

Proper 27

[Home](#) [Up](#)

Pentecost 25
November 10, 2002

Prayer of the Day

Lord, when the day of wrath comes we have no hope except in your grace. Make us so to watch for the last days that the consummation of our hope may be the joy of the marriage feast of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amos 5:18-24

{18} Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light; {19} 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. {20} Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? {21} I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. {22} 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. {23} Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. {24} But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

18. Alas for you: Hebrew *hoy*, "woe.": "The interjection *hoy* was used as a wail of grief over the dead (I Kings 13.30; Jer. 22.18; 34.5). The woe-cry pronounced over a living audience is found only in prophetic sayings; the prophet, knowing in advance the punishment decreed by Yahweh, would lament the death of his audience as a dramatic way of disclosing the dire consequences of their conduct. Here the woe-cry simply introduces the saying to identify its addressees and to characterize their desperate plight...." [1]

the day of the Lord: "...the earliest datable reference to the 'Day of Yahweh'." [2] The term appears in Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; 22:5; 34:8; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 2:31; 3:14; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14-18; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Lamentations 2:22. However, the term is obviously already in use by Amos' contemporaries, implying the vindication of Israel over her enemies, and therefore a day of joy and celebration.

18c-19: Amos gives two situations of a person trying to escape and finding a worse conclusion, but to make the point that the Day of Yahweh will not be a time of celebration but a time of sorrow.

21-23: Note the change to the first person. Yahweh rejects all the components of Israel's worship: festival ceremonies, sacrifices, the music of worship. The reason is implied in the last verse of the lection.

24. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream: Worship without righteousness and justice is corrupt and offensive. True worship is characterized by relationships that reflect the character of Yahweh, his justice and righteousness.

Or

Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16

{12} Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her. {13} She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. {14} One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate. {15} To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care, {16} because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets

them in every thought.

Wisdom does not seek to evade us. Rather it is easily discerned. It seeks to be discovered, and meets us everywhere. And wisdom leads to perfect understanding and freedom. As a response to the first lesson, the passage clearly implies that Yahweh's expectation of justice and righteousness is not obscure, but obvious.

Psalm 70

{1} Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O LORD, make haste to help me! {2} Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life. Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me. {3} Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!" turn back because of their shame. {4} Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!" {5} But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

With minor differences the Psalm is duplicated in Psalm 40:13-17.

The singer is the victim of those who, according to the first lesson worship, sacrifice, and praise but do not act with justice and righteousness. (S)he prays that God will deliver him/her from those who seek to dishonor him/her.

Or Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-17 (See above)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

{13} But 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. {14} For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. {15} 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. {16} 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. {17} 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. {18} Therefore encourage one another with these words.

13. those who have died: Greek, "those who are asleep." "Paul could be writing in response from his readers about members of their number who had died.... The description of death as sleep is natural and was widespread.... in the LXX (e.g. Gen 47:30; 1 Kgs 2:10; Isa 43:17).... on Jewish epitaphs...." [3]

those who have no hope: Paul contrasts the hope of Christian believers with the expectations of non-Christians.

14 through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died: Paul assures his readers, not of the certainty of the resurrection, but of the gathering of the resurrected with Jesus in the Parousia.

15. we declare to you by the word of the Lord: Paul claims the support of a word of the Lord. This may mean, an actual statement of Jesus, as in 1 Corinthians 7:10; 9:14; 11:23 (possibly one not preserved in the Gospels); a tradition closely related to Matthew 24; or a prophetic word from the risen Christ. The latter is the most popular view. [4]

we...will not precede those who have died: This must have been a contemporary debate which Paul settles with his "word of the Lord."

16: The order of things is 1) the announcement accompanied by cries and calls and trumpets, 2) Christ's descent from heaven to earth, 3) the resurrection of the dead, 4) the rapture of those who were alive at the time. Clearly this did not happen, so the passage must be understood in a metaphorical sense.

17. encourage one another with these words: The encouragement is the firm assurance that believers will be raised and "be with the Lord forever."

Matthew 25:1-13

{1} "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the

bridegroom. {2} Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. {3} When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; {4} but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. {5} As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. {6} But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' {7} Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. {8} The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' {9} 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.' {10} 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. {11} Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' {12} But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' {13} Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

1. *bridesmaids*: Greek, *parthenoi*: a young girl ready for marriage, possibly as young as 12 years old is intended. In verse 10 the bridesmaids seem to meet the bridegroom (and his bride?) near the place for the wedding feast probably provided by the groom and his family, so it is likely that these "bridesmaids" were representatives of the groom who were to welcome the bride.

