

VIOLENCE, INJUSTICE, TRAUMA AND THE ORDINARY PRACTICES OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN A SOCIAL MEDIA AGE

2018 J. J. Theissen Lectures
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LECTURE 1

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND A CRUCIFORM PASTORAL IMAGINATION

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

—Romans 8:26–27, NRSV

The Pastoral Challenge of Engaging Violence, Trauma, and Misery in Ordinary Weekly Worship Services

Re-envisioning 360° Comprehensive Prayers of the People

Public intercessory prayer as a prime, focal site for pastoral, congregational leadership: a super-concentrated expression of a congregations' stance toward the world, of its royal priesthood of all creation, of its convictions about the scope and nature of God's redemptive activity; sharpened through the lenses of soteriology *and* pneumatology *and* pastoral care *and* prophetic witness *and* missional engagement...

Virtue built into the classic patterns

1. Concern for both breadth and specificity
2. Concern for both sincerity and formation

Pastoral wisdom inhabiting the classic forms

3. Leaning into halting, fragmentary prayers of lament and yearning
4. Stretching toward ultimate eschatological hope
5. Resisting paternalism, conveying congregations as intertwined in the world's travail
6. Prayers alert to the mysterious interplay of divine and human agency, and the links between prayer and congregational activity beyond Sunday worship

Clothed with Compassion: Cultural Difference and Improvisatory Pastoral Intelligence in Action

Preparing the prayers of the people... searching, pruning, embodiment

Preparing the people for prayer... linking public/ private prayer, mutual discernment of challenging prayers, inviting seekers into public prayer, the future of Christian worship in treatment plans for those who suffer from acute trauma (?)

Praying in a Social Media Age

LECTURE 2

PRAISE BEYOND CLICHÉ

*Let the afflicted hear and be glad... I sought the Lord and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him and be radiant, so your faces will never be ashamed.*

—Psalm 34: 2, 4–5

Rachael Den Hollender's Call to Worship—The Praise of God Implicit in Justice Advocacy

Transfigured, Rembrandtesque Praise

Praise with explicit renunciations—Psalm 115, 146
Praise with explicit corrections of theological astigmatism
Praise that encompasses human mortality—Psalms 23, 103
Praise emerging out of past pain or sin—Psalms 40, 107
Praise for future redemption in the context of present-tense pain (Advent)
Praise attached to lament, anger—Psalm 13, 22, 102, even 88
Praise that stretches toward repose—Psalm 131, Job
Praise for perceptible divine action in the context of pain
Praise for transfigured glory (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Ascension)

Preparing Praise for the People

Expanded bandwidth, pastoral juxtaposition, repetition, attuning tempo and affect

Preparing the People for Praise

'Framing' praise, linking hymns and testimonies, praise in pastoral counseling, praise in social witness and advocacy, pastoral ministry beyond escapism and resignation

The far reaches of trauma theory, the paradoxes of decentering yieldedness/dispossession

Praise in a Social Media Age

Other Practices of Cruciform Engagement: Preaching, Repentance, Testimony, Offering, Passing of the Peace

LECTURE 3

DISCIPLING EMOTION, SINGING AT THE TABLE, AND PRACTICES OF MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CARE

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

—2 Corinthians 4:16–18

The Symphonic Table of the Lord

Discipling Emotions

Deep Gratitude	Contentedness	Calming Anxiety
Aching Sorrow	Fierce Determination	Healing a Sense of Inadequacy/Insecurity
Capacious Joy	Moved with Compassion	Relinquishing Pride
Growing Empathy	Eager Expectation	Calming Terror and Fear
Holy Astonishment	Resolute Hopefulness	Healing a Sense of Being Trapped
Deep Repentance	Mutual Love	Relinquishing Revenge
Peace that Surpasses Understanding	Quiet Confidence	Healing of Guilt
Godly Sorrow	Holy Patience	Relinquishing Fear
Righteous Anger	Holy Impatience	Healing of Shame
Holy Resilience		Moving Beyond Bewilderment

W. E. B. Dubois, Howard Thurman, James Cone—The Fusion of Aching Lament and Cruciform Hope

Exercises for Local Musicians, Pastoral Leaders, and Ministry Students

1. Attending to emotional landscapes
2. Curating a realistic Lord's Supper repertoire list
3. Imagining, illuminating juxtapositions
4. Attending to the many layers of "musicking"
5. Rewriting your church's website

Acute Trauma and Healing Practices

Embracing fragmentary prayer, the language of ultimate eschatological hope, permission for ambivalence

Postscript: Practices of Collaborative Discernment, Mutual Accountability in a Social Media Age

HISTORICAL TEXTS, WORSHIP RESOURCES

PRAYER TEXTS & HYMNS

Clement of Rome (1 Clement 59.3–61.3)

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.

