

November 8, 2020 🕯️ 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

## Invitation to Grace

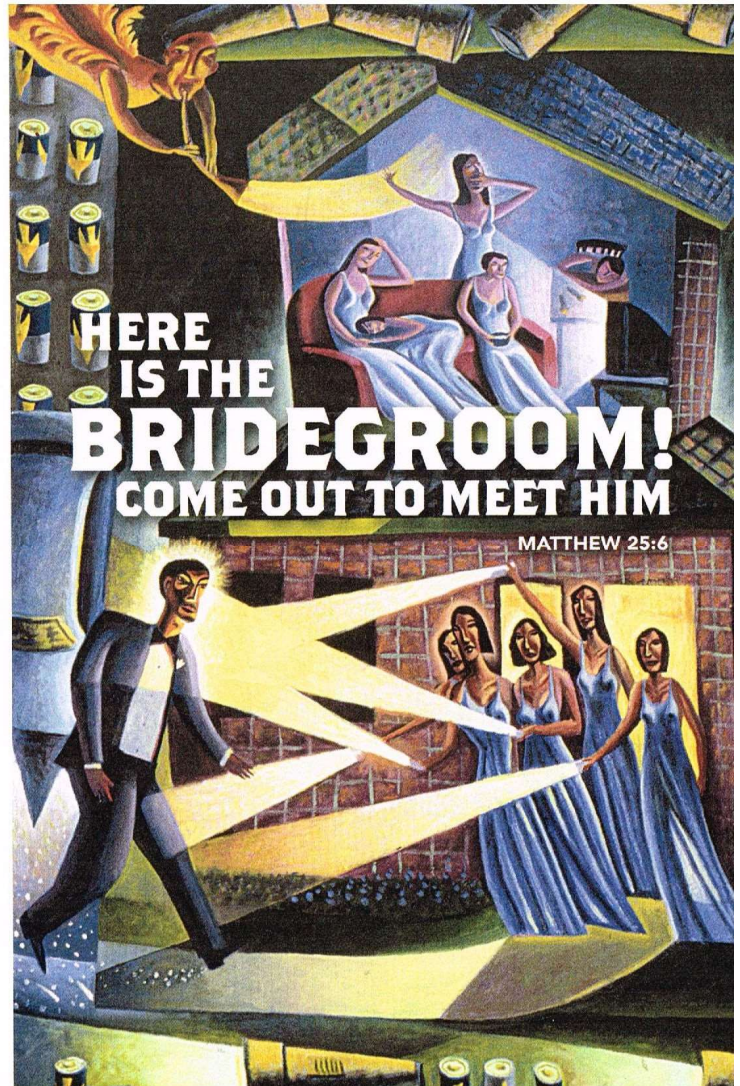
The parable of the ten bridesmaids easily draws our attention to the differences in their levels of preparation. Some have enough oil to welcome the bridegroom; others do not. The ability of each bridesmaid to control her fate finds ready ears in a culture that favors independence and individual effort. Every day we see the consequences—good or bad—of our actions.

The early part of the parable speaks to a commonality among the bridesmaids. As they wait for the bridegroom, all of them become drowsy and fall asleep. Then comes the cry, “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” We might hear this as a command. We certainly have commands from God throughout Scripture. However, what if we heard the cry as an invitation?

God’s commands are a gift that invites us to live into the reality of the ever-present and ever-coming kingdom. God does not force or compel us to follow, to be obedient, or to love. It is always framed as an invitation. The psalmists invite us to praise God. God invites the people of Israel into covenantal relationship. Jesus invites all who are weary to come to him and find rest.

If the kingdom of heaven is close to us now, of course our actions will have consequences. Whether we choose to love or hate, share or hoard, work for peace or not—all of these choices impact the people around us. And yet, God’s command that we live into a way of love is not coercive, but rather an invitation to life.

In worship we gather around the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. Neither is forced; neither is required. Both are invitations to experience what Augustine called visible signs of God’s invisible grace, a gift given for each and every one of us.



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# Celebrate

Sunday, November 8, 2020  
23rd Sunday after Pentecost

*Today the prophet Amos calls for justice to roll down like waters. Paul urges us to encourage one another with the promised coming of the Lord. Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. Surrounded by the faithful of every time and place, we celebrate Christ's coming in our midst in the word of life and the feast of victory—the marriage feast of the lamb.*

## Prayer of the Day

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O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Amos 5:18-24

*In the days of Amos, people thought that the day of the LORD would be a time of great victory, but Amos announced that it would be a day of darkness, not light. He said liturgy is no substitute for obedience. The LORD demands justice and righteousness in the community.*

Alas for you who desire the day of  
the LORD!

Why do you want the day of  
the LORD?

