



## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18–24

TIME AFTER PENTECOST — LECTIONARY 25

### FIRST READING: Jonah 3:10—4:11

A reading from Jonah.

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what <sup>1</sup>the people of Nineveh<sup>2</sup> did,  
how they turned from their evil ways,  
God changed his mind about the calamity  
that he had said he would bring upon them,  
and he did not do it.

<sup>4:1</sup>But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry.

<sup>2</sup>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 and merciful God,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,  
and relenting from punishment.

<sup>3</sup>And now, O LORD, please take my life from me,  
for it is better for me to die than to live.”

<sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day,  
God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered.

<sup>8</sup>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.”

<sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah,

“Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?”

And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.”

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**FIRST READING** *Nineveh = NIN-uh-vuh Tarshish = TAR-shish*

This is a biting and marvelously ironic dialogue between God and the prophet Jonah. Jonah didn't want to be God's messenger in the first place. (God finally had to transport him in the belly of a great fish.) Now Jonah is angry because the people listened to him, repented, and are being spared by God. God's point here, demonstrated in the bush that appears and disappears, is that God's compassion considerably exceeds human compassion. Jonah's whining is melodramatic in the extreme. An energetic reading that gives us a taste of that will help the hearer get the point.

<sup>10</sup>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.  
<sup>11</sup>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?”

Word of God, word of life.            *or*            The word of the Lord.

## **PSALMODY: Psalm 145:1-8**

### **SECOND READING: Philippians 1:21-30**

A reading from Philippians.

<sup>21</sup>For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.  
<sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me,  
yet I cannot say which I will choose.  
<sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two:  
my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better,  
<sup>24</sup>but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.  
<sup>25</sup>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,  
<sup>26</sup>so that, by my presence again with you,  
your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.  
  
<sup>27</sup>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  
<sup>28</sup>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.  
<sup>29</sup>For he has graciously granted you the privilege  
not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well,  
<sup>30</sup>since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had  
and now hear that I still have.

Word of God, word of life.            *or*            The word of the Lord.

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#### **SECOND READING**    *Philippians = fih-LIP-ee-unz*

The author encourages hearers to live the Christian life and helps them come to grips with suffering. Living provides the occasion to witness to faith in Christ Jesus; dying brings us directly into the presence of Christ. Both are attractive to the author. Both life and death (and even suffering!) are gifts of God for the faithful. The unique nature of the author’s dilemma should be reflected in the tone of the reading.

## GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

「Jesus said to the disciples:」

<sup>1</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

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

<sup>3</sup>When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

<sup>4</sup>and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

<sup>5</sup>When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same.

<sup>6</sup>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?’

<sup>7</sup>They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup>“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.’

<sup>9</sup>When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received a denarius.

<sup>10</sup>Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

<sup>11</sup>And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup>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.’

<sup>13</sup>But he replied to one of them,

‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?’

<sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go;

I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.

<sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?

Or are you envious because I am generous?’

<sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The gospel of the Lord.

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### GOSPEL

Beware: Familiarity can breed complacency. Strive to present the parable as if for the first time. Do not rush the repetition of “he went out.” Instead, allow each instance to underscore the persistence of the landowner (that is, God’s pursuit of humankind). Celebrate the holy, happy generosity of the Divine.