



November 8, 2020  
23rd Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Communion

*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.*

**WELCOME!** We are glad to have you join us in worship today. Here are a few notes to help you feel more at home participating in our worship.

**Worshiping.** Today's service is printed in this bulletin. Parts in bold indicate responses by everyone in which you are invited to participate.

**Adjustments to our service.** In order to comply with safety and social distancing guidelines, it will be mandatory that everyone have a face covering and everyone must be mindful of keeping their distance from others. Please refrain from mingling in confined spaces before and/or after service.

Other adjustments are:

- Congregational singing is discouraged. If you feel you must, please sing softly with your mask in place.
- The sign of the PEACE will be offered by a wave or bow while staying in place.
- The OFFERING PLATE will not be passed or brought forward. It will be in the back of the sanctuary instead.
- If this is a service of HOLY COMMUNION, communion elements will be available as you exit the sanctuary.
- At the conclusion of the service, everyone is asked to remain in their pew. Ushers will dismiss people by row to maintain safe spacing.
- The Sanctuary, Narthex and Broadway lobby are the only areas open. All other areas of St. Stephen's are closed.

**Prayer Requests.** Please call the office if you'd like to place someone on our prayer list.

**PRELUDE:** Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

+ **GATHERING** +  
*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P In the name of the Father,  
and of the + Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

P God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Brief silence*

P Most merciful God,

**C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG: *Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers* (ELW 244)**

*All are invited to listen.*

*Rejoice, rejoice, believers,  
and let your lights appear;  
the evening is advancing,  
and darker night is near.  
The bridegroom is arising  
and soon is drawing nigh.  
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;  
at midnight comes the cry.*

**GREETING**

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C And also with you.**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

P Let us open our minds to God's teaching;

**C and tune our ear to God's word.**

P Let us listen to the stories of the faith of our ancestors;

**C and share our stories with our children.**

P We put our trust in God;

**C we worship the one who gives us life.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P Let us pray. 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.

**C Amen.**

**+ WORD +**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**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.*

A reading from Amos.

<sup>18</sup>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.  
 ...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 70**

*The psalm for the day is read responsively. The lector will read the plain text and all are invited to read the text in **bold**.*

<sup>1</sup>Be pleased, O God, to de- | liver me;  
 O LORD, make | haste to help me.  
<sup>2</sup>**Let those who seek my life be put to shame | and confounded;**  
**let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and | be disgraced.**  
<sup>3</sup>Let those who say to me “Aha!” and gloat | over me  
 turn back because | of their shame.  
<sup>4</sup>**Let all who seek you rejoice and be | glad in you;**  
**let those who love your salvation say forever, “Great | is the LORD!”**  
<sup>5</sup>But as for me, I am poor and needy; come to me quick- | ly, O God.  
 You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, | do not tarry.

**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.*

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

<sup>13</sup>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.

...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 25:1-13**

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

P The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**C Glory to you, O Lord.**

[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.”

...The gospel of the Lord. **C Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY: *In Thee Is Gladness* (ELW 867)**

*All are invited to stand and listen as the Word of God is proclaimed in song.*

*In thee is gladness amid all sadness,  
Jesus, sunshine of my heart.*

*By thee are given the gifts of heaven,  
thou the true redeemer art.  
Our souls thou wakest; our bonds thou breakest.  
Who trusts thee surely has built securely  
and stands forever: Alleluia!  
Our hearts are pining to see thy shining,  
dying or living, to thee are cleaving;  
naught can us sever: Alleluia!*

## **APOSTLES' CREED**

A With the whole church, we confess our faith.

**C I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A 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.*

A Holy God, rouse us to deep praise as we gather for worship. Sustain the work of all who lead us in praise and prayer. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A 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.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A 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.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Holy Companion, console those who feel lonely or abandoned and comfort those who are struggling with illness and pain. We especially pray for Perry and those we now name aloud or in the silence of our hearts...*brief silence*... Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A 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.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A 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.

**C Amen.**

## **PEACE**

*The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.*

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C And also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace with a wave or bow while staying in place.*

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE: *When Peace Like a River***

+ **MEAL** +  
*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

P Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,  
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,  
who preached good news to the poor,  
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,  
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,  
that by this Holy Communion we may know  
the unity we share with all your people  
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

**C Amen**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**C 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;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

*Communion will be distributed at the conclusion of our worship service as you exit the sanctuary. After the presiding minister hands you the wafer, take one individual cup of wine or juice, partake of communion and dispose of the used cup.*

**+ SENDING +**  
*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

### **A LITANY FOR VETERANS**

*We invite veterans present with us in worship this day to stand for recognition and for these prayers.*

P On this day, we remember those who have served in our armed forces.

*Brief pause for silent reflection.*

P Prince of Peace, even as we pray for an end to war,

**C We give thanks for our soldiers' courage, for their love of country, and for their work to bring peace to our world.**

P Healer of All, bind up the wounds of all who have served.

**C Show us how to comfort those who are hurting.**

P Merciful God, all suffer the cost of war.

**C We remember widows and widowers, orphans, and all those separated from those they love.**

P We pray, Gracious God, that swords will be turned into plowshares and that peace will reign.

**C We give thanks for all who have served. Shield from danger those who bravely protect us. With them, may we glory not in war, but in your love and righteousness. Strengthen us to be your peacemakers in the world.**

P Almighty and ever-living God, we give you thanks for the men and women who have served and defended our country and the values of freedom and justice we hold so dear. Help us be mindful of the sacrifices they made and the hardship endured by their families and friends, so that we never take for granted the privileges they have secured for us. Hear us, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

### **BLESSING**

P Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**C Amen.**

### **SENDING SONG: *Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer* (ELW 618)**

*All are invited to listen.*

*Guide me ever, great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but you are mighty;  
hold me with your pow'rful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore,  
feed me now and evermore.*

### **DISMISSAL**

A Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE:** On the Journey to Emmaus

# 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.