

All the Prayers of God's People

August 4, 2020

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

One theme we haven't touched upon in our prayers is the theme of Birthday prayers. There are a few sayings about birthdays that come up frequently. First is "Getting old is not for wimps". That is especially true as our bodies begin to act mysteriously or simply rebel as years add on. Another saying is "If we are blessed enough, we will know what it is like to get old". This one generally we don't think about as often. We sometimes focus on the downsides of aging, missing some of the good stuff that goes along with it.

The fact of the matter as we age, both sayings have truth and merit. Our bodies slow and experience the unexpected, our minds too, but as we age, but we also get to experience things that are precious and powerful and bring joy. Things like having three to four generations in one room at the same time. Things like songs, experiences, and conversations shared with our children and their children. Things like planning for the future or leaving your legacy in the church. While there are both challenging and blessed things about aging, each year as our birthdays roll around, it is a gift from God.

This Covid season, we might just find ourselves pondering how we will best use this gift called life. How will we honor the aging but also celebrate the living? Will we spend it heartily in praise, seeking joy in our midst, making new friends and sowing love? Or will we worry and fret over every wrinkle, ache and pain and fear of our world? Will we fight for equity and equality for those in our midst or provide food on someone's table or will we squabble over political debates as election approaches?

Certainly, this year of 2020 has had more than enough worries and frets. You are invited to take each day as a day of rebirth instead of worry. We are born in the image of God to be at work bringing about the Kingdom of God in our midst. May these prayers help to fill and fuel us to get about that work. Below you will find two distinct but similar birthday prayers. When you know someone celebrating a birthday, these are ways you can pray over them for the coming year.

Traditional Irish Birthday Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm on your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of God's hand.

May God be with you and bless you,
May you see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune,
Rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness from this day forward.

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind always be at your back,
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home,
And may the hand of a friend always be near.

May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the sky above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.

Birthday Blessings of Wisdom, Patience, and Hope

May the Lord show you the greatness of his goodness,
that you overflow with thanks every day.
May the Lord bless you abundantly with rest for the heart,
power for virtue, wisdom for life, and patience in suffering.
May the Lord bless you with joyful hope, and one day
with the inexpressible joys of eternal life.

Source: Schleswig-Hosteinsche Kirchen-Agende, 1797, Segenswünsche, p. 146#1,
translated for A Collection of Prayers.