For you through your works have revealed the everlasting structure of the world. You, Lord, created the earth. You are faithful throughout all generations, righteous in your judgments, marvelous in strength and majesty, wise in creating and prudent in establishing what exists, good in all that is observed and faithful to those who trust in you, merciful and compassionate: **forgive us our sins and our injustices, our transgressions and our shortcomings.**

Do not take into account every sin of your servants and slaves, but cleanse us with the cleansing of your

truth, and direct our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and purity of heart, and to do what is good and pleasing in your sight and in the sight of our rulers.

Yes, Lord, let your face shine upon us in peace for our good, so that we may be sheltered by your mighty hand and delivered from every sin by your uplifted arm; deliver us as well from those who hate us unjustly. Give harmony and peace to us and to all who dwell on the earth, just as you did to our ancestors when they reverently called upon you in faith and truth, that we may be saved, while we render obedience to your almighty and most excellent name, and to our rulers and governors on earth.

You, Master, have given them the power of sovereignty through your majestic and inexpressible might, so that we, acknowledging the glory and honor that you have given them, may be subject to them, resisting your will in nothing. **Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, harmony, and stability, so that they may blamelessly administer the government that you have given them.**

For you, heavenly Master, King of the ages, give to human beings glory and honor and authority over the creatures upon the earth. **Lord, direct their plans according to what is good and pleasing in your sight, so that by devoutly administering in peace and gentleness the authority that you have given them they may experience your mercy.** 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.

Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations, 3rd ed., ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 123–129

Apostolic Constitutions 8.10 (c. 310 A.D., late 4th century Antioch)

All we, the faithful, let us bend the knee: let us pray to God through his Christ: let us all earnestly call upon God through his Christ.

For the peace and tranquility of the world and of the holy Churches, let us pray: that the God of all may grant us his everlasting peace, which cannot be taken away, to the end that he may keep us persevering in the fullness of that virtue which is according to godliness.

For the holy catholic and apostolic Church of God, which is [spread] from one end of the earth to the other, let us pray: that the Lord would continually guard and preserve it, until the end of the world, unshaken by the waves and the storms, [and] founded on the rock.

And for the holy parish in this place, let us pray: that the Lord of all may make us worthy unremittingly to press after his heavenly hope, and without ceasing to pray to him as we ought.

For every episcopate which is under heaven, of those who rightly divide the word of your truth, let us pray.

For our bishop James, and for his parishes, let us pray; for our bishop Clement, and for his parishes, let us pray: for our bishop Evodius, and for his parishes, let us pray; for our bishop Annianus, and for his parishes, let us pray: that the God of compassion would vouchsafe to preserve them for the good of his holy Churches, in safety, honour, and length of days, and afford them an honorable old age in godliness and righteousness.

And for our presbyters, let us pray, that the Lord may deliver them from every unseemly and evil deed, and grant them a safe and honorable presbyterate.

And for the whole diaconate and ministry in Christ, let us pray, that the Lord may grant them a blameless ministry.

For the readers, singers, virgins, widows, and orphans, let us pray; for married women and for women with child, let us pray; that the Lord may have mercy on them all.

For ascetics who walk holily, let us pray; for those who live in continence and godliness, let us pray.

For those who bear fruit in the holy Church, and for those who give alms to the needy, let us pray; for those who bring offerings and firstfruits to the Lord our God, let us pray; that the God of all goodness may recompense them with his heavenly gifts, and give them in this world an hundredfold, and in the world to come life eternal, and bestow on them for their temporal goods those that are eternal, [and] for earthly goods those that are heavenly.

For our brethren newly enlightened, let us pray; that the Lord may strengthen and confirm them [in the faith].

For our brethren afflicted by illness, let us pray; that the Lord may deliver them from all sickness and from all infirmity, and restore them in good health to his holy Church.

For those that travel by water or by land, let us pray; for those that are in the mines, in exile, in prison, or in bonds, for the name of the Lord, let us pray; for those that are oppressed in bitter servitude, let us pray.

For our enemies and for those who hate us, let us pray; for those who persecute us on account of the name of the Lord, let us pray; that the Lord would calm their anger, and scatter their wrath against us.

For those that are without and are wandering, let us pray; that the Lord may convert them.

