



THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A

Wisdom 6:12-16
Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

Gathering

(An unlit candle and pictures of a gate, a door and an entryway are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)

We reflect this week on the Wisdom of God at the door, always waiting for us to seek her. This is wisdom we learn: being prepared for the Lord who comes. Last week we encountered the challenge to practice what we preach and to serve, whatever our role, with a sense of humble service. How did what you said and what you did this past week match?

Prayer

(The candle is lit. The leader invites the community to take a few moments to quiet themselves in God's presence. A selection of reflective instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: Loving God, may we continue to be attentive to your stirrings in our lives. We pray to be ever more mindful of your waiting for us to draw near to you. Strengthen us

as we thirst for you in all facets of our daily life. We do so in hope that we may know more fully the abundant love you have for each one of us. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(The community prays in two alternating groups.)

I: O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

II: Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
for your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you.

I: Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.
As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

II: I will remember you upon my couch,
and through the night-watches I will meditate on you:
you are my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.

Psalm 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. The leader then poses these questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

Wisdom holds vigil, sitting by the gate, and graciously appearing to us. Her attentiveness to us is tireless. She is there before dawn. As mothers and fathers rise before their children to prepare for their day, so Wisdom is ready to guide us, even as we are resting. “God gives to his beloved in sleep,” says the psalmist. (Ps. 127) Our desire to know Wisdom is all she needs to make herself known to us. Living with a world full of care, we need her in our lives. Knowing God’s wisdom, we may learn freedom from, or at least balance with, the preoccupations that weigh us down.

Advent is on the horizon; Wisdom awaits us there. How keenly do you seek the God who seeks you? How thirsty are you for God? Are you ready for his feast? As we look to our reading from Matthew, we find a hint of Advent: the bridegroom comes. Jesus invites us to consider what wisdom entails as we hear the stories of the virgins.

Being wise means being prepared for the bridegroom. In what facets of your life are you well prepared for the bridegroom? In what areas of your life do you struggle to prepare well? While we wait for fullness of his coming, God’s Wisdom is at hand. Even when we are in darkness, Wisdom is at work drawing us into the light, drawing us to be light in our world today.

We tend our inner lamps as we gather in community. As we grow more deeply in our faith and in community, we fill our lamps with oil; we become more wise and watchful in these in between times. God’s Wisdom is always with us in our waiting.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Recall a time when you worked hard to prepare for a guest.
- ◆ How does God come to you in daily life?

- ◆ How do you tend your inner lamp? Is it full or are you running on empty?
- ◆ How is God's Wisdom guiding your life these days?
- ◆ How thirsty for God are you?

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?" "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Make time this week to be in contact with someone who is a source of God's Wisdom in your life. Let the person know what he/she means in your life.
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Listen for the sound of God's Wisdom moving in your life. Pray with this week's Responsorial Psalm found in the Opening Prayer.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment. When the sharing has run its course, members join in singing, "You Know Who I Am." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the leader prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Leader: Loving God, We thank you for the blessing and fruits of our time together. We are grateful for the ability to see your hand at work in our lives. Bless us with the grace of your Wisdom as we thirst for you in our daily lives. Keep us safe, we pray, until we meet again. Hold us in the palm of your hand. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

