It is a "saving will." My reaction to God's will is a little like all the negative things about taxes and audits that came to my mind when I saw the return address on that envelope. I expected the worst but had my expectations turned upside-down. The revealed will of God is that people are saved (I Tim. 2:4). It is important for Christians to remember that God has not revealed everything about Himself. In many ways he remains hidden from our view. But he has revealed his heart in Christ Jesus. He wants to save people (John 3:16-17). There is no crisis or scheme of the evil one which can thwart that will. We ask God for the faith which believes the promises. This is a time when God needs to give us that faith. Pray for it.

Tuesday of Pentecost 2 – Exodus 19:1-8

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the

earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

Through her tears, the young woman in my office told a story which was too familiar. It had seemed like the right thing to do when they moved in together. It had been fun, and they did not need to get married. They were in love. Until they weren’t. Until, that is, he got abusive and controlling. But, as she saw it now, he had been abusive and controlling all along. Now it was time to get out with her child to safety and a chance to pick up the pieces of a broken life.

This story and its countless permutations occupy a fair amount of a pastor’s ministry and a professor’s vocation too. When I started teaching, I was surprised at how often living arrangements were disrupted and people had to move out during finals week. I have concluded that God’s command to get married first, then move in, and then have children is not only a command but also a really good idea. The sociologists who study these things will usually concur. Their studies also point to the importance of this sequence for human well-being.

Moses would have us look at another sequence of events that is terribly important today. Before God asks any faith or response from the people in Moses’ day, God first rescued them. He brought them up out of slavery in Egypt on eagles’ wings (what an image!) and brought them to Himself. It is only then that he calls for their faithful response. Notice the order of events. God rescues first, then they enter the covenant.

That order is important for us today. Perhaps your life has been lived out of order. I know that at times mine has been. God does not wait for us to get our lives straightened out before he rescues us, and he does not make his love contingent on our getting something right. The children of Israel were likely worshipping the Egyptian gods when Moses showed up. God loved them anyway. If life events have revealed the weak and broken places in your life, do not despair. God rescues people. He has been rescuing stinkers and sinners for a very long time.

Wednesday of Pentecost 2 – Psalm 100

¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

² Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!

³ Know that the LORD, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

It was a hot, humid late-afternoon. At least it seemed hot and humid to this Northwesterner who was visiting the Midwest that day. On the dock of the municipal lake stood an African-American man of retirement age, holding the rope affixed to a small boat bumping against the tires which lined the sides of the dock. He was clearly waiting.

“What are you fishing for?” I asked.

“Anything that’s biting,” he grinned. “We are not very good fishermen, but we just have a good time.”

Soon, from the parking lot came another man, a similarly-aged white fellow. They bantered and spoke like the old friends they clearly were. I watched them start the little motor and putter out until they disappeared behind a point of land. I could hear them talking across the water far out into the lake. It looked like a great deal of fun.

Does God enjoy being with us? Or does he tolerate us? The psalmist would answer this question for us. He invites us into the presence of God with thanksgiving, gladness, and rejoicing. God made us and delights in us. We are the sheep of his pasture, his creatures. God is not tolerating us, enduring us patiently like some paternalistic figure who puts up with us. He delights in us. We are his people. This is a sure thing for God’s steadfast love endures forever. Christ has seen to that on a cross and empty tomb. Rejoice today in the presence of God in your life.

Thursday of Pentecost 2 – Romans 5:6-15

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from

Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many

In the film “The Last Full Measure,” the heroic acts of William Pitsenbarger are recounted along with the 32-year struggle of the men he saved to get him the Medal of Honor. Much of that struggle is fictional. The acts of heroism are not. Pitsenbarger was an Airforce pararescue medic who descended into a terrible battle in Vietnam and saved many men before he was killed. He repeatedly ran out of the perimeter in the face of enemy fire to retrieve wounded soldiers.

Our nation bestowed on this man its highest honor because of what he did. We see his self-sacrifice on behalf of his comrades to be worthy of praise. Paul is using this image to help us understand Christ, but he makes a critical distinction. Jesus takes it up a notch even from the heroic deeds of Pitsenbarger. He does not die for his fellow citizens or friends, but for his enemies. Christ died for the ungodly. God’s real enemy, you see, is your death, the product of sin and Satan’s schemes. Our reconciliation to God, the restoration of the relationship which was severed in Eden, is through God’s great self-sacrifice for us while we were subject to and bound to the very thing which God despised, the death of his creation.

There is great peace for you in this. God did not wait until you got something right before He extended his love toward you. There is no difficult standard which you must meet. God raises the dead and here is a bar we can all attain to. But, what is more, Paul points us to something equally precious. Now we rejoice in God for Christ’s reconciliation is real. We are at peace with God. Whenever we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we ask that God’s will be done. This is what God wants: to be reconciled with you. Rejoice, Christ has done it.

Friday of Pentecost 2 – Matthew 9:35-10:20

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

¹ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹ Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹ And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹² As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³ And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

¹⁶ “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

At the height of the pandemic, when we were all staying home and the roads were empty, I noticed something at my neighbor’s house. There was a large black van parked out front. Behind it stood a grill, and a man attending the grill, while my neighbor and others were sitting in the front yard, appropriately distant. My neighbor lives alone since his father died several years ago.

Later I ran into my neighbor and commented about the scene. He said, “Yeah, I paid the chef to come and make a meal for my friends and me, it had been months since I had eaten a meal with anyone.” That really struck me. I have a family in my home. We eat together regularly. My neighbor is a very social person who enjoys going to restaurants and socializing with his wide circle of friends. He could not do that. The stay-at-home order fell heavily upon him in that way. He paid a professional chef to come and make him a dinner just so he could share it with someone.

Jesus looked out over the crowds and had compassion on them. They were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. That word for “have compassion” in Greek is a very powerful word. It might be better to say that his guts were wrenched by what he saw. It is perhaps the strongest word for emotion in the Greek language.

Jesus’ response to his compassion for the people was to send his own disciples out into the world. He gives them great authority but also warns them that they will be persecuted. They can do great good, but they should not expect safety and security. That sounds familiar! That same

Jesus has risen from the dead and rules His strange kingdom today, a kingdom of which you are a citizen. Has His compassion sent you to a neighbor today? He cares for them through you.