Of the children of the Church let us be mindful ;that the Lord may perfect them in his fear, [and] grant them length of days.

For one another let us pray; that by his grace the Lord would keep us and guard us to the end, that he would deliver us from the evil one, and from all the scandals of those that work iniquity, and would save us [and bring us] to his heavenly kingdom.

For every Christian soul, let us pray—

Save us and rise up, O God, by your mercy.

Let us arise: praying earnestly, let us commend ourselves and one another to the living God through his Christ.

Portion of Comprehensive List of Potential Intercessions/Intentions

- | | |
|--|---|
| Those who suffer with physical illness, and those who care for them | Those who care for young children |
| Those who suffer with mental illness, and those who care for them | Those who care for elderly or needy parents |
| Those who have intellectual, emotional, and/or behavioral impairments, and those who care for them | Those who are just starting school |
| Those who are elderly and infirm, and those who care for them | Those who are struggling with peer pressure |
| Those who have suffered abuse, and those who support them | Those who are trying to choose a college or career path |
| Those who suffer with addiction, and those who support them | Those who are leaving home |
| Those who mourn a death, and those who minister to them | Those who are unemployed or underemployed |
| Those who are imprisoned, and those who minister to them | Those who work in business and industry |
| Those who are lonely, and those who support them | Those who work in homemaking |
| Those who are orphaned, and those who care for them | Those who work in medicine |
| Those who are homeless, and those who care for them | Those who work in education |
| Those who are victims of crime, and those who support them | Those who work in agriculture |
| Those whose needs cannot be spoken | Those who work in government |
| Those who are facing temptations | Those who work in service to others |
| Those who live as single persons | Those who are beginning a new career |
| Those who are about to be married or those newly married | Those who struggle in their work |
| Those who celebrate a wedding anniversary | Those who are seeking new or different jobs |
| Those who struggle with marital difficulties | Those who are retired or anticipating retirement |
| Those who are divorced and separated | Those who celebrate baptism |
| Those whose sexuality is a source of pain | Those who celebrate a renewed faith commitment or profession of faith |
| Those who celebrate the birth of a child | Those who struggle with doubts |
| Those who long for children | Those who are persecuted for their faith |
| Those who adopt a child or children | Those who seek spiritual renewal |
| Those who are adopted | Those with family members and friends who do not have faith |
| | Those who travel |
| | Those who are enjoying leisure or rest |
| | Those who traveled to be present at worship |
| | Those who are new members of the congregation |
| | Those who are departing members of the congregation |

The Worship Sourcebook, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013), 183–184

Prayer Template

- (a) Address to God
- (b) Praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what God has done
 - (1) in creating the world
 - (2) in redeeming the world in Christ
 - (3) for specific acts of faithfulness to the present community
 - (4) for the sure promise of the coming kingdom
- (c) Intercessions for worldwide and local concerns, including
 - (1) the creation and its care, especially . . .
 - (2) the nations of the world, especially . . .
 - (3) the nation and those in authority, especially . . .
 - (4) the community and those who govern, especially . . .
 - (5) the church universal, its mission, and those who minister, especially . . .
 - (6) the local congregation and its ministry, especially . . .
 - (7) those with particular needs, especially . . .
- (d) Doxology in praise to the triune God, in unity with those who praise God in heaven and on earth

Jazz-Like Improvisation

[paragraphs led/improvised upon by two leaders, each followed by optional congregational sung or spoken refrain]

Almighty and loving God, we bless and thank you for creating us, redeeming us, and calling us to follow Jesus. We offer our petitions in his name, grateful that he perfects our prayers and send the Spirit to help us pray. And so, in a spirit of unspeakable gratitude...

*Explicit Trinitarian frame
which celebrates divine
action in our praying*

We pray for the redemption of creation, and especially for all those seeking to restore and heal polluted rivers and sources of drinking water in Flint, Kalamazoo, and Rockford.

We pray for the nations of the world, and all peacemakers, that in concrete ways, this coming week will feature greater justice, peace, nourishment, and health than last... For your intervention to bring about greater peace in Sudan, Indonesia, Liberia, Iraq, North Korea, and Palestine... For followers of Jesus all over the world, that each of us will be empowered to embody Christ's peace and healing in our lives.

*Even this veiled reference
to abuse speaks loudly*

Implicates us

We pray for the city of Grand Rapids, that this week will feature positive developments in the areas of housing, healthcare, justice, public education, child protective services, and the fight against racism. Save us, we pray, from a season of violence in homes and neighborhoods. Strengthen every parent, every community development worker, tutor, coach, camp counselor, police officer, judge, social workers, and teacher for their essential ministry... May the work and witness of each of us in this congregation be salt and light in this city... Even as we confess our faults and resolve to live more justly, we are bold to pray...

