

**FIRST READING** Acts 17:22-31

Our first reading is from the book of Acts, the seventeenth chapter which tells the story of Paul in Athens, who is facing the challenge of proclaiming the gospel to Greeks who know nothing of either Jewish or Christian tradition. He proclaims that the “unknown god” whom they worship is the true Lord of heaven and earth who will judge the world with justice through Jesus, whom God has raised from the dead. Here is the reading:

<sup>22</sup> Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. <sup>23</sup> For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

<sup>26</sup> From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live,

<sup>27</sup> so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, For we, too, are his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup> “Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. <sup>30</sup> While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

L: May the church hear what the Spirit is saying.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

L: **This morning’s psalm is from Psalm 66. It will be chanted responsively with the congregation reading the bolded text.**

**PSALM 66:8-20**

<sup>8</sup> Bless our <sup>l</sup> God, you peoples;

let the sound of <sup>l</sup> praise be heard.

<sup>9</sup> **Our God has kept us a- <sup>l</sup> mong the living  
and has not allowed our <sup>l</sup> feet to slip.**

<sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have <sup>l</sup> tested us;  
you have tried us just as sil- <sup>l</sup> ver is tried.

<sup>11</sup> **You brought us in- <sup>l</sup> to the net;  
you laid heavy burdens up- <sup>l</sup> on our backs.**

<sup>12</sup> You let people ride over our heads; we went through <sup>l</sup> fire and water,  
but you brought us out into a place <sup>l</sup> of refreshment.

<sup>13</sup> **I will enter your house <sup>l</sup> with burnt offerings  
and will pay <sup>l</sup> you my vows—**

<sup>14</sup> those that I promised <sup>l</sup> with my lips  
and spoke with my mouth when I <sup>l</sup> was in trouble.

<sup>15</sup> **I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with the <sup>l</sup> smoke of rams;  
I will give you ox- <sup>l</sup> en and goats.**

<sup>16</sup> Come and listen, all you <sup>l</sup> who believe,  
and I will tell you what God has <sup>l</sup> done for me.

<sup>17</sup> **I called out to God <sup>l</sup> with my mouth,  
and praised the Lord <sup>l</sup> with my tongue.**

<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished evil <sup>l</sup> in my heart,  
the Lord would <sup>l</sup> not have heard me;

<sup>19</sup> **but in truth <sup>l</sup> God has heard me  
and has attended to the sound <sup>l</sup> of my prayer.**

<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God, who has not reject- <sup>l</sup> ed my prayer,  
nor withheld unfailing <sup>l</sup> love from me.

**SECOND READING: 1 PETER 3:13-22**

*In our second reading, the author of 1st Peter encourages Christians to remain faithful even in the face of defamation and persecution. In baptism we are made clean to act in accordance with what is right. Here is the reading:*

<sup>13</sup> Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect.

Maintain a good conscience so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup> in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight lives, were saved through water.

<sup>21</sup> And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

L: May the church hear what the Spirit is saying.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL:**

The holy gospel according to **JOHN 14:15-21**

C: **Glory to you, O God.**

Jesus said to the disciples: <sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. <sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

P: The gospel of Christ. C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Trusting in the power of Christ's resurrection to heal and redeem our broken world, let us pray for the needs of all creation, saying "God of grace" and responding "receive our prayer".

***A brief silence.***

God of glory, you have built your church on Christ the cornerstone. Inspire lay leaders, deacons, pastors, and bishops to proclaim forgiveness and your steadfast love to all whom they encounter. Sustain our church council, committees, and all who contribute to this community. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God of mercy, you intend governments and social service agencies to be instruments of peace and justice. Guide political leaders and organizations to be agents of compassion, and raise up advocates for those who seek refuge and assistance. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God of well-being, you soothe those in distress, console all who grieve, provide for any in need, and comfort those who are sick especially Alfred, Byron, Jose, Terri, Martha, Tim, Terry, Eleanor, Bea, Abdulaziz, Meryem, Aysa, & Hasan, Alma, Sylvia, George, Harold, Joan and Orville. We also bring to you those we carry in our hearts and minds this day, silently or named aloud at this time... (brief pause). Restore them to health of body, mind, and spirit. Instill caregivers with a sense of purpose to be your healing hands in this world. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God of community, you call us together as your people for mutual support and to witness to your love in the world. We give thanks especially today for those who nurture and support, and strive to set a positive example. We know that you bless us with family in many shapes and forms and we see examples of love all around. We regret that for some, this day is challenging. Be with those who have lost their mothers, whose mothers were abusive or absent, for those who struggle with a sense of family. Make your presence known among us all. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God of eternal life, you have prepared dwelling places for your people, so that we are never separated from you. We give you thanks for the faithful departed who witnessed to your mighty acts in word and deed. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God of resurrection power, use us and these prayers to proclaim the good news of new life to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.