

First Monday of May 2019 – Day of Prayer of Fasting

As we continue our pattern of prayer and fasting on the first Monday of the month, many of your brothers and sisters of faith at Intown are joining together today. We recently completed Holy Week and a season of reflection on our baptism and repentance, so, our prayers today will focus on similar themes while also picking up another prayer of Jesus. You may recall that in the past we have spent time reading a prayer that Jesus prayed that was recorded, to show us more of his heart and how we might relate to our Heavenly Father. We sought to both receive those prayers as being prayed for us and to pray similar prayers for both the lost and found in our world.

The prayer that we've chosen to focus on today is the eighth prayer of Jesus recorded for us in the Gospels. And it ties in beautifully with why our repentance is effective and hopeful. Just before he was crucified, as Jesus looked at the guards who were leading him, the two criminals who were going to hang on either side of him and the people watching the spectacle he was overheard to pray **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)**

In the midst of suffering and impending death, Jesus had great clarity. He knew his mission and purpose and why he was giving his life. It was for us and for all of the lost sheep of the world.

As you read that short prayer, what strikes you?

Do you think the Father heard Jesus? You may not like questions that have such obvious answers, but we sometimes need to lay a foundation for what we are reading. It was a real conversation that Jesus was having. Again, why might Jesus verbalize such a prayer for us to read hundreds of years later?

Do you believe that prayer included you and all of us?

Earlier in his teaching ministry, Jesus talked about our role in forgiving others so that we might be forgiven. Are there people in your life for whom you believe God wants you to pray this prayer? You might want to write down their names.

How does it make you feel that Jesus prayed this prayer for you?

Suggested prayer

Lord, I love your Word that brings clarity and truth into my life. Without you and your Word, I am tossed around like a lost soul with no direction or purpose. It is too easy to get off the track. And, even, to refuse your love and forgiveness. That seems bizarre that I could refuse your love, but I do it. Somehow, thinking that your

love brings restrictions or limitations when it actually brings freedom and wholeness. Help me to understand the depth of your love.

There are many voices of restrictions and limitations, but those are not your voice. Help me to have keen ears to hear your voice.

Thank you for drawing me back into the story of redemption and love. Who do you want me to show love and your peace to today?

Follow through

As you wait for the Holy Spirit to bring you the names of people, think about each person and how you could reach out to them today. Could you call them, write to them or go see them?

In an earlier prayer between Jesus and the Father, Jesus said that he loved us to the end. His love was not a one-time event or a short-term relationship. As you go through this day and are consciously in tune with the Holy Spirit, be open to speaking words of forgiveness, grace and peace to those in your world. You may be giving up a meal or something else to help your focus. That will likely be a means of creating peace for a few extra minutes or it may give you a break when you pray for your brothers and sisters at Intown and in other parts of the city. Try to keep your prayers close to home, like Jesus was doing as he observed those near him on Skull Hill.