

St. Augustine: “Two criminals were crucified with Christ. One was saved, so do not despair. The other was not, so do not presume.”

O Loving God, maker of heaven and earth, this weekend we have seen again the awesomeness of your creation. To have seen and felt the power of the wind and rain, we are humbly reminded of our own smallness in the midst of it all. And it is also a reminder of the many blessing we've been given. Forgive us, when we complain about the disruptions we've experienced. May we be more grateful, realizing that many people in parts of the world live every day without power, lights, heat, hot food, and more. And may we be grateful too that you, the God who created this magnificent creation, who has such power, is also a God who loves us, who does not stay far away in the heavens, but comes to us, where we are. A God who came as the Christ to live with us, to experience what we experience. And Lord, let us not forget that you also call us to live as Christ lived. To love as Christ loved. Sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. That is why we come to you with our confessions. For Lord, we are so thankful that your mercy and forgiveness is there for us. And like the criminal who came humbly before Jesus, confessing his sins, you treat us with compassion and grace, promising that you will be with us, and we will be with you. But let us also never presume to take your grace for granted. We have a responsibility as Christians, to wear the name of Christ with integrity and with truth, as an example to the world around us. And this sometimes involves sacrifice, inconvenience, time, effort, change, selflessness. Help us to remember that it is not cheap grace you offer us, it is grace that flows from the pain and the wounds and the suffering of our Savior, the one who came to take our sins away, Jesus Christ.

And so, as we prepare our hearts and souls to come to this table where we will remember that Christ's body was broken and his blood shed for each one of us, let us now be in silence, so that we can come to you with our confessions, our joys, our questions, ourselves.

Lord, we pray for others at this time as well. We pray for those affected so adversely by the storm. We pray for our country and world. We pray for loved ones who are in need. Lord, there are others we wish to name, and so hear us now as people in this congregation lift aloud the names of others for whom we ask your blessing.