It is darkness, not light;

<sup>19</sup>as if someone fled from a lion,  
and was met by a bear;

or went into the house and  
rested a hand against the wall,  
and was bitten by a snake.

<sup>20</sup>Is not the day of the LORD darkness,  
not light,  
and gloom with no brightness  
in it?

<sup>21</sup>I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your  
solemn assemblies.

<sup>22</sup>Even though you offer me your  
burnt offerings and grain  
offerings,

I will not accept them;  
and the offerings of well-being  
of your fatted animals

I will not look upon.

<sup>23</sup>Take away from me the noise of  
your songs;

I will not listen to the melody of  
your harps.

<sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-  
flowing stream.

**or Wisdom 6:12-16 [not printed]**

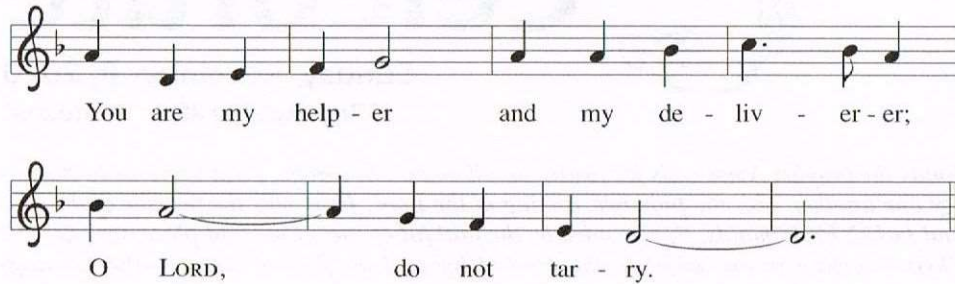
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*Wisdom is part of the structure of the universe and is easily accessible to those who want to find her. Wisdom actually seeks people out. People who are wise are free from care.*



Psalm

Psalm 70; refrain, Ps. 70:5



Two staves of musical notation in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are: "You are my help - er and my de - liv - er - er; O LORD, do not tar - ry."

Be pleased, O God, to de-<sup>l</sup>iver me;

O LORD, make <sup>l</sup>haste to help me.

<sup>2</sup>Let those who seek my life be put to shame <sup>l</sup>and confounded;  
let those who take pleasure in my misfortune  
draw back and <sup>l</sup>be disgraced. **R**

<sup>3</sup>Let those who say to me "Aha!" and gloat <sup>l</sup>over me  
turn back because <sup>l</sup>of their shame.

<sup>4</sup>Let all who seek you rejoice and be <sup>l</sup>glad in you;  
let those who love your salvation say forever, "Great <sup>l</sup>is the LORD!"

<sup>5</sup>But as for me, I am poor and needy; come to me quick-<sup>l</sup>ly, O God.  
You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, <sup>l</sup>do not tarry. **R**

*or Wisdom 6:17-20; refrain, Wis. 6:17 [not printed]*

## Second Reading

## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

*Some of the Thessalonians are worried that dead Christians will be excluded from the resurrection to eternal life when Christ comes again. Paul reassures them with the word of hope that all Christians, living or dead, will be raised into everlasting life with Christ.*

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means

precede those who have died. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

## Gospel

## Matthew 25:1-13

*Jesus tells a parable about his own second coming, emphasizing the need for readiness at all times.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise,

'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup>But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."



## Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Holy God, rouse us to deep praise as we gather for worship. Enliven our worship with sincere and heartfelt song. Sustain the work of all church musicians and artists who lead us in praise and prayer (*especially*). Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Creator, surprise and delight us with the beauty of the world you have made. Bless the work of landscapers, architects, and artists whose work invites us into harmonious living with your creation. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Judge, let justice roll down like waters over this world. Reign over the courtrooms of every land, in the hearts of those who guard the law and those who stand accused of crimes. Be present in cases where we long for both justice and mercy to prevail (*especially*). Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Companion, console those who feel lonely or abandoned. Share the hours of those who live and eat alone. Comfort those who have few friends or who struggle with their identity and place in this world. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Holy Protector, be with all observing Veterans Day. Guard the lives of active duty and retired military personnel. Comfort all who mourn those who have died in the line of duty. Heal the wounds, both physical and mental, experienced by service members. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Holy and Immortal One, we pray in thanksgiving for the lives of all who have died. Remind us of the frailty and shortness of our own lives and inspire us to use them for the building up of your kingdom. Hear us, O God.  
**Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

**Amen.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 63. **Tuesday** 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Martin, Bishop of Tours, died 397; Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, teacher, died 1855) Matthew 24:29-35. **Thursday** Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12. **Friday** Ezekiel 7:1-9. **Saturday** Matthew 12:43-45. **Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost** Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18; Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30.

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