

Notes for Next Sunday

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Amos 5:18-24). Israel wrongly expected to be exalted as a nation and longed for that day to come. Amos warned that the day would come, but not as Israel expected—it would be a day of “darkness, not light” (v. 20) for her, because she had not been faithful to God. Amos speaks primarily of an imminent and decisive judgment on Israel, not exclusively of the last day. Though Israel may continue to offer the worship described in these verses, it will do no good. Where simple justice and humility are lacking, even the most orthodox ritual and the finest of music is nothing more than a hypocritical sham.

Epistle (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Paul comforts the Thessalonians, saying that the dead in Christ will be the first to taste the resurrection and come with the risen Christ. At the second coming, we will all be together once more. Christians grieve over the death of loved ones but not as those who have no hope. The resurrection of our Lord, and the victory we have over death through Him, gives us a living hope, despite the fact that death separates loved ones and causes great pain. (TLSB)

Gospel (Matthew 25:1-13). Jesus warns that many invited to share in the eternal joy of His kingdom will miss out by failing to have a living faith at the end. Though some will be condemned for heinous crimes and gross sins, many more will fail to enter heaven because they neglected their faith. Even so, no matter how depleted our faith is, Jesus' grace can fill us to overflowing with a single word. (TLSB)

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

OLD TESTAMENT – Amos 5:18-24

¹⁸ Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. ¹⁹ It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. ²⁰ Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness? ²¹ “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. ²³ Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

5:18 day of the LORD. Likely refers to the day in which God will allow Israel's enemies to attack and destroy the northern tribes and then take them into exile. (TLSB)

5:19 A pair of similes portrays things going from bad to worse, like “jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.” Israel's condemnation is now inevitable. (TLSB)

5:21 *feasts*. The three major festivals required by the Law were Passover, Pentecost, and Booths. (TLSB)

5:21 *solemn assemblies*. Likely refers to the prayers and sacrifices offered on a daily and weekly basis. (TLSB)

5:23 *not listen to the music*. Israel's insincere religiosity and its consequent sham worship have become repugnant to God. The nation's supposedly sacred music is nothing more than noise to Him. Without a right relationship to the Lord, attempting to worship is futile. (TLSB)

5:24 *justice ... righteousness*. Prerequisites for acceptance by God; but these are what Israel had rejected and scorned (cf. vv. 7, 10, 12b). (CSB)

God's people are to produce justice continually and swiftly, like the flow of a river. Just as plants and animals need a steady supply of water to survive, so also human communities can flourish only when justice and righteousness prevail. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

4:13 *those who fall asleep*. For the Christian, sleep is a particularly apt metaphor for death, since death's finality and horror are removed by the assurance of resurrection. Some of the Thessalonians seem to have misunderstood Paul and thought all believers would live until Christ returns. When some died, the question arose, "Will those who have died have part in that great day?" See note on v. 15. (CSB)

4:13 *who have no hope*. Those who live without Jesus have no hope because they do not know of the resurrection. (TLSB)

4:14 *those who have fallen asleep in him*. Therefore the Christians, all those that have fallen asleep in Christ, trusting in His complete salvation, will pass through death into life. Just as surely as we believe in the crucified and resurrected Christ, just as surely as we are united with Christ in life and in death through faith, just so surely the Lord will lead us and all believers that have fallen asleep in Jesus with our Savior into the realms of eternal glory. That is the comfort of the Christians with regard to those friends and

relatives whom they have laid to rest in the grave. They are at rest, they are asleep in the Lord; even in death they are the Lord's. When Christ, therefore, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory, and all believers with us, Col, 3:4. (Kretzmann)

4:15 we who are still alive. Those believers who will be alive when Christ returns. "We" does not necessarily mean that Paul thought that he would be alive then. He often identified himself with those he wrote to or about. Elsewhere he says that God will raise "us" at that time (1Co 6:14; 2Co 4:14). (CSB)

4:15 will certainly not precede. Those who died in Christ will have no disadvantage when the Lord returns. The second coming will be seen by them as well as the living. (TLSB)

4:16 archangel. The only named archangel in the Bible is Michael. (CSB)

4:17 caught up.† Or "taken up." Millennialists read into this verb a "rapture," from the Latin Vulgate rendering. Note that Paul seems to be describing something open and public, with loud voices and a trumpet blast. (CSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 25:1-13

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' ⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' ⁹ "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' ¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

25:1 ten virgins. The bridesmaids, who were responsible for preparing the bride to meet the bridegroom. (CSB)

On the wedding day, the bridegroom would dress in wedding garments, and his friends would escort him to the house of the bride. The bride would come out to meet them with her friends. The whole group would joyously parade to the home that the groom had prepared. (TLSB)

25:1 lamps. Torches that consisted of a long pole with oil-drenched rags at the top. (Small clay lamps would have been of little use in an outdoor procession.) (CSB)

25:3 did not take. Conversion must be coupled with faithful perseverance. Coming to faith will do you no good if you do not stand firm to the end (Mt. 24:13). (PBC)

25:3 Streets if even large cities had no public lighting. The foolish virgins do not consider the possibility that the bridegroom might be delayed, and so they bring no extra oil for their lamps. The oil represents a faith continually sustained by the means of grace, thus able to endure until Christ's return. (TLSB)

25:5 was a long time in coming. Many early Christians expected Jesus' return in their generation. This parable implies that Jesus might not come as quickly as some expected, while encouraging the Church not to lose hope. (TLSB)

25:6 at midnight. The Jews often expected the Messiah to arrive at midnight, the time of the Passover visitation. The arrival at midnight certainly should not be taken as a literal prediction. The idea is that they be prepared like the people waiting for the Passover.

25:7 trimmed. Everyone's lamp has gone out during the period of waiting. With lamps out, the virgins prepare them quickly and then light the wicks, it is at that point that the foolish virgins realize that they need more oil, and they ask the wise virgins to give some to them. (CC)

25:9 no they replied. The fact that all must fend for themselves underscores the individuality of the Christian faith. We cannot rely on the merits of others or the intercession of saints. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 4)