

COLLECT: (*Remain Standing*)

Almighty God, who has revealed to your Church your eternal Being of glorious majesty and perfect love as one God in Trinity of Persons: Give us grace that, like your bishop Gregory of Nazianzus, we may continue steadfast in the confession of this faith, and constant in our worship of you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Wisdom 10:1-21 (*Please be seated*)

Reader: A reading from the book of Wisdom.

Wisdom protected the first-formed father of the world, when he alone had been created;

she delivered him from his transgression,
and gave him strength to rule all things.

But when an unrighteous man departed from her in his anger,
he perished because in rage he killed his brother.

When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it,
steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood.

Wisdom also, when the nations in wicked agreement had been put to confusion,
recognized the righteous man and preserved him blameless before God,
and kept him strong in the face of his compassion for his child.

Wisdom rescued a righteous man when the ungodly were perishing;
he escaped the fire that descended on the Five Cities.

Evidence of their wickedness still remains:

a continually smoking waste-land,
plants bearing fruit that does not ripen,
and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an unbelieving soul.

For because they passed wisdom by,
they not only were hindered from recognizing the good,
but also left for humankind a reminder of their folly,
so that their failures could never go unnoticed.

Wisdom rescued from troubles those who served her.
When a righteous man fled from his brother's wrath,
she guided him on straight paths;

she showed him the kingdom of God,
and gave him knowledge of holy things;
she prospered him in his labours,
and increased the fruit of his toil.
When his oppressors were covetous,
she stood by him and made him rich.
She protected him from his enemies,
and kept him safe from those who lay in wait for him;
in his arduous contest she gave him the victory,
so that he might learn that godliness is more powerful than anything else.

When a righteous man was sold, wisdom did not desert him,
but delivered him from sin.
She descended with him into the dungeon,
and when he was in prison she did not leave him,
until she brought him the sceptre of a kingdom
and authority over his masters.
Those who accused him she showed to be false,
and she gave him everlasting honour.

A holy people and blameless race
wisdom delivered from a nation of oppressors.
She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord,
and withstood dread kings with wonders and signs.
She gave to holy people the reward of their labours;
she guided them along a marvellous way,
and became a shelter to them by day,
and a starry flame through the night.
She brought them over the Red Sea,
and led them through deep waters;
but she drowned their enemies,
and cast them up from the depths of the sea.
Therefore the righteous plundered the ungodly;
they sang hymns, O Lord, to your holy name,
and praised with one accord your defending hand;
for wisdom opened the mouths of those who were mute,
and made the tongues of infants speak clearly.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 61

Reader: Let us pray together the words of **Psalm 61**.

1 Hear my cry, O God, *
and listen to my prayer.

2 I call upon you from the ends of the earth
with heaviness in my heart; *
set me upon the rock that is higher than I.

3 For you have been my refuge, *
a strong tower against the enemy.

4 I will dwell in your house for ever; *
I will take refuge under the cover of your wings.

5 For you, O God, have heard my vows; *
you have granted me the heritage of those who fear
your Name.

6 Add length of days to the king's life; *
let his years extend over many generations.

7 Let him sit enthroned before God for ever; *
bid love and faithfulness watch over him.

8 So will I always sing the praise of your Name, *
and day by day I will fulfill my vows.

Romans 12:1-21 *(Please be seated)*

Reader: A reading from the book of Romans.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Luke 8:1-15 *(Please stand as you are able)*

Priest: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.' As he said this, he called out, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!'

Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that "looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand."

'Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

Deacon or Priest: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Christ