

KEEPING WATCH

Taking Every Hour Captive



WYCKOFF
REFORMED CHURCH

God is the creator of time. In the beginning, when all things were created, time, too, came into existence. Eternity birthed time. The time we experience as now is God's time. God is its origin. He owns it; we're just subletting. Christians throughout the centuries have recognized this and responded accordingly. "How can we, in our daily lives, give back to God what is His? How can we steward time for Him and bless others with it?"

One way Christians have done this is to pray assiduously throughout the day. King David talks about doing this in many of the psalms (i.e. Psalm 55:17, 86:3, 119:164). Jesus instructs his disciples to keep watch through prayer: "Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit. Be like people waiting for their master to come home from a wedding celebration, who can immediately open the door for him when he arrives and knocks on the door. Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. I assure you that, when he arrives, he will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them. Happy are those whom he finds alert, even if he comes at midnight or just before dawn" (Luke 12: 35-38). Early and contemporary monastic communities have developed a rhythm of praying every three hours throughout the day.

All have come to realize that to pray is to take an hour captive, to give it back to God. It is to acknowledge that it is already His. He owns it. He is in control of it. He is there, and He is doing something. When we pray every hour or minute or second, we acknowledge the Father's work as the origin of all things, Jesus Christ's work of redemption, and the Holy Spirit's movement in this moment and those to come. We orient ourselves to true control, genuine peace and comfort. We need to pray so that we constantly "keep watch" and remind ourselves of who is behind us, before us, and beside us.

Prayer is just as much about the formation of our expectations and dreams as it is our attempts to transform God's prophecies and plans. We need the constant reminder that the end has already been settled in the beginning. Our future was already secured before we were born. When we pray, we hand our most precious commodity, i.e., time, to its maker, and remind ourselves of why we're here. To take every hour captive through prayer is to bind ourselves to the only one who holds power over life and death, here and there, up and down, before and after, being and nothingness.

So, as we make our way from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, we invite you to keep watch with us. To take every one of these holy hours captive through prayer. This guide offers set prayers and scripture readings to observe four of the monastic “hours” for prayer each day. We have suggested 7am, 12pm, 5pm, and 9pm, but you may choose to observe them more loosely as morning, noon, evening, and night. We begin at Noon on Good Friday as Jesus is hung on the cross, and we will conclude on Easter morning as we celebrate the resurrection.

As you pray, consider gathering in a set place and doing something to set this time and space aside. Perhaps you will light a candle and spend a few moments in silence before and after. We encourage you to pray together with others in your home, if that is possible. Do whatever you need to so that this isn’t just another item on your checklist. The purpose of spending a few minutes in scripture and prayer throughout the day isn’t to say we did it; it’s to charge the rest of our day with that same presence of God.

As we keep watch at Jesus’ tomb this weekend, we walk through the larger story of God. This is the story of a God who does not remain far off but draws near and calls men and women to leave everything behind and follow. This is the story of a God who meets us with love and invites us to radical trust. This is the story of a God who is faithful, always faithful. As we gather at Jesus’ tomb in these uncertain times, we seek to take every hour of our lives captive. May this story seep into our bones, shape our imagination, and guide our feet in the way of Jesus.

So, enter in deeply, bring your whole self, and pay attention during the rest of your day as these prayers and stories come to mind. How might the Spirit be guiding us as we keep watch for Jesus?

FRIDAY NOON

PRAYER

Today, you who hung the earth upon the waters are hung upon the Cross. You, King of the angels, are arrayed in a crown of thorns. You who wrap the heavens in clouds are wrapped in the purple of mockery. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We see your Passion, O Christ. Show us also your glorious Resurrection.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 2:4-25 - Creation

Psalm 46

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

FRIDAY 5 PM

PRAYER

Today, you who hung the earth upon the waters are hung upon the Cross. You, King of the angels, are arrayed in a crown of thorns. You who wrap the heavens in clouds are wrapped in the purple of mockery. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We see your Passion, O Christ. Show us also your glorious Resurrection.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 3:1-24 - Fall

Psalm 51:1-10

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

FRIDAY 9 PM

PRAYER

Today, you who hung the earth upon the waters are hung upon the Cross. You, King of the angels, are arrayed in a crown of thorns. You who wrap the heavens in clouds are wrapped in the purple of mockery. The Bridegroom of the Church is transfixed with nails. The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a spear. We see your Passion, O Christ. Show us also your glorious Resurrection.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-8, 17:1-22 - Covenant

Psalm 113

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SATURDAY 7 AM

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes suffered death on the cross, help us to carry in our bodies your death so that your life may be seen in us. Looking to you whom we have pierced, we would mourn for our sins with true sorrow; we would learn of you to forgive, with you to suffer, and in you to overcome. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us your peace. Lord, we pray, in your great mercy, remember us when you come into your Kingdom. Amen.

STORY

Genesis 31:9-32 - Wrestling

Psalm 40

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we

forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SATURDAY 12 PM

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes suffered death on the cross, help us to carry in our bodies your death so that your life may be seen in us. Looking to you whom we have pierced, we would mourn for our sins with true sorrow; we would learn of you to forgive, with you to suffer, and in you to overcome. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us your peace. Lord, we pray, in your great mercy, remember us when you come into your Kingdom. Amen.

STORY

Exodus 12:1-42 - Passover

Psalm 46

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SATURDAY 5 PM

PRAYER

Wholly present with those below, yet in no way separated from those above, you, Lord, of your own will, suffered for us; by your death, you put to death our death and by your resurrection, you granted life to us who chant to you: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

STORY

1 Kings 8:1-30 - Temple

Psalm 113

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we

forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SATURDAY 9 PM

PRAYER

Wholly present with those below, yet in no way separated from those above, you, Lord, of your own will, suffered for us; by your death, you put to death our death and by your resurrection, you granted life to us who chant to you: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

STORY

Jeremiah 7:1-15 - Repent

Psalms 51:10-19

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SUNDAY 7 AM

PRAYER

O Thou who shared our mortal frailty in the flesh, whom death could not conquer nor the tomb imprison, grant us grace to share your eternal triumph in the Spirit. Let no shadow of the grave frighten us and no fear of darkness turn our hearts from you. Reveal yourself to us this day and all our days, as the First and the Last, the living One, who brought life and immortality to light. Amen.

STORY

Isaiah 53:1-12 - Substitute

Psalms 40

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SUNDAY 12 PM

PRAYER

O Thou who shared our mortal frailty in the flesh, whom death could not conquer nor the tomb imprison, grant us grace to share your eternal triumph in the Spirit. Let no shadow of the grave frighten us and no fear of darkness turn our hearts from you. Reveal yourself to us this day and all our days, as the First and the Last, the living One, who brought life and immortality to light. Amen.

STORY

Luke 24:1-49 - Resurrection

Psalm 30

PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.



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Worshiping God, Making Disciples of Jesus, Living Missionally

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