

Service for Sunday, November 8, 2020 – Provided via Elim’s website, Email, and Facebook



Jesus is with us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and he will come again.

Greeting

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

Hymn

Wait for the Lord

Text: Taizé

Music: Jacques Berthier

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Wait for the Lord,
Whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord:
Be strong, take heart.

The Word

The Old Testament reading for today is from the 5th Chapter of Amos.

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even 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.
²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;
 I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
²⁴But let justice roll down like waters,
 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24)



Today's alternate Psalm is from the Wisdom of Solomon, Chapter 6.

¹⁷The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction,
 and concern for instruction is love of wisdom,
¹⁸**and love of wisdom is the keeping of wise laws,
 and giving heed to wise laws is assurance of immortality,**
¹⁹and immortality brings one near to God;
²⁰so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom. (Wisdom of Solomon 6:17-20)

The New Testament reading is from 1st Thessalonians, the 4th Chapter.

¹³We 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. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Keep awake and be ready, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. **Alleluia.** (Matthew 24:42,44)

The Gospel for today is from the 25th Chapter of Matthew. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But 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.’ ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:1-13)

Word of God. Word of life. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Message

Do you remember in the late 1950's and early 60's how people built fallout shelters in their basements in case of nuclear war? These folks were prepared...just in case. In one corner of the basement, I recall my mom putting an extra large jar of water and a couple of cans of food – probably enough to last a day. However, there were no

extra thick concrete walls to protect us in case the worst happened. And Mom likely didn't understand how long nuclear fallout would last.

I'd say that my mother thought ahead, hearing the news that a catastrophic threat loomed somewhere between imminent and somewhere on the distant horizon. She was prepared, sort of – but maybe not thoroughly enough. I admire her wanting to keep the family safe. I'd say, in this case, she was somewhere between the wise bridesmaids and the foolish ones in today's Gospel.

All of today's readings are chock full of subtle hints about what it means to wait for the Lord's coming. It doesn't mean to try and predict the date and time of return, because even Jesus tells us he does not know the specifics. Only God knows. If Jesus, God's son doesn't know, why should we expect to know the date and time?

There are books, billboards, movies, modern-day prophets that seem to know all the particulars of the event. But how in the world could they know of such privileged information? I recently read a book where the author/scientist had figured out when the second coming would occur. He used multiple calendars – the Aztec, the Hebrew, and the modern-day calendars – and many other facts and figures to determine the exact date. Just so you know – October 31, 2131 just after midnight. I truly wonder how many times, in my lifetime, have predictions been made about the time of the return of Christ. Those dates have come and gone, and we're still here - with no physical presence of Jesus walking the earth.

The foolish maidens in the Gospel were foolish because they expected everything and everyone to follow a schedule. Keep it right on track. No veering from the plan. No room for time glitches. But when the bridegroom was delayed – oh no – that just throws everything off kilter.

But there is a lesson in this. If we are so locked into times and dates and places and details, how can we plan for the Second Coming? My dear ones, we can't! God has not intended for us to sit idly by on the roadside waiting for the Jesus-train to pick us up. We have work to do. In fact, there is much work to do while we wait.

In today's Old Testament reading, we hear that God does not want our sacrifices, and icons, our fatted calves and our offerings, nor our assemblies or our rites. What our Lord wants is our loyalty and our faith.

Walking alongside loyalty is trust for and with God. God wants relationships with each of us. From the moment of our birth, we are thrust into lives of relationship: with the doctors or midwives who delivered us, with our parents and families, with teachers and religious leaders. YHWH wants relationships that are filled with love and praise for the God of all, and love and service for all in need. God desires our hearts to be filled with joy when things are good and trust and faith that God will repair our wills and relationships when things go bad.

And while we are at it, let's take a look at the feast. This feast, for the bridesmaids, would have been a splendid feast. This feast is life-giving in the present day and a glorious foretaste of what will be when Jesus returns. In our lives, we have a taste for one thing or another, even though those things aren't always necessary. But the feast that feeds us at the Lord's table is a dazzling morsel of that which is to come. I don't know about you, but I can hardly wait for that time to come.

