

### **Prayer of the Week:**

*Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations, and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

*(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The First Sunday in Lent)*

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.*

*We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.*

*And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.*



## **Faith Filled Prayer** James 5:13-19 (NRSV) February 21st

### **Intro**

James ends his letter with a call to prayer. In the previous verses, he's just talked about how Christians should live with patience for the day when all things will be made right. This patience should lead us to a life of faith-filled prayer.

He also ends his letter with instructions on prayer because the nitty-gritty stuff of everyday faith is to be blanketed in prayer.

Suffering? Then you should pray. Happy? Sing praises! Sick? Have others pray for your healing.

Of course, these don't capture the fullness of the human experience, but they are representative of life.

### **Faith Filled Prayer**

Notice the simplicity of the instruction; when you are suffering, you should pray. James doesn't tell us how to pray. He doesn't tell us what to pray. He just says we should pray in the midst of our suffering.

We are left to wonder what he might mean. Does he mean that prayer will help anchor us in the midst of the suffering? Does prayer help bring perspective? Does prayer help calm the stress? Does prayer move the needle in a more favorable direction? For now, we are left wondering.

If you find that you are happy, then sing praises! Prayer is not just something you do when you need help. Your praise for God's gifts and goodness are themselves a type of prayer.

In the moments when you are sick. Have fellow Christians pray over you and anoint you with oil for healing. That prayer of faith will save the sick. And your sins will also be forgiven.

### **Prayer Puts One Foot In New Creation**

Any fellow skeptics out there that start to ask questions when the scripture says "the prayer of faith will save the sick?"

Does that mean if someone isn't healed, they didn't have enough faith? Also, why does James bring in the forgiveness of sins? Is he trying to connect illness to sinfulness as though one caused the other?

These are important questions.

James isn't trying to be deterministic. He is not setting out a guarantee that if you pray in all the right ways, then your prayers will be answered in precisely the way you've prayed. That kind of interpretation just wouldn't match the human experience.

James is making an important connection: Prayer is where the healing and forgiveness of the age to come can

intersect with the illness and sin of the present age. He's not saying one causes the other. He is giving us evidence of the power of prayer!

When we pray, we stand with one foot in the world as it is; filled with sickness, sin, and trouble while the other other foot stands in God's new creation; filled with healing, forgiveness, and hope. Prayer brings new creation to bear on creation in such a way that we can experience healing and forgiveness!

Here is another way of thinking about it; prayer is the place where heaven and earth meet.

Are you suffering? Then place one foot down in God's new world so that you can experience peace in the midst of suffering.

Are you happy? Place a foot in heaven and join your voice with the heavenly hosts singing praises to God.

Are you sick? Then take the earthly material of oil and rub it on your body crafted from the dirt and pray for healing. God's redemption includes our physical bodies.

Prayer is about standing in the gap and bringing more of God's kingdom to bear on our lives. James ends his book with prayer because to live an everyday faith, we are going to need to have one foot in heaven and one foot on earth.

May you experience new life and encouragement in your prayer life today.