## Year 2, Proper 20, Friday: Morning Prayer

*The First Lesson. The Reader begins*

## A Reading from the Book of Judith

When evening came, Holofer′nes’ slaves quickly withdrew, and Bago′as closed the tent from outside and shut out the attendants from his master’s presence; and they went to bed, for they all were weary because the banquet had lasted long. So Judith was left alone in the tent, with Holofer′nes stretched out on his bed, for he was overcome with wine. Now Judith had told her maid to stand outside the bedchamber and to wait for her to come out, as she did every day; for she said she would be going out for her prayers. And she had said the same thing to Bago′as. So every one went out, and no one, either small or great, was left in the bedchamber. Then Judith, standing beside his bed, said in her heart, “O Lord God of all might, look in this hour upon the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help thy inheritance, and to carry out my undertaking for the destruction of the enemies who have risen up against us.” She went up to the post at the end of the bed, above Holofer′nes’ head, and took down his sword that hung there. She came close to his bed and took hold of the hair of his head, and said, “Give me strength this day, O Lord God of Israel!” And she struck his neck twice with all her might, and severed it from his body. Then she tumbled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the posts; after a moment she went out, and gave Holofer′nes’ head to her maid, who placed it in her food bag. Then the two of them went out together, as they were accustomed to go for prayer; and they passed through the camp and circled around the valley and went up the mountain to Bethu′lia and came to its gates. Judith called out from afar to the watchmen at the gates, “Open, open the gate! God, our God, is still with us, to show his power in Israel, and his strength against our enemies, even as he has done this day!” When the men of her city heard her voice, they hurried down to the city gate and called together the elders of the city. They all ran together, both small and great, for it was unbelievable that she had returned; they opened the gate and admitted them, and they kindled a fire for light, and gathered around them. Then she said to them with a loud voice, “Praise God, O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hand this very night!” Then she took the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, “See, here is the head of Holofer′nes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy beneath which he lay in his drunken stupor. The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman. As the Lord lives, who has protected me in the way I went, it was my face that tricked him to his destruction, and yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me.” All the people were greatly astonished, and bowed down and worshiped God, and said with one accord, “Blessed art thou, our God, who hast brought into contempt this day the enemies of thy people.” And Uzzi′ah said to her, “O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to strike the head of the leader of our enemies. Your hope will never depart from the hearts of men, as they remember the power of God. May God grant this to be a perpetual honor to you, and may he visit you with blessings, because you did not spare your own life when our nation was brought low, but have avenged our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God.” And all the people said, “So be it, so be it!”

*The Reader concludes* The Word of the Lord.

# *The Second Lesson. The Reader begins*

**A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke**

Jesus went down to Caper'na-um, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, “Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

*The Reader concludes* The Word of the Lord.