

## Introduction

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

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: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

*In the Near East, covenant means "agreement" or "alliance." It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.*

<sup>1</sup>Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2</sup>And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. <sup>3a</sup>Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

<sup>14</sup>"Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

<sup>15</sup>Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

<sup>16</sup>Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup>for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; <sup>18</sup>and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

<sup>19</sup>But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. <sup>20</sup>If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." <sup>21</sup>And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" <sup>22</sup>Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." <sup>23</sup>He said, "Then put away the

foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

<sup>24</sup>The people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” <sup>25</sup>So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

## **Psalm 78:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Hear my teaching, | O my people;  
incline your ears to the words | of my mouth.

<sup>2</sup>**I will open my mouth | in a parable;  
I will declare the mysteries of | ancient times—**

<sup>3</sup>that which we have heard and known, and what our fore- | bears have told us,  
we will not hide | from their children.

<sup>4</sup>**We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power | of  
the LORD,  
and the wonderful works | God has done.**

<sup>5</sup>The LORD gave a decree in Jacob and established a | law in Israel,  
commanding our ancestors to teach it | to their children;

<sup>6</sup>**that the generations to come might know, and the children | yet unborn;  
that they in their turn might tell it | to their children;**

<sup>7</sup>so that they might put their | trust in God,  
and not forget the deeds of God, but keep | God’s commandments.

## **Gospel Reading: 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:] <sup>1</sup>“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

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, saying, "Hear us, O God," and responding, "Your mercy is great."

*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. 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. 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, guide us towards peace. 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 those who have put their lives in harms way. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

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 Saviour, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

**Amen.**



## ***A reflection for this day...***

### Trusting in God, Trusting with God

Human beings are relational creatures. We are created to be in relationship with one another and with God. No one, no matter how independent or disconnected they may feel they are, functions completely outside the context of relationships. From the moment we are born we are thrust into relationship with people around us—the people who delivered us, the people who will be taking care of us in a hospital nursery, our family, and God. When we enter this world we do so forming relationships right from the start.

Relationships, healthy relationships, require a lot of work and care to continue. In particular, relationships require trust to grow and become mature. Relationships rooted in trust can bring out the best in us. Relationships rooted in anything else can bring out the worst.

Readings for this day give us the chance to consider the trust required in the relationship between God and God's people. Moreover, we are invited to give thought to the consequences of replacing trust with something else: hubris stemming from trust in one's identity or work (in Amos 5:18-24), or hubris stemming from trust in others to sustain us rather than God (in Matthew). Paul reminds us that our relationship with God is cause for joy, even in the midst of sorrow, since we believe (trust) God's promise of eternal life through the living Lord Jesus.