

READINGS

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalms 51:1-17

or Psalm 103:8-14

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God,
you despise nothing that you have made,
and you forgive the faults and failings
of all who confess them:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our brokenness,
may obtain of you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who lives and reigns with you and Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of compassion,
through your Son Jesus Christ
you reconciled your people to yourself.
Following his example of prayer and fasting,
may we obey you with willing hearts
and serve one another in holy love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

A Reading from the Book of Joel.

Sound the horn in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of our God is coming, it is near—
 a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like dark shadows swarming the mountains
 a great and powerful army comes;
 their like has never been from of old,
 nor will be again after them in ages to come.

“Yet even now,” says our God,
 “return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
 rend your hearts and not your clothing.”
Return to Yahweh your God,
 who is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
 and who relents from punishing.
For who knows? God may yet turn, relent,
 and leave a blessing behind—
 grain and drink offerings for Yahweh your God!

Sound the horn in Zion;
 sanctify a fast;
 call a solemn assembly;
 gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
 assemble the aged;
 gather the children, even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room,
 and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep.
Let them say, "Spare your people, O God,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:1-12

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah.

Thus says the high and lofty One
who inhabits eternity,
whose name is Holy:

Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to their God.

They say,
"Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?"

But look, you serve your own interests on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.
Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to your God?

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Only then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing spring up quickly;
your vindication shall go before you,
the glory of your God shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and your God will answer;
you shall cry for help,
and Yahweh will say, 'Here I am!'

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil;
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

Your God will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 51:1-17

Refrain: **Create in me a clean heart, O God.**

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offences.
Wash me through and through from my wickedness
and cleanse me from my sin. **R.**

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight. **R.**

And so you are justified when you speak
and upright in your judgement.
Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth,
a sinner from my mother's womb. **R.**

For behold, you look for truth deep within me,
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure;
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed. **R.**

Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquities. **R.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence
and take not your Holy Spirit from me. **R.**

Give me the joy of your saving help again
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

I shall teach your ways to the wicked,
and sinners shall return to you. **R.**

Deliver me from death, O God,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.
Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. **R.**

Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice,
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. **R.**

PSALM 103:8-14

Our God is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

**Our God will not always accuse us,
nor stay angry for ever.**

Our God has not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so is your mercy great upon those who fear you.
**As far as the east is from the west,
so far have you removed our sins from us.**

As a parent cares for a child,
so do you care for those who fear you.
**For you know whereof we are made;
you remember that we are but dust.**

Our days are like the grass;
we flourish like a flower of the field;
**When the wind goes over it, it is gone,
and its place shall know it no more.**

But the merciful goodness of our God
endures for ever for those who fear God,
and God's righteousness on the children's children;
**On those who keep God's covenant
and remember God's commandments,
and do them.**

You have set your throne in heaven, O God,
and your reign has dominion over all.

Bless God, you angels,
you mighty ones who do God's bidding,
and hearken to the voice of God's word.

**Bless God, all you heavenly hosts,
you holy ministers who do God's will.**

Give praise to God, all you works:

**in all places of God's dominion,
give praise to God, O my soul.**

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As Christ's co-workers, we urge you also not to accept in vain the grace of God, who says, "At an acceptable time I listened to you, and on a day of salvation I helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

God be with you.

And also with you.

*The Good News of Jesus Christ
according to Matthew.*

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said:

Beware of practicing your piety before others
in order to be seen by them;
for then you have no reward
from your Father in heaven.

So whenever you give alms,
do not sound a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues
and in the streets,
so that they may be praised by others.

Truly I tell you,
they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know
what your right hand is doing,
so that your alms may be done in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And whenever you pray,
do not be like the hypocrites;
for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues
and at the street corners,
so that they may be seen by others.

Truly I tell you,
they have received their reward.

But whenever you pray,
go into your room and shut the door

and pray to your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.

And whenever you fast,
do not look dismal, like the hypocrites,
for they disfigure their faces
so as to show others that they are fasting.

Truly I tell you,
they have received their reward.

But when you fast,
put oil on your head and wash your face,
so that your fasting may be seen not by others
but by your Father who is in secret;
and your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust consume
and where thieves break in and steal;
but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes
and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.

The Gospel of Christ.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.