Implicates us

We pray for all victims of crime and violence, and those who minister to them, and for those imprisoned, and those who minister to them, including our own members involved in helping returning prisoners find jobs and housing, that your Holy Spirit will heal and correct each of us.

*Linking congregational ministry and the broad
sweep of divine redemption beyond the church*

We pray for the indigenous peoples and the immigrant peoples of the world and all refugees, for those whose land was seized, for those who seized lands that did not belong to them, for those who have no place to live...

We pray for victims of sexual abuse and assault, and all those who minister to them. Send your Holy Spirit to bind up the places of fear and trauma. We pray for their victimizers. Work deep within their hearts. Bring them to full repentance, to godly sorrow for their sin, to life-giving accountability to those around them...

the 'pray for enemies' turn

We pray especially for those trained to engage in violent action—for those who were ordered to engage in violence that turned out not to be just, for those who are haunted by guilt and shame for past actions that cannot be undone, for those who must learn to resist deeply formed habits of retribution...

We pray for the church around the world—Orthodox and Pentecostal, Catholic and Baptist, Lutheran and Reformed—that many congregations will experience a concrete sense of unity with the whole body of Christ—also through gatherings of Grand Rapids pastors this week.

*Prayers rotating for the holiness, unity,
and fruitful witness of the church*

We pray for our congregation,

- For this week's food drive, that it will bring nourishment, and also hope to those who receive this food,
- For our discipleship classes this week, they will help us grow in grace and knowledge in Jesus so that we can bear witness to your love and help each person around us flourish
- [extemporaneous]

a missional turn

We pray for those with particular needs and opportunities among us,

- For N and N, that they will receive healing and with a clear sense of your presence with them,
- For each person among us involved in the agriculture and food industries, that they will be given courage for challenging decisions they need to make, so that healthy food is readily available to each person you have made and so love.
- [extemporaneous]

*Sacrifices more detailed
prayers here in order
for greater breadth
throughout*

2-4 areas of human trauma each week

For those we name now in our hearts, for concerns which we dare not speak out loud, for concerns we are not able to bring to full expression, and for all of us who feel unable to pray, we bring our prayers to you, knowing that *you hear us and that your Spirit teaches us to pray as we ought...* [silence] *the “fragmentary, halting, turn”*

All of this we pray, in the strong name of Jesus Christ, The One who redeems all creation and invites us to the feast, The One who identifies with us in our weakness and promises never to leave or forsake us, The One who lives and reigns with you and the Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. *the “eschatological crescendo”*

Gathering Prayer Requests, Shaping ‘Joys and Concerns’

Praise and Thanksgiving

- For which divine actions or attributes shall we bless God?
- For which blessings shall we thank God?
- For which aspects of biblical teaching shall we thank God?

Lament and Petitions

- For which country (or part of the world) shall we pray?
- For which ministry shall we pray?
- For which other congregations shall we pray?
- For which aspects of congregational life shall we pray?
- For which concerns in our town or city shall we pray?
- For which personal concerns shall we pray?
- For which voiceless and powerless persons shall we pray?

Adapted from *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013), 177

Malcolm Guite Poems

“The six days world transposing in an hour”

Twenty-four seven in ‘the six days world’,
In endless cycles of unnerving news,
Relentlessly our restless hurts are hurled
Through empty cyber-space. Is there no muse
To make of all that pain an elegy,
Or in those waves of white noise to discern
Christ’s inner cantus firmus, that deep tone
That might give rise at last to harmony?

We may not seal it off or drown it out,
Nor close our hearts down in the hour of prayer,
But listening through dissonance and doubt,
Wait in the space between, until we hear
A change of key, a secret chord disclosed,
A kind of tune, and all the world transposed.

“A kind of tune”

A kind of tune, a music everywhere
And nowhere. Love’s long lovely undersong,
A trace in time, a grace-note in the air,
Borne to us from the place where we belong
On every passing breeze and in the breath
Of every creature. All things hear and fear,
For faintly, through our fall, we too may hear
The strong song of the Son that undoes death.

And one day we will hear it unimpaired:
The joy of all the sorrowful, the song
Of all the saints who cry ‘how long’,
The hidden hope of all who have despaired.
He sang it to his mother in the womb
And now it echoes from his empty tomb.

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