

Readings + 17th Sunday after Pentecost, Lect. 25 A + Sept. 20, 2026

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

First Reading Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

¹⁰ When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, how they turned from their evil ways, God had second thoughts about the calamity that God said would be done to them; and God did not do it.

⁴ ¹ But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ³ And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” ⁴ And the LORD said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” ¹⁰ Then the LORD said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.

¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”

Psalmody Psalm 145:1-8

I will exalt you, my God and king, and bless your name forever and ever.

Every day will I bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!
There is no end to your greatness.

One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power.

I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty and all your marvelous works.

They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts, and I will recount your greatness.

They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Second Reading Philippians 1:21-30

Paul writes: ²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; yet I cannot say which I will choose. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶ so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and in no way frightened by

those opposing you. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹ For God has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for Christ as well— ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Holy Gospel Matthew 20:1-16

Only Matthew relates this parable about God's generosity.

Jesus said to the disciples: "The reign of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same.

⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to

them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

¹³ But the landowner replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."