

What Then Shall We Do

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- [0 : 0 0] God, our refuge and our strength receive all we offer you this day and through the death and resurrection of your Son transform us in his likeness without this in his name.
- Let us pray. O Heavenly Father, how can you help us when we are in conflict with you?
- How foolish is pride, rebelliousness, and self-reliance in the face of the creator of the universe who pervades and upholds every atom of our universe.
- Your presence among us is promised in the words of the book of Matthew, chapter 18, verse 20, where you say, For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.
- Because you keep your promises, Lord Jesus, be with us as we ask you to comfort and sustain us. For all who find that their public roles and their consciences are at war with each other, please comfort and direct these people.
- [1 : 3 5] For all in authority, all who are responsible to maintain public order, please comfort and direct these people. and we turn to the prayer at the bottom of page 50 in the prayer book.
- In the middle of page 50. Prayer number 26 for civic authorities. Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, send forth, we beseech thee, upon thy servants who bear office in this city, the spirit of prudence, charity, and justice, that they may in all things walk before thee with steadfast purpose and a single heart, and faithfully serve in their several offices through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Amen. For all who study in theological colleges, we offer the prayer on the bottom of page 45 in the prayer book.
- Almighty Father, grant that our schools of theology may be homes of faith and fruitful study, and that all their students may so learn truth as to bear its light along their ways, and so learn Christ as to be found in him, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without hand.
- Amen. For all who are touched by the evil of abortion in our society, please comfort and direct these people.
- [3 : 3 9] For all who suffer at work, whether from persecution by others or from their own weaknesses, please comfort and direct these people.
- comfort also the lonely members of our parish and give us patience with each other as you build us into your church. And comfort those sick and in pain while giving us, we humbly ask of you, the strength to go to them with offers of help.
- We put before you now, aloud or silently, those known to us who are in great pain, or have upon them any suffering or loss.
- I think of Paul and John. Amen. Amen. And return to page 732 in the prayer book, where at the bottom of the page we see a prayer for relatives and friends.
732. O loving Father, we commend to thy gracious keeping all who are near and dear to us.

[5 : 25] Have mercy upon any who are sick and comfort those who are in pain, anxiety, or sorrow. Awaken all who are careless about eternal things.

Bless those who are young and in health, that they may give the days of their strength unto thee. Comfort the aged and infirm, that thy peace may rest upon them.

Hallow the ties of kindred, that we may help and not hinder one another in all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord God, in these present years we have seen fortunes made and lost with the buying and selling of houses in our city.

Remind us now that only your house can give us the security for which we long. Remind us always of our Lord Jesus Christ's temptation in the desert.

[6 : 28] Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. winds so Bri hitting upon him out on the deep ground. Loan heard of his blood yesterday down at us.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. the risen Lord Jesus Christ, his winnowing fork in his hand.

We ask that your word will so work among us to bring to the surface the truth of our hearts that we might acknowledge it before you and find your confirmation and your healing and your forgiveness.

[7 : 29] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. That passage of Scripture, which was read as the Gospel this morning and is found in the third chapter of Luke, beginning at the seventh verse, I want to draw particularly to your attention.

And within that passage of Scripture, this question, which occurs three times in the passage, what then shall we do?

And it here and in other places in the New Testament is given to us as a model of an appropriate response to the preaching of the Gospel.

The Gospel having been preached, our hearts are to turn to God in the question, what then shall we do? Now Christmas is not very far away, and the busyness of our lives and the pace and stress of our lives increases very considerably.

And I hear, not infrequently, people saying what a tragedy Christmas is for them and how much unhappiness it brings to them.

[8 : 56] And my heart goes out to them in one way, but in another way I want seriously to rebuke them because I am sure that bereavement, separation, unemployment, bad memories, confused family relationships, all things are secondary, ultimately, to the reality of the God who has become flesh and chosen to dwell among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

And I suppose I must demand of you that you give your heart's worship to the God who has met you despite the circumstances in which you find yourself, that you may by the Holy Spirit be encouraged to offer to that God the praise of your whole heart as the record of the message of Christmas is rehearsed again in these weeks between now, these days between now and the end of the year.

So take cheer. The other thing I want you to be aware of is that in its wisdom the church has decided that the best preparation for Christmas is a serious confrontation with John the Baptist.