2. *foolish...wise*: This is the point on which the parable turns, the matter of wisely being prepared for an expected, yet not specified coming and included in the festivities, or foolishly being unprepared and excluded.

3. *lamps*: These would have been shallow bowls filled with oil with a wick. The lamps would have given light to the midnight wedding feast, so the oil would have had to last until dawn. To spread it out would have given more light, but for a shorter time. The foolish may have been able to conserve their oil by extinguishing their lamps while they were waiting and relighting them when the wedding party arrived, but then they were foolish.

6. *At midnight*: In a culture where weddings lasted for several days (up to two weeks, Tobit 8:20) the mention of time does not imply unexpected delay, but a view of the importance of the "times of life" that does not see much significance in time schedules.

10. *the wedding banquet*: "The imagery of a feast is well established in Hebrew literature as a symbol of the joys of the Kingdom (the Messianic age).... The conception of it as a *marriage* feast is linked with the theme of the relationship of Yahweh and his people as a marriage (accompanied by the stigmatizing of the worship of other gods as 'adultery' or 'playing the harlot'—especially developed by Hosea and Ezekiel—Hos. 2:1-20; Ezek. chaps. 16 and 23). On the other hand, the marriage imagery never seems to have been carried over into the Messianic expectation.... It is a purely Christian development that Christ is conceived as the bridegroom and his church as his bride, in parallelism with the Yahweh-Israel relationship." [5]

11-12. *the door was shut... I do not know you*: See Luke 13: 25 for a similar situation. Once the door is shut the assumption is that everyone who was invited is inside, so anyone left outside is a stranger.

13. *Keep awake*: Since both wise and foolish bridesmaids slept, the meaning here is "Be prepared."

Reflection

The lessons look forward to the end of time and the day of judgment, and encourage the faithful to be prepared. In the prayer of the day we ask that we may be prepared for the last days. With the Psalmist we pray for deliverance from those who would hurt us. In the second lesson Paul encourages the believers to know that both those are still alive and who have already died will be a part of the resurrection.

The Gospel is "A parable about God's patronage is here outfitted with a new ending (v. 13) to underscore the theme of proper behavior as one awaits the soon and sudden coming of the Messiah.... As a parable about God's patronage, the point would be something like: Be clever in your role of client and in matters of God's patronage. As a parable about the soon and sudden coming of the Messiah, the point now is: Be ever prepared." [6] The first lesson describes the kind of life to be lived by those who would be prepared: "...let justice roll down like waters, and

righteousness like an everflowing stream."

Hymns [7]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

321 E--The Day Is
31 D--Wake, Awake, for
512 I--Oh, Blest the
342 II--I Know of a

25 G--Rejoice, Rejoice,
224 G--Soul, Adorn Yourself
351, 443, 789s, 725s

Prayers of the People [8]

P or A: We lift up our eyes, as a servant to our master and pray for our needs and those of all people saying, "Hear us, O God," and responding, "We depend on your mercy."

A: We do not know on what day or at what hour Christ will return. Let your church be continually occupied with encouraging one another and building one another up. You have not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through Jesus our brother and Lord. Hear us, O God. We depend on your mercy.

A: Your people have had more than enough of contempt, too much of the scorn of the indolent rich, the derision of the proud. Raise up women and men who will lead nations and people, bring mutual respect, peace and security for all. Equip us as citizens of Canada and the world to offer our gifts and services when they are needed. Do not allow us to hide our talents Hear us, O God. We depend on your mercy.

A: For those in need of wholeness and healing we pray to you. Take us to them as messengers of your love and allow us to touch them with your care. We pray for the terminally ill, people with cancer or AIDS, who ask only for moments free from pain. We remember those we know who need you _____. Hear us, O God. We depend on your mercy.

A: We thank you that we are children of the light and of the day. Make us love the light rather than the darkness. Keep us mindful of all that we say and do that it may be glory and honor for you. Hear us, O God. We depend on your mercy.

P: You have entrusted so much to us as your children. Guide us in our use of all that you give. Care for those for whom we pray and see to our needs as may be best for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or [9]

Presider or deacon

As we await the coming of the Lord with justice and righteousness, let us offer prayers to God for all the world.

Deacon or other leader

For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth and peaceful times.

For our city and those who live in it and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

God whose Son died and rose again, hear the prayers we offer this day and bring all your people to the wedding banquet of your Son in the kingdom of heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Notes

[1] James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969, p. 103.

[2] *Loc. cit.*

[3] Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 263.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

[5] Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: Translation, Introduction and Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, pp. 483-484.

[6] Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p. 148.

[7] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0102.txt>

[8] http://www.worship.ca/text/int_a2.txt

[9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>