



First Christian Reformed Church of Lynden
From Generation to Generation for the Glory of God

God's precious and exceedingly great promises in hard times

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

In lieu of this morning's regular devotional, and in light of what is happening in many cities across our nation, I have printed a prayer Pastor John Piper wrote for his city of Minneapolis. We can easily insert Seattle and all the cities of our nation torn apart by chaos and violence.

The Psalmists asks the question, "if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" We can turn to Scripture and prayer where we find refuge, strength and hope.

Scripture

Psalm 11:1-7

¹ In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul,
"Flee like a bird to your mountain, ² for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
³ if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"
⁴ The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven;
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.
⁵ The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.
⁶ Let him rain coals on the wicked;
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
⁷ For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

Prayer

A Prayer for Our City

By John Piper

Almighty and merciful Father,

Hallowed be your name in Minneapolis. Revered, admired, honored — above every name, in church, in politics, in sports, in music, in theater, in business, in media, in heaven or in hell. May your name, your absolute reality, be the greatest treasure of our lives. And may your eternal, divine Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord — crucified for sin, risen from the dead, reigning forever — be known and loved as the greatest person in this city.

It was no compliment to the city of Nineveh, but it was a great mercy, when you said to your sulking prophet Jonah, "Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left?" (Jonah 4:11).

Oh, how kind you are to pity our folly rather than pander to our pride. Jonah could not fathom your mercy. His desire was the fire of judgment. And you stunned him, and angered him, with the shock of forgiveness.

And have we not heard your Son, crying out to the city that would kill him, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37)?

Oh, how large is your heart toward cities in their sin and misery.

Yes, we have heard you speak mercy to great cities. Did you not say, to Jerusalem, “This city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth” (Jeremiah 33:9)? They were not worthy — not any more than Nineveh, or Minneapolis. But you are a merciful God, “slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6).

And what are we? Debtors. Whose only hope is grace. For we could never pay back the honor we have stolen from your name. How precious, then, is the lightning bolt of truth that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!” (1 Timothy 1:15).

And for what have you saved us, Father? To what end did you forgive, and cleanse, and free, and empower your people? You have told us, “In the coming ages I will show the immeasurable riches of my grace in kindness toward you in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). Yes. That is best. You are your best gift to us.

But that’s a long way off, Lord. What about now? For now, we live in Minneapolis, not heaven. This is our home away from Home. We love our city. We love her winters — yes, we do — and cherish her spring. We love her great river and her parks. Her stadiums and her teams. We love her lakes and crystal air. We love her beautiful cityscape. We love her treelined neighborhoods, her industry, her arts, her restaurants, and recycling.

And we love her people. Her old immigrant Swedes and new immigrant Somalis. Her African Americans, her Asians, her Latinos. We love those with so many genetic roots they don’t know what box to check. We love her diversity — every human precious because you made each one like yourself and for your glory.

This is our home away from Home. We are sojourners and exiles in this city (1 Peter 2:11). So we ask again: For what have you saved us? Here and now?

Open our hearts to hear your answer, Lord: “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).

Yes, Lord. Yes. This is our heart for Minneapolis. We seek her welfare. We pray on her behalf.

For those who knew George Floyd best and loved him most, bring them your consolation, and direct their hearts to the God of all comfort.

For Derek Chauvin, who put his knee on Floyd’s neck for seven minutes, until he died, we ask for the mercy of repentance and the judgment of justice. For officers Thomas Lane and Tou Thao and Alexander Kueng, who stood by, we pray that grief and fear will bear the fruit of righteous remorse; and may the seriousness of the killing and the cowardice of the complicity meet with proper penalties.

For the upright police who have watched all ten minutes of the unbearable video of Floyd’s dying, who consider it “horrific” and “inhuman,” who find it unbelievable that Chauvin did not say a single word for seven minutes as the man under his knee pled for his life, and who lament with dashed hopes that they must start again from “square one” to rebuild what meager trust they hoped to have won — for these worthy servants of our city, we pray that they would know the patient endurance of Jesus Christ, who suffered for deeds he did not do.

For police chief Medaria Arradondo, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman, our Mayor Jacob Frey, and our Governor Tim Walz, we ask for the kind of wisdom that only God can give — the kind king Solomon had when he said, “Cut the baby in half” (1 Kings 3:16–28), and discovered the true mother.

May our leaders love the truth, seek the truth, stand unflinching for the truth, and act on the truth. Let nothing, O Lord, be swept under the rug. Forbid that any power or privilege would be allowed to twist or distort or conceal the truth, even if the truth brings the privileged, the rich, the powerful, or the poor, from the darkness of wrong into the light of right.

For the haters and the bitter and the hostile and the slanderers — of every race — we pray that they will see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We pray that the light will banish darkness from their souls — the darkness of arrogance and racism and selfishness. We pray for broken hearts, because “a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

We pray that our city will see miracles of reconciliation and lasting harmony, rooted in truth and in the paths of righteousness. We pray for peace — the fullest enjoyment of shalom, flowing down from the God of peace, and bought at an infinite price for the brokenhearted followers of the Prince of Peace.

And as the scourge of COVID-19 has now killed 100,000 people in our nation, and still kills 20 people a day in our state — most of them in our city — and as the virus wreaks havoc with our economy, and riots send lifetimes of labor up in smoke, and the fabric of our common life is torn, we pray that the compounding of sorrows will not compound our sins, but send us desperate and running to the risen Savior, our only hope, Jesus Christ.

O Jesus, for this you died! That you might reconcile hopeless, hostile people to God and to each other. You have done it for millions by grace through faith. Do it, Lord Jesus, in Minneapolis, we pray. Amen.