And that serious confrontation is brought to us in this passage this morning. The passage from Zephaniah, the passage from Isaiah, the passage from Philippians we're all full of praise and thanksgiving at the prospect of the fulfillment of God's promise of the restoration of peace and joy and his presence.

But then you have to meet John the Baptist. And John the Baptist does for us what I'm sure is good for us and tells us, well, if we were to be before him as in fact we are, he would say, you brood of vipers.

[11 : 17] You get that? You brood of vipers. Now I gather when vipers are born, they're ready to do their poisonous things.

And that was how John greeted this congregation of people who came to be baptized by him in the river Jordan.

They, however, it seems, were ready for him. And their answer, which John anticipates is, we have Abraham as our father. He said, oh no, you don't.

You remain a brood of vipers. And he tells them that the children of Abraham I could raise up from these stones.

To tell them that they are under the judgment of God. Clearly and centrally under the judgment of God. Because they, like us, And this is what often makes pagan people so much more delightful than what I would call too pious Christians.

[12 : 30] Because pagans, I think, avoid the gospel because they recognize the judgment of God. And Christians sometimes sit too comfortably within the confines of the Christian community and don't recognize that they too are under the judgment of God.

And that God is going to demonstrate his judgment beginning with us. Not with somebody else. And so it's appropriate that John says, you brood of vipers.

And then he goes and tells them that the tree, the tree which may symbolize the nation, or the tree which may symbolize the family, the tree which may symbolize the wonderful family to which you belong.

Unless that tree brings forth fruit worthy of repentance, know that the axe is laid to the root of the tree. There's a lovely bit of relief that I think probably only comes in the RSV translation.

And that is when John has finished delivering this message. If you look in verse 18, it says, so with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

[13 : 55] It doesn't sound like it at first, does it? But behind all this, there is good news. So wait for it. What then shall we do is the question.

And I think that's a question for us as a congregation at the conclusion of our parish mission. What then shall we do? How are we going to answer that question?

John the Baptist tells some people how they are to answer it. He says when the people come up and say, convicted by his preaching, what then shall we do?

He says simply to them, if you have two coats, share one with somebody who hasn't any. And in the same way, share food.

So the first thing we're to do is share clothing and food. Then the tax collectors came up and said, what shall we do? And in a sense he says to them, deal honestly.

[15 : 00] Now the happy or unfortunate circumstance of our lives is that we are all tax collectors. Every shop merchant has to take his little bit for the government.

He's made us almost into a nation of tax collectors. And so the admonition applies very widely. Deal honestly.

Bring honesty into the place of your daily work. Share food, share clothing. Bring honesty into the place of your daily work.

And then the soldiers come and they say, what shall we do? And he says to them, and they were probably, we're told, armed policemen. The kind of people you see going around in the third world with a machine gun over their shoulder.

Sort of policemen that have been made, in one sense, to keep order. And John the Baptist says to them, you're to use your authority only in the right way.

[16 : 10] Not for robbery and false accusations. To be content with your wages. And not to resort to violence and false accusations to extort money out of people.

Now these are all very simple things that have to be done. Share food. That's the beginning of potluck supper.

Share clothing. That's the beginning of rummage sale. And then he says, deal honestly in your business and don't use your authority for extortion and violence and false accusations.

Now we have, as I suggest, institutionalized these things. But a lot of people think that this is where Christianity stops. that we know nothing except the preaching of John.

But this has nothing to do with our Christian lives. This is a preparation to receive the good news of the gospel. Putting our lives in order by sharing food and clothing and dealing honestly and not using our authority in the wrong way.

[17 : 28] This is just John the Baptist who's talking. The kingdom hasn't come yet. We haven't begun to think what Christian faith is about. All we've done is to try and put our lives in order.

The reason that we do that, you will see in Acts chapter 10, 31, where you see one man who came in a wonderful way to faith in Christ.

But in Acts 10, 31, it says of him that he received a message from a man in bright apparel saying, Cornelius, your prayers have been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

This man, his prayers and alms had been remembered before God and so Peter came to give him the good news. Look, if you will, in John chapter 3 and verse 21, a passage which is perhaps familiar to you, where it says this.

Verse 20 of John 3, Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed.

[18 : 44] But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. And so what John the Baptist is preaching for is fruit worthy of repentance.

