

“Cause Me to Hear Your Lovingkindness”
(Psalm 143 – Midweek Lent 6 – March 25, 2026)

Psalm 143 – ¹Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. ²Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous. ³For the enemy has persecuted my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me dwell in darkness, like those who have long been dead. ⁴Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is distressed. ⁵I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. ⁶I spread out my hands to You; my soul longs for You like a thirsty land. ⁷Answer me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit. ⁸Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust; cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You. ⁹Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; in You I take shelter. ¹⁰Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness. ¹¹Revive me, O LORD, for Your name’s sake! For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble. ¹²In Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all those who afflict my soul; for I am Your servant.

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, who was crucified for us:

“For the enemy has persecuted my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground” (vs. 3), says the psalmist. That word for persecute has to do with pursuing someone, hounding and harassing them to bring them down. That is how Satan works. He pursues the Christian, persecuting his soul through temptation. He seeks to crush our faith and life in Christ. Satan’s main weapon of war is the lie. He tries to deceive us into believing that we have not sinned, or that our sin is not so bad that we need forgiveness.

This is why we need to pray the penitential psalms. They teach us who we are as sinners who cling to Christ alone and His Word of Absolution. They teach us about sin and forgiveness. But notice how common the sins are that should concern us. Let us hear again the words we recited earlier from the Catechism, concerning the kinds of sins we are to confess:

Which are these?

Here consider your own situation according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee; whether you have been disobedient, dishonest, lazy; whether you have injured anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted anything, or done any harm.

Notice that it does not list the kinds of sins by which even the world would be shocked. It does not list sins that would make the evening news – like murder, rape, drunk driving, etc. The sins included here are part of our everyday lives and relationships in the home, in the workplace, or wherever we are. Each of us has a vocation, a calling where God has placed us to live and work. It is in that daily calling that we need God’s Law and Gospel, to show us our sins, and then to show us our Savior.

Who of us has not been disobedient, dishonest, or lazy in the daily vocation God has given? Who of us has not injured anyone by word or deed? Have we ever spoken angry words to a family member, coworker, fellow student, or friend, because we didn’t get our way? Have we ever stolen from our employer, even if just by laziness and not working as hard as we should have while getting paid for it? Have we ever neglected or wasted the gifts and abilities God has given us, which we could have used for His glory in our everyday life?

As we can see, the sins we speak of in our daily vocations are not just sins of commission but also sins of omission. Not only have we committed wrong and hurtful behavior that we should not have done against others. Maybe even more so, we have omitted countless good and helpful things that we should have done for the people God has put around us to serve.

As spouses, have we always been there to serve one another’s needs; or have we at times withdrawn to our own selfish interests? As fathers and mothers, have we always been there for our children; or have we neglected them at times? As sons and daughters, have we always done what our parents wanted us to do while growing up in the home, and later in life, have we always honored and cared for them as we should have; or have we selfishly done our own thing? As neighbors, have we seen ways in which a person near us could have used our help, but we looked the other way?

These are real sins. To the world, they may not seem so serious. The world says: “You’ve got to look out for your own interests.” But in God’s eyes, every sin is very serious. James 2:10 says: “*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*” Just one failure to do what God’s Law demanded, just one selfish act years ago – is enough to disqualify us from God’s holy presence and damn us to hell. As the Law shows us our sin, must we not fall on our faces before the Lord and pray with the psalmist: “*Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous*” (vs. 2).

God does not want us to consider any sin a small matter. He certainly did not treat our sin that way. He sent His own beloved Son into our flesh and blood to suffer and die

on the cross, because that is what it took to forgive each and every sin of ours. That is what it took to save us from the damnation we deserved.

If God takes our sins so seriously, so should we. That is why we have Confession and Absolution. God wants these sins gone from our life. He wants them cast into the depths of the sea of His forgiveness, so that we may arise and walk in newness of life as His children in Christ.

This Lent we have taken a journey into God's gift of Absolution. We have all participated in His gift, by joining in the General Confession and Absolution in our worship services, hearing His forgiveness of sins declared to us in the name of Christ. Some of us may have partaken of God's gift of Individual Confession and Absolution, bringing specific sins that burden us before the Lord with a pastor or confessor, so that we could hear God's forgiveness applied to us individually.

For those of us who have done this, we know how hard it is to confess our sins specifically and honestly. Satan will try to put up every barrier, convincing us that the words will not come out right, or it will be too embarrassing, or it will seem like making a big deal out of nothing. Satan whispers in our ear: "Who cares how you treated your family, or what you did at work, or how you were not such a good friend? Won't the guilt just go away with time?" Satan wants that sin to continue to fester and cause trouble in our life. Satan wants that sin to continue to be a burden and a barrier between us and God and other people.

One way or another, the enemy of our soul wants us to go on bearing our own burden of sin, because he wants to separate us from Christ's Word of forgiveness. Either Satan pursues us with temptation to pride, thinking our sin is not so serious that we need forgiveness. Or else he hounds and harasses us to the point of despair, thinking our sin is so bad that we could never be forgiven. Either way, Satan seeks to crush our faith and life in Christ, and at last bring us down in guilt to the dark pit of hell.

Again, the psalmist pictures this in the words: "*The enemy has persecuted my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me dwell in darkness, like those who have long been dead. Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is distressed*" (vs. 3-4). But in the spirit of penitence, in distress and sorrow over his sin, he cries out to the God who saves sinners: "*Answer me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, for in You do I trust*" (vs. 7-8).

Satan's purpose with our sin is to tempt and pursue our soul, to hound and harass us and bring us down. But God's purpose, when His Law has shown us our sin, is to bring us His Gospel, to lift us up in His forgiveness, to strengthen our faith. He causes us to hear His lovingkindness in the morning, as we live each day in His grace. As we confess our many sins, He declares that His Son has paid for every one of them. On the cross, God gave His Son over to the pit of death and damnation, so that we shall not perish but have everlasting life. When Jesus declared from the cross, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30), He meant that He had paid for every single sin of ours.

Yes, He was talking about the time we were angry with our spouse, and it came out in hurtful words or actions. He was talking about the time we rebelled against our parents and did the wrong thing. He was talking about the time we were lazy and refused to do our job at work. He was talking about the time we refused to be there for someone and help them in their need. He was talking about the time we acted secretly and shamefully when no one else even noticed. "*It is finished.*" It is all paid for. Jesus says so.

So let us make use of His gift of Absolution, His full forgiveness and healing applied to us. Let us join the psalmist in saying: "*Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness*" (vs. 1). Because we have God's promise: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). For the sake of His Son Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross for our sins, God forgives us all our sins.

Where there is forgiveness, there is healing and new life. As God's Gospel is applied to us in His Absolution, it leads the new man in us, the Holy Spirit-led nature, to pray: "*Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good*" (vs. 10). As God's redeemed, restored, and forgiven children in Christ, His Spirit leads us in our daily calling to rejoice in His salvation; and to share His forgiveness and healing, His goodness and love, with the people He puts around us.

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.