

prominence, even in the one place they shouldn't have any prominence, in the outward structure and life of the church. This fact causes much distress to pious followers of Christ, and they may ask, as they hear this parable, "What should be our attitude toward the church of Christ, and what can be done about the scandals that afflict it?" Jesus comes to us offering liberty in the Word of God and the wonder of life in the kingdom of God. We hear and believe that God is sovereign that He has a plan. We may not always understand or comprehend that plan, but God is in control. We are a part of that plan. We are of the group that has been called out to be saved.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

¶ Heavenly Father, by Your Son You created all things in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible. You gave Him authority over all things. We thank you that through Him we have received the spirit of adoption, so we are able to truly know You as our Father, call upon You in our prayer, and be assured that we will be heard as Your children.

Father, for Your church and Your people we pray. Grant us Pastors and teachers who are counseled and led by Your Spirit, and who earnestly hold forth the word of life. Diligently gather Your children and teach us all things whatsoever our Lord has commanded. Keep us all knit together in Your Love, that we may stand fast in one spirit, and with one mind strive together for the faith of the Gospel.

Father, let Your Spirit descend on our homes. Let the Word of Christ in all wisdom dwell richly in the children, and grant that all parents may be worthy examples of true Christian virtues. Shelter the homes where Your Word reigns supreme from all harm and danger.

O Gracious Father, from Whom all good counsels and just works come, give to Your children who may be enduring pain, sickness, the threat of disease, mental or spiritual anguish, or any other adversity of the body or soul, such an assurance of Your Love and mercy that they may commit themselves completely into Your care and receive from You all things needful for their health and healing. Above all we pray that all things would work together for the salvation of everyone.

Hear us as we bring to You our private petitions. (**Time of silent prayer.**)

Abba, Father, as You have instructed us through Your Word to let our requests come unto You, we come in loving gratitude and trust offering this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ.

© Amen.

## PROPER ELEVEN

### Chant Tone



#### Introit

Give ear, O Lord, | to my prayer;\*  
listen to my | plea for grace.

Teach me Your way, O Lord, that I  
may walk | in your truth;\*  
unite my heart | to fear Your name.  
I give thanks to You, O Lord my God,  
with | my whole heart,\*  
and I will glorify Your name  
— forever.  
For great is Your steadfast | love  
toward me;\*  
You have delivered my soul from  
the depths of — Sheol.

O God, insolent men have risen up against  
me; a band of ruthless men | seek my life,\*  
and they do not set You be — fore them.  
But You, O Lord, are a God merciful  
and — gracious,\*

slow to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love and | faithfulness.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy — Spirit;  
as it was in the be — ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. — Amen.

Give ear, O Lord, | to my prayer;\*  
listen to my | plea for grace.

(Antiphon, Psalm 86:6;  
Psalm 86:11-15)

### Collect of the Day

O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

### Gradual

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and know | ledge of God!\*  
How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscruta | ble His ways!  
For from Him and through Him and to Him | are all things.\*  
To Him be glory forever. — Amen.

(Romans 11:33, 36)

**ENTRANCE PRAYER:** O Lord our Righteousness, we, the wheat of Your fields gather together to bring You our praise and thanksgiving. We praise You for breaking down the dividing wall of hostility between us by bringing us near to You through the blood of Christ. For making it possible for us to become fellow citizens and members of Your household, we give You thanks. Keep the Holy Spirit in our hearts us that we always have access to You. Make our hearts Your dwelling place. Assure the lonely of Your presence and comfort the sick and depressed with the promise of the Resurrection. In Your will grant what we ask. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen (So be it, Lord.)

**I HAVE DRIVEN THROUGH NEW YORK BUT HAVE NEVER SEEN THE STATUE OF LIBERTY.** I drove down Manhattan Island, to no avail. The Statue was simply not visible from any of the places I went. We use a number of symbols to remind us of our liberty. We have the Statue, we have the flag, we have the Constitution, but what does it mean to live in this Republic? What is liberty? These are concepts, these are ideas, they are not something we see, they are something we experience. We use a number of symbols to remind us of the wonder of our salvation in Jesus Christ. An empty tomb and an empty cross, are the main symbols of our liberty in Christ. They are purposefully empty because the work of Jesus is finished. There isn't much to see with our eyes, and therefore we see liberty in Christ with our hearts, with our faith. Without seeing the Statue of Liberty, we know we live in freedom and liberty because of the words of the Constitution. Without seeing Jesus we know the work is over the battle is done our salvation has been won. It is all in the Word of Scripture.

#### **THEME OF THE DAY:**

Wheat and Weeds

#### **INTROIT**—(Antiphon: Psalm 86:6;) Psalm 86:11-15

Psalm 86 was written by David. Without light walking is difficult, we run the constant risk of falling down. Without being granted liberty by God, we can not listen to His Word. We proclaim the wonder that set us into liberty, cut us off from sin, and made us over to hear His Word of life and truth so that we are saved.

#### **COLLECT**

The Collect for three of the four Sundays of Advent begin with the words, "Stir up..." Dictionary.com says: "stir (verb) to move around, especially briskly; be active" We ask in Advent that God's power would be stirred up. We ask here that we would be stirred up to holiness that we would be allowed to dwell with Him forever. All this of course through the work and person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**—Isaiah 44:6-8

The text derives from the second of the two main portions of Isaiah, commonly referred to as the "Book of Comfort" In this text God indeed comforts His people. God comforts Israel with the assurance of redemption, of new life through the Spirit, and of belonging to God. The wider context of Isaiah and of all Scripture makes clear that these blessings are ultimately given in the Messianic age. The fulfillment of the entire Old Testament is the call to liberty offered in the work and the Word of Jesus.

#### **GRADUAL**—Romans 11:33, 36

In Romans 11, Paul lamented the fact that the Jews rejected Jesus and therefore salvation. These verses sing praise to God for because of their unbelief, we were chosen to believe.

#### **EPISTLE LESSON**—Romans 8:18-27

The Spirit of God groans with all creation and mankind in our state of waiting for the completed fulfillment of Salvation. Even we Christian are not able to adequately diagnose our problems or articulate solutions for our own and the world's problems because of the brokenness resulting from the fall into sin. The Holy Spirit becomes our spokesman. He gets to the inner groans of our broken relationship. God hears the Holy Spirit pleading on our behalf and grants us the liberty to hear the Word, respond with repentance and receive the benefits of salvation in Jesus.

#### **GOSPEL LESSON**—Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

This is one of the parables about the realities of the Kingdom of Heaven. The wheat represents the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, who present themselves as having great power and