

“He Shall Regard the Prayer of the Destitute”
(Psalm 102 – Midweek Lent 5 – March 18, 2026)

Psalm 102:1-28 – ¹Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. ²Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily. ³For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. ⁴My heart is stricken and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. ⁵Because of the sound of my groaning my bones cling to my skin. ⁶I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert. ⁷I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop. ⁸My enemies reproach me all day long, those who deride me swear an oath against me. ⁹For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, ¹⁰because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away. ¹¹My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass. ¹²But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. ¹³You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come. ¹⁴For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust. ¹⁵So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. ¹⁶For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. ¹⁷He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer. ¹⁸This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD. ¹⁹For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, ²⁰to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, ²¹to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, ²²when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. ²³He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. ²⁴I said, “O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations. ²⁵Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. ²⁶They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. ²⁷But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. ²⁸The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You.”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ:

“I lie awake, and am like a sparrow alone on the housetop” (vs. 7), prays the psalmist. There are times in our lives when we feel like that sparrow – all alone, without a friend in the world. But notice that for the psalmist it is not just about loneliness. There is an element of fear. It is not simply fear of being left by friends. It is not simply fear of being hurt by enemies. It is fear of God’s wrath against his sin. The psalmist feels destitute and forsaken before the Lord, because of his sin. He prays: “I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up and cast me away” (vs. 9-10).

When God's Law does its work in our hearts, it leaves us alone and fearful of His wrath. His Law shows us our sin. It shows us that we deserve death and condemnation. The Law condemns us to hell. Hell is complete separation from God. Sin is what separates us from God. Truly that is the worst kind of loneliness, to see that our sins have separated us from God.

Our sin may blind us for a while to our true condition, as destitute and lonely people before God. But God's Law convicts us. It is like when Jesus looked at Peter in the courtyard of the high priest, after Peter had just denied Him three times. That piercing look was all it took. Peter had deceived himself into thinking everything was fine, as long as he could get the people around him to accept him. But when he saw the Lord turn and look straight at him, suddenly it was all too clear in his conscience how badly he had fallen, how shamefully he had denied the Lord. With that look of the Law, Peter went outside into the darkness and wept bitterly.

Imagine how lonely Peter must have felt then. It is one thing to feel the kind of loneliness that comes when we lose family or friends for no fault of our own. It is a much darker loneliness when we lose a close relationship because of our own guilt. But what is the loss of any relationship in the world, compared to losing the only eternal Friend and Savior of the soul?

At times, Jesus must turn and give us that same look He gave Peter, because He does not want us to be lost. Perhaps we have been going along in life, thinking everything is fine in our sinful way, denying Jesus' Lordship as we do our own will. We may be able to quiet our conscience for a time, by surrounding ourselves with people who accept, befriend, and even praise us. But if we have lost the acceptance, friendship, and praise of the Lord Himself, what do we really have in life? Jesus catches our eye with that look of the Law, and suddenly it is all too clear in our conscience how badly and shamefully we have fallen and denied Him. The Law leaves us outside in the darkness weeping bitterly, seeing ourselves for what we truly are – destitute and lonely sinners, who need forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

This is what Confession and Absolution is all about. This is what the Gospel is all about. It is about Jesus bringing us His forgiveness of sins. It is about Jesus coming to our side as we are bowed down and weeping, to show His infinite mercy to us. As the psalmist wrote: *“But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come”* (vs. 12-13). Here the Lord promises to have mercy on us, sinners though we are. As 2 Corinthians 6:2 says: *“Behold, now is the*

accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” There is no better time than the present to confess our sins and be restored through Jesus’ forgiveness.

Listen again to the words of our Catechism concerning confession:

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know about, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer. But before the pastor or confessor we should acknowledge those sins only which we know and feel in our hearts.

God wants us to plead guilty of all sins, even the ones we are not aware of. We do this in the Lord’s Prayer every time we pray it. We also do this in the General Confession and Absolution every time we worship together.

But Individual or Private Confession is about specific sins that trouble our conscience. It is bringing before the Lord those sins that are burdening our hearts, separating us from Him, and leaving us destitute and lonely. It is acknowledging our unworthiness, saying with the psalmist: *“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily”* (vs. 1-2).

Again, as we cry out to God confessing our sins, is not for His benefit. He already knows our sins. We are not telling Him anything new. Rather, we confess our sins for our own benefit, so that we can hear God’s forgiveness.

We need to hear that God forgives us personally. We do not want simply to read or hear about forgiveness in a general way. We do not want simply to pray about it and wonder if it can really be true for us. That is one of Satan’s temptations, to cast doubt on God’s forgiveness for us personally. When we find ourselves destitute and lonely in our sins, Satan tempts us to think: “Of all people, how can you ever be forgiven for what you have done? What about that deep dark sin that burdens your heart so heavily? Surely that sin will weigh you down to hell!”

But where Satan tries to cast doubt, Jesus declares His unfailing promises. He says: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). We confess our sins with the confidence that He does hear us, forgive us, and give true rest for our souls. Like the psalmist, we have the Lord’s promise: *“He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their*

prayer” (vs. 17). As we join Peter, weeping bitterly in repentance, asking only the Lord’s forgiveness, He responds every time with His Gospel. Like Peter, the Lord Jesus forgives our sin; He reinstates us and restores us to full fellowship with God.

Through His Gospel, Jesus looks us in the eye and declares that His suffering and death was all for you and for me. He was abandoned by everyone, and even forsaken by His Father, so that you and I will never be abandoned and forsaken by God. He was flogged, spit on, nailed to the cross, and cursed for our sin; so that you and I will never bear those marks of punishment and shame before God. He was given over to the hands of His enemies; so that you and I will never be given over to our enemies of sin, Satan, and death. Instead, through the forgiveness and reconciliation Jesus won for us, we will live in God’s presence forever.

Truly, as the psalmist says: *“He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death”* (vs. 19). For Jesus has suffered desolation and death for us, to release us from the prison of judgment and condemnation. He has set us free to live in His gift of forgiveness, peace with God, and eternal life in His Kingdom.

So when Satan holds our sins before our eyes, when the world tells us we are not worthy to be saved, when our conscience casts doubt in our heart about our salvation, where do we flee? Let us not flee into hiding and loneliness, apart from God. Let us flee to God’s Word of Absolution. Jesus died on the cross so that your sins and mine specifically are forgiven. Why should we cling to our sins any longer? Let us confess them, knowing that He removes them all from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Let us give thanks to the Lord for His gracious promise! *“He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer”* (vs. 17). He will not leave us alone like a sparrow on a housetop. But He who sent His Son to die for us and rise again for our salvation, will continue to hold us close to His heart and love us forever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.