Now don't get me wrong. I love life and I have much to do yet and much to experience. If possible, I'd like to see our son become a grandparent, see our girls graduate from high school and college and establish for themselves, lives well-lived. I wish to live in loving service for all, to care for all, no matter who they are or what they need. It is important for me to care for creation, doing my part to protect this globe from destruction by waste and greed. And how I wish to see peace everywhere: between political opponents, among tribes and ethnicities, and good health and medical care for everyone. It's up to you how you wish to use your hands and feet to serve God by serving others. We just need to get out and serve!

Is this too much to ask? I don't think so. God is the supplier of all good things. With our trust and faith in the One who can do all, peace, creation care, love and service, and good health are not pipe dreams. God's goodness allows us to work toward a world with no more hunger, no more nakedness, no more homelessness. This is what we are called to do while we wait for Jesus to return.

Yes, trust in our relationships with God is what allows us to be patient as we wait for the end of this age and the new age to come. Be prepared while we wait, just like the wise maidens who brought extra oil for their lamps. But at the same time, be willing to step forward and do the work that is required of us – to love as we have been loved.

We often think of the end days as being “caught up in the clouds” when Jesus comes a second time. This is looking at that day through an end-times lens. But Jesus also catches us in the present, in the here and now. This is the time we hold someone tenderly who is afraid or lonely. Here we pick up the crumpled newspaper blowing on the street. We can share the joy of a new baby’s birth. We can see the triumph in a child’s face as she or he rides a bicycle for the first time. The joys of this lifetime are infinite. In these joys is a foretaste of the feast together with all the saints. Here is a sample of what that day will bring. Here is but a morsel of what is to come. Alleluia. Amen.



Hymn

Rejoice, Rejoice Believers

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, Sarah B. Findlater

Tune: Swedish folk tune

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Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
and let your lights appear!
The evening is advancing,
and darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising
and soon he will draw nigh;
up, watch in expectation!
At midnight comes the cry.

The watchers on the mountain
proclaim the Bridegroom near;
go forth as he approaches,
with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting;
The gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory;
The bridegroom is at hand.

You saints, who here in patience
your cross and suff'rings bore,
shall live and reign forever,
when sorrow is no more:
around the throne of glory
the Lamb you shall behold,
in triumph cast before him
your diadems of gold.

Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
arise, O Sun so longed for,

above the darkened sphere.
 With hearts and hands uplifted,
 we plead, O Lord, to see
 the day of earth's redemption
 that sets your people free!

The Apostles' Creed

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

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

The third day he rose again from the dead.
 He ascended to heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
 From there 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 the People

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 Robyn Vinje, Scott Strand and the Elim Choir. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Holy Guide, hear the prayers for our new Bishop, Tessa Moon Leiseth. Walk with her as she leads our Synod with wisdom only you can provide. 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 in instances of racial inequality. 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.**

Holy Physician, ease the pain of all who suffer bodily ills and injuries, especially Les Rheault, Marilyn Dolezal, Sarah VanRaden, Bonnie Duggan, Jeanne Roen, Edna Mae Lewis, Judy - Curt Meyer's sister, Rose – Lenora Scheer's niece, Greg Turner, Fern Softing, Brandon - Victoria Savanh's cousin, and those we name in our hearts before you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Holy Lord of Peace, calm the winds and rains around those suffering during this hurricane season, and extinguish wildfires that threaten lands and lives. **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 Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Remembrance for the Saints

Last Sunday was All Saints' Day. However, we have received additional names for remembrance following the publishing of last week's service. Let us remember those additional saints who have walked with us on our spiritual journeys.

Prayer

Dear God, may we be reminded of those who have touched our lives with your grace and truth, bringing light and hope into our darkened places. May this day be holy for us as we remember all the Saints who sit around your throne. Amen.

Clyde, Curt Meyer's uncle
 Violet, Fern Softing's sister
 Gladys, Kimberly Kemppanion's grandmother
 Glen, Ron Anderson's brother
 Clifford, Geri Nelson's father
 Charlie Gast
 Ron Moe
 Connie, Scott Johnson's mother

The Lord's Prayer

As we have been gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the pray we have been taught.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by 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. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Sending

Blessing

May the God of all creation,
in whose image we are made,
who claims us and calls us beloved,
who strengthens us for service,
give you reason to rejoice and be glad!
The blessing of God,
Sovereign, ✝ Savior, and Spirit,
be with you today and always.
Amen.

Dismissal

Beloved of God,
go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



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