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Corporate Prayer on the Lord's Day

Grant us, Lord, to hope on Your name

Greg Strand (/blog/authors/greg-strand) | March 29, 2020



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On this Lord's Day, we "gathered" with other church family members and worshipped our great God. We sang, prayed, heard the Word of God read and preached, most of the elements of corporate worship we normally do. But on this day, we engaged in these aspects of corporate worship through extraordinary means - virtual. Although unusual, we give thanks to God for those extraordinary means.

Our love can be and is expressed in and through prayer.

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We also long for the day when we will be able to gather personally and physically once again. This longing somewhat parallels our longing for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when our faith becomes sight (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1), when the mortal puts on immortality, when “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).

In this extraordinary time when love for others (Matt. 22:37-39) means we do not meet with one another, our love can be and is expressed in and through prayer. We join together with others in prayer, with assurance our Father hears the prayers of his children (Matt. 7:7-11). Today we reach across the ages to pray “the oldest Christian prayer known outside Scripture.” This prayer comes from 1 Clement (ca. 95), one of the Apostolic Fathers (cf. Phil. 4:3; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.21; 3:34; 5:6), which was written in the latter part of the first century, during the Domitian persecution.

Although the author is unknown (Clement may have been either a church leader or a scribe/secretary), this consists of a letter from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth. Through it, we gain insights into the lives of early Christians and life together in the early Christian church.

We also see in and through this prayer, which serves as a model, the affirmation of and trust in God, their humble dependence on God evidenced in those affirmations, i.e., only he can fulfill them, and their present situation as evidenced in their requests. In some ways, this evidences the notion of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, “the rule of prayer is the rule of belief.” What we believe will be expressed in prayer; what we pray is grounded in what we believe.

Corporate prayer

On this Lord's Day, let's corporately pray this early church prayer. Its early date does not make it more spiritual or effective. Prayer that is effective is a prayer of faith (cf. Jms. 5:16), uttered through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27), through Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1), to God the Father (Eph. 2:18). This reminds us that we are a part of "one, holy, catholic (universal), apostolic church" (from the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, 381).

Dear brothers and sisters, this is a fitting prayer for this present day. May we hope in the name of the Lord, may the Lord be our helper and protector, and may the nations know that he alone is God. (This prayer comes from 1 Clement 59.3-4; 61.3, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*

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Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 123-129; format adapted from Kenneth Berding.)

*Grant us, Lord, to hope on your name,
which is the primal source of all creation,
and open the eyes of our hearts
that we may know you,
who alone are highest among the high;
you are holy, abiding among the holy.*

*You humble the pride of the proud;
you destroy the plans of nations;
you exalt the humble and humble the exalted;
you make rich and make poor;
you kill and make alive.*

*You alone are the benefactor of spirits and the God of all flesh,
looking into the depths,
scanning the works of humans;
the helper of those who are in peril,
the savior of those in despair;
the creator and guardian of every spirit.*

*You multiply the nations upon the earth,
and from among all of them you have chosen those
who love you through Jesus Christ,
your beloved servant,
through whom you instructed us,
sanctified us, honored us.*

*We ask you, Master, to be our helper and protector.
Save those among us who are in distress;
have mercy on the humble;
raise up the fallen;
show yourself to those in need;
heal the sick;
turn back those of your people who wander;
feed the hungry;*

*ransom our prisoners;
raise up the weak;
comfort the discouraged.*

*Let all the nations know that you are the only God,
that Jesus Christ is your servant,
and that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.*

*You, who alone are able to do these
and even greater good things for us,
we praise through the high priest and benefactor of our souls, Jesus Christ,
through whom be the glory and the majesty
to you both now and for all generations
and for ever and ever. Amen.*



Greg Strand (/blog/authors/greg-strand)

EFCA

Greg Strand is EFCA executive director of theology and credentialing, and he serves on the Board of Ministerial Standing as well as the Spiritual Heritage Committee. He and his family are members of Northfield (Minnesota) EFC.

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