Some kind of straightening out your life before God in order that you might hear the good news of the gospel. And I find this particularly helpful because so many people come to me from week to week and say, What then shall I do if you want me to be a Christian?

Well, I trust that the first thing we all recognize is that our lives may be ordered in order to receive the good news of the gospel.

John is the one who prepared people for the coming of Christ. Then if you go on in the passage in Luke chapter 3, you see what they thought and we sometimes think that John is perhaps the Christ.

And the message that I have conveyed to you this morning is all there is. But John says there is much more. There is coming one after him, the lachet of whose shoes he is unworthy to unloose.

[20 : 11] And then he goes on and says who this Jesus is. He's the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary. The chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

So John wants us to be prepared to receive this person, Jesus Christ. John is pointing to him and he points to him particularly as a person of judgment.

That he is going to bring judgment. That he is going to bring into your life and into mine the awareness of what is wheat and what is chaff.

what is simply blown away because of the meaninglessness of it and what remains as the abiding reality which is the wheat.

[21 : 15] And that's what Jesus does for us. All the sham and all the hypocrisy and all the superficiality and artificiality, all the illusions are blown away by him.

He comes up and all that is gone. And that's my experience and I'm sure it's the experience of many of you if not all of you that Jesus demands truth in the inward parts.

We cannot play around with the reality of who Jesus Christ is. He comes as a person of judgment and the artificiality of our lives simply cannot stand up to him.

Well, let me show you the other example in the New Testament in which this same question comes up and it's Acts chapter 2 and verse 37 and a good and a quite different answer is given.

Here, not John the Baptist is preaching but the Apostle Peter is preaching and when Peter preaches and lets them know the reality of the person of Christ verse 37 of Acts chapter 2 says when they heard this they were caught to the heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles brethren what shall we do?

[22 : 49] that's the question that we must all answer in our hearts we must all find the answer to that question Peter's answer is very different from John because Peter is telling them how the kingdom is going to come into their lives repent he says be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and it's that gift of the Holy Spirit which is the mark of the presence of the kingdom and no longer now is it simply a matter of sharing your food which you must continue to do and your clothing and doing honestly in your business and not using your authority for the wrong reasons now it is a matter of living in fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ who indwells you as the gift of the Holy Spirit and now we live in obedience to him what then shall we do

I tell you all this because we as a community of the Holy Spirit need individually to come before one another and say what then shall I do what is my responsibility and we seek to know the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit guiding and directing us to our answer to that question and we need it for the answer we give to others if one of you as some of you have have come to me and said I would like to go into the ministry then I send you down to the synod office which could be a chilling experience but nevertheless necessary and one to wonderfully try your sense of vocation and then from the synod office I get a letter and the letter says does this congregation agree that this person is called to the ministry

I never ask you that question because I don't think you know who I'm talking about some of the time but we've got to answer that question when a person says this is what my calling is we've got to say alright to this congregation is that true are those the gifts you have seen is that the way the Holy Spirit is directing this person will you confirm that and that's very important for us and I think we are living in a world where there's a great many people who are seeking to be obedient to the Holy Spirit to answer that question what then shall I do and I've made up a list a quick list of people just so you will know that in a sense we have responsibility to confirm people in their calling and these are people who've gone away from the congregation and I would like you to know that

Johanna Klassen is teaching the blind in Hong Kong Helen Houston a doctor in Nepal Joanne Curry a teacher in Nepal Brenda Ireland we sent to India on our behalf for a short term and Louise Sorosso and Rachel Dreidegger has gone to Nigeria as a nurse and should be back today or this week or this month Kelvin and Elaine have gone to study and prepare themselves for teaching in the Christian faith in Oxford and Marcus Bachmuel to Cambridge and Bob Wismer and Steve Andrews have been working towards the ministry having gone out from this congregation and this morning we're saying goodbye to Brian and Sue Salter who are going for three years to teach in Zimbabwe and within the congregation we have Don Laurie and Richie Spidell and Mike Abercrombie working through the Navigators and Sina Ayers and Mildred Sullivan and Kathy Murphy and Tama O'Rourke working with

