



ECV @ Home

A LITURGY FOR MARCH 22, 2020

A Call to Worship

Hosea 12:6 exhorts us, “But as for you, return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.” When we worship God through music, we are returning our attention to God, honoring God as worthy of our praise. We are also entering back into God’s presence and waiting expectantly for the Spirit to speak to us again. As we begin worshipping God, play as many of these songs as you would like (or join our worship pastor, Tina, and other Vineyard churches in a [livestream praise session](#) at 10am EST on Sunday, March 22). If you play an instrument, you can also find the chords and lyrics [here](#).

[1. My Worship](#)

[2. Be Still](#)

[3. Give Us Your Heart](#)

[4. Great Are You, Lord](#)

Opening Prayer

God of mercy, you invite us to dwell with you, to rest in the shadow of your wings, to eat at the table you set for us, to make our home in the place you have prepared for us. Lord Jesus, our home is with you, and your home is in a manger, on the road, among the crowds, on the cross, stepping out of a tomb. Give us the peace and passion that marked your life, Lord, give us the stillness and power that is possible when we live out our days with you. We want to find you through our worship of you, God. Come, Holy Spirit.

The beauty of Lent is that a dedicated time of prayer, confession, repentance, and return to God can make our hearts soft and humble. To obediently walk in the compassion and humility of Jesus is a way of life that blesses us and others in all seasons, and never more so than when the world feels chaotic and overwhelming. In times of fear and uncertainty, we often desperately search for any voice that promises to tell us the future. But the humility of Jesus reminds us that even when we don’t know everything, it is enough for us that a good and loving Father has plans for our future. Even when we don’t know the right thing to do, we can trust that Jesus is present, and that imitating his love and faith will guide us along his way. No longer do we have to frantically pretend to be gods; we can be comforted knowing that we are creatures made to know and love the one true Creator. In order to humbly turn our attention away from falseness and towards the truth of God’s way, we will spend time **this week--as has been our custom--using two ancient Christian practices:** a form of prayer called **the examen**, and a way of reading Scripture called **lectio divina**.

The examen is a form of prayer that Christians can use at regular intervals to reflect back on what God has been teaching them. In light of Matt’s message last Sunday about the lie that we can’t be vulnerable, try the following steps for this week’s examen prayer:

1. **Slow down**, become aware of God's presence, and invite the Holy Spirit to fill your mind.
2. **Review the last week**, asking yourself where you have been tempted to believe the lie that you can't be vulnerable.
3. **Ask God if there are things you need to repent of**, and places where you need to reaffirm the truth of God's grace and sufficiency.
4. **Choose one particular moment or lesson that stands out**, and pray about it.
5. **Close by giving thanks to God for graciously directing your attention.**

Lectio divina encourages us to read Scripture while expecting that God is going to say something particular to us while we read. This week, we'll be reading together Luke 18:9-17, our original scripture for this Sunday's message. Here is an example of what it might look like to read Luke's gospel in this way.

1. **Pray**, inviting the Holy Spirit to shine a light on the text through your own thoughts and experiences.
2. **Read through Luke 18:9-17 slowly**, pausing to note any words or images that seem to particularly catch your attention.
3. **Take a few minutes in silence to listen to God** with the text fresh in your mind.
4. **Read through Luke 18:9-17 a second time**, slowly, and as you do, ask yourself where you see God's truth at work in this passage.
5. **Spend a few minutes praying** that God would give you wisdom and insight about the words or images that have stuck with you.

Intercessory Prayer

The substance of our prayers is not found in saying the perfect words, but in wholeheartedly longing to love and bless those we pray for. In this way we pray obediently, finding ourselves praying alongside the Spirit of Christ in us for the sake of the world. Sometimes, that means that our intercession also requires our confession, so that we might set aside anger or resentment and set our hearts again on the good of others. Join us in following the confessional and intercessory prompts below. Feel free to add your own prayers to the prompts as the Spirit leads.

Gracious God, you are always forgiving. We know that your love never ceases, even as we confess everything in our hearts. We confess to you that in these times we have judged others harshly. We have sought out villains and fashioned enemies for ourselves. We have blamed others, thought they alone were responsible for evil, named them as fools and criminals, secretly hoped for their harm, shrugged at their suffering, mocked them, feared them, hated them, and in doing so, we have murdered them in our hearts . . .

We confess to you that we have feared acknowledging the truth, that we are more like our enemies than we care to admit, more flawed, more broken, more anxious, more hungry for love and grace than we portray ourselves. We confess that in rejecting others, we have also rejected ourselves. We confess that we have despised our weaknesses and needs. We confess that we have not cried out to you for help or asked for care and support from others . . .

Lord Jesus, to honor and obey you, we pray for those we have most despised in our hearts, for those we most blame in these times. We pray for their blessing, for their forgiveness, for their welfare, that they would know they are loved by you and would turn to your presence . . .

Lord Jesus, we pray for ourselves and those closest to us. We pray for greater dependence on you and for greater dependence on one another. Give us courage to admit our weaknesses, to trust in the worth you have given us, and to

accept that you have made us all to be a family with you. Help us not to neglect anyone's need during this time--even our own. Help us not to compare sufferings, but to place everything at your feet again and again. Provide enough in every way, O Lord . . .

Commit to Action

As we near the end of the liturgy, here are a few prompts for action.

- *Continue to live wisely and to heed advice from health professionals even as we live with hope, asking God to rid of us fear and panic.*
- *Don't hesitate to ask for help! ECV Helps is a program to connect resources and willing volunteers with folks experiencing need. Ask God to help you identify financial, physical, emotional, or spiritual needs in your life at the moment and then share them with us.*
- *Consider the ways in which God has gifted you or made you able to help others in our community even during a time of quarantining. Make your gifting known by filling out this short form so that we can contact you as needs arise.*
- *Neighbor well! Reach out to your physical neighbors by e-mail, text, letter drop-off, or in-person (at a responsible distance) and ask if you can serve them in any way. Keep an eye out for those in our city who may be particularly vulnerable: folks over 60 years of age, those with chronic illnesses, those with insecure employment, those with children at home, etc.*

Closing Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and give us hearts free from falseness and captive to truth. Give us confidence in love and courage in obedience. Give us more of you, that we might love as you love. Amen.

The word of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah (29:11) reminds us: "surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." Go in the hope of God and remind one another of the Spirit's good plans for the future and gracious work in the present!

Note: For the foreseeable future, we will be publishing home liturgies regardless of the status of our Sunday gatherings. If you would like to offer suggestions, have original contributions (songs, poems, prayers) or would like to be part of crafting these liturgies in other ways, please e-mail patrick@elmcityvineyard.org. This week, ECV will share more ways for us to be together - to be the Church - in this time.



Elm City Vineyard Church
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