

## Bible Challenge November 12 - 18, 2017

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The Basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and included in the Sunday bulletin. You may want to recall how the passages were incorporated into the sermon. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

### INTRODUCTION

*In this week's readings, the prophet Amos calls for justice to roll down like waters. Paul urges us to encourage one another with the promised coming of the Lord. Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids. Surrounded by the faithful of every time and place, we celebrate Christ's coming in our midst in the word of life and the feast of victory—the marriage feast of the lamb.*

### DAY ONE: Amos 5:18-24

*In the days of Amos people thought that the day of the Lord would be a time of great victory, but Amos announced that it would be a day of darkness, not light. He said liturgy is no substitute for obedience. The Lord demands justice and righteousness in the community.*

<sup>18</sup>Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light; <sup>19</sup>as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. <sup>20</sup>Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? <sup>21</sup>I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. <sup>22</sup>Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. <sup>23</sup>Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. <sup>24</sup>But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

**Adventure Challenge:** Amos 5.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A* - Read an introduction to or summary of Amos. *Option B* - To see how shocking Amos' statements might be for some in the Jewish community, compare this passage to the detailed instructions in Leviticus 26.

### DAY TWO: Psalm 70

*You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, do not tarry. (Ps. 70:5)*

<sup>1</sup>Be pleased, O God, to deliver me;

O LORD, make haste to help me.

<sup>2</sup>Let those who seek my life be put to shame and confounded;

let those who take pleasure in my misfortune  
draw back and be disgraced.

<sup>3</sup>Let those who say to me "Aha!" and gloat over me

turn back because of their shame.

<sup>4</sup>Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;

let those who love your salvation say forever, "Great is the LORD!"

<sup>5</sup>But as for me, I am poor and needy; come to me quickly, O God.

You are my helper and my deliverer; O LORD, do not tarry.

**Adventure Challenge:** Read Psalm 40 to see Psalm 70 is incorporated into another psalm.

**Explorer Challenge:** Use the information and language in Psalm 70 to develop a description of the speaker and the speaker's concerns. Note the importance of *shame*, *disgrace*, and *gloat*. Do you think *seek my life* and *poor and needy* are literal concerns or metaphors for anguish? Is the speaker's life really at stake? (Hint: there probably isn't enough information to develop a definitive answer to these questions.)

### **DAY THREE: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

*Some of the Thessalonians are worried that dead Christians will be excluded from the resurrection to eternal life when Christ comes again. Paul reassures them with the word of hope that all Christians, living or dead, will be raised into everlasting life with Christ.*

<sup>13</sup>We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

**Adventure Challenge:** 1 Thessalonians 5.

**Explorer Challenge:** *Option A* - Read all of 1 Thessalonians, one of the shorter epistles. *Option B* - In this letter (particularly with the phrase *we who are alive*) Paul seems to assume that he will be alive when the Lord comes again. Compare his thinking in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 or Philippians 1:20-26.

### **DAY FOUR: Matthew 25:1-13**

*Jesus tells a parable about his own second coming, emphasizing the need for readiness at all times.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' <sup>12</sup>But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

**Adventure Challenge:** Matthew 25.

**Explorer Challenge:** This story includes marriage customs that are unfamiliar to us; research commentary on this parable to learn more. (Wikipedia is a place to start.)

### **DAY FIVE:**

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

#### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Keep awake and be ready, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. (Matt. 24:42, 44)

**Adventure Challenge:** Consider what God might want you to put on your "bucket list."

**Explorer Challenge:** Pray for illumination to know a God of both justice and love.