InterVarsity and Vince Bedham working as chairman of the board of the Youth for Christ and Charlotte Data working on campus with Campus Crusade and David Jones at Crosswalk with the Salvation Army plus Regent College and students and staff who need to be confirmed in their calling to serve Christ in that way and Ernie Eldridge in his ministry Among Us which is beginning formally next month the interns who are seeking to know God's direction for them and Anne Ruth Bocchule who's working with overseas students through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship you see all these people and more are some of you sitting in the congregation this morning and they must be seeking to be obedient not to those works which are the fruits of repentance but to those works which are the result of the direction of

[28 : 10] God's Holy Spirit in their lives and when I say that of this list I must also say it of each of us that we need to be confirmed by one another and directed by God's Holy Spirit that we may find that totally unique wonderfully creative and absolutely fulfilling reality of finding for ourselves under God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the answer to the question what then shall we do may that question be the question which doesn't let go of you until you find in prayer in reflection in meditation in fellowship and in study and in sharing with others what the answer is amen in prayer and in inspiration and in confidence Alex andash and to be friendly inabelove.com in through vignon hymn and we sing of let light and come be in other articles let us there visit to us and love in an of

All my glory.

of our hearts, and to the Lord of the Lord of the Lord, now and to the Father of the Lord of the Lord, in which the Lord of the Lord is born and the Lord, in which the Lord has shown Jesus Christ, who came with us in great glory.

Let him come last day, when he jumped on again in his glorious hand to speak, which shall I go to the prison again, we may rise to the light of the Lord. To him who lived and raised his feet in the Holy Spirit, and God has never heard.

Amen. We pray for Christ's holy Catholic Church, and particularly for the Church overseas.

[31 : 17] For Christ our Lord's resurrection, turn your ten disciples into men of courage and daring. Let your risen power come upon your Church, that she may be bold to proclaim your saving truth to the world.

Grant her such a love of the souls of men, that she may draw all into union with you. Lord, in your mercy. Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our Lord, in your mercy. Let us pray for peace on earth. Let us pray for the unity of all Christian people. Let us pray for those in particular who are in spiritual need. Those known to you particularly, and generally those in the world who have no knowledge of God. Have compassion, O Lord, upon all who are careless about eternal salvation and the Lord. are living without you, and are living without you. And we pray for the unity of all Christian people.

Let us pray for those in particular who are in spiritual need. Let us pray for those in particular who are in spiritual need. Those known to you particularly, and generally those in the world who have no knowledge of God. Have compassion, O Lord, upon all who are careless about eternal things, and are living without use, and finally, therefore, without hope.

Send to them the light of your Holy Spirit to teach them their dream beneath, and bring them to the knowledge of your encompassing love through faith in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 22] our Lord and Savior. Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. We pray for those that are sick and ill. And that you are in spiritual need. And that you are in spiritual need. Let us pray for those who are in spiritual need. Let us pray for those who are in spiritual need. We pray for those who are sick and ill.

through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. We pray to those that are sick and ill, particularly this morning.

Let us pray for those that are sick and with diseases by the people who find incurable, and particularly those who have cancer, and those that are sick and with disease, and those who have AIDS.

We commend your mercy, O God, those who are suffering from illnesses which are beyond the reach of human skills. Give them courage to endure patience and faith to trust you fully, even though your way is hidden from their sight.

So may they fear no evil, knowing that you are with them and will be with them to the end. Lord, in your mercy. Amen.

[33 : 46] Let us pray for our families, especially if you go near to this Christian time, many families will be traveling, forget it, or coming together.

Heavenly Father, we bring to you in our prayer all of whom we love in our own traveling service. Knowing that your love for them is so much greater than ours, and that your will for them is all that is for their good.

So have us in your teaching, O Lord. Give them now and always the fullness of your blessing. Lord, in your mercy. Amen.

Father, we thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life. We thank you for the love which you have seen to have geared across for us and for all my sons.

For the victory of his resurrection and the glory of his affection. For the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for the witness of the Church through many times.

[34 : 57] We thank you for the encouragement of our own growing awareness that we are all one in Christ Jesus. We thank you for the blessings received in the longing to the service and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

For the privilege of being called to discipleship of Jesus Christ to bear witness that is eternal presence and his saving power and his loving purpose in our life.

For all these joyful gifts thanks be to you, O God. Amen. Now we sing together our own story of heaven number 595.

Um, Hanbridge that's born in our ■AL on the others and you for Thank you.

Thank you.

[37 : 35] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.