

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Moses spoke to the people, saying,
“Obey the Lord your God
by observing his commandments and decrees
that are written in this book of the Law;
turn to the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul.
Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today
is not too hard for you,
nor is it too far away.
It is not in heaven, that you should say,
‘Who will go up to heaven for us,
and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’
Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say,
‘Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us,
and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’
No, the word is very near to you;
it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.”

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers –
all things have been created through him and for him.
Christ is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the Church;
he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

“Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law?

What do you read there?”

The lawyer answered,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

and with all your soul, and with all your strength,

and with all your mind;

and your neighbour as yourself.”

And Jesus said to him,

“You have given the right answer;

do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus,

“And who is my neighbour?”

Jesus replied,

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,

and fell into the hands of robbers,

who stripped him, beat him, and went away,

leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road;

and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him,

he passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan while travelling came near him;

and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds,

having poured oil and wine on them.

Then he put him on his own animal,

brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day the Samaritan took out two denarii,

gave them to the innkeeper, and said,

“Take care of him;

and when I come back,

I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

Jesus asked,

“Which of these three, do you think,

was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

The lawyer said, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”



SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

This is part of Moses' farewell discourse in Deuteronomy. In fact, it is a liturgical sermon urging Israel to renew the covenant, and was probably composed in the time of exile.

It suggests the concept of the law no longer written on tablets of stone but engraved on the heart, thus presaging the development of the wisdom tradition after the Exile.

Paul picked up this passage (v.14) and applied it to the gospel and the righteousness that comes by faith (Romans 10:5-8).

As C. H. Dodd pointed out, Paul is not really doing violence to Deuteronomy, which is less legalistic than, say, Leviticus: "The deuteronomic code . . . bases righteousness on the love of God, to which we should be provoked by his grace towards his people." [C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932) 165.]

Hence the first reading prepares us for the Gospel of the day, which features the double command of love.

Responsorial Psalm: 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37

Like so many other psalms, this one begins as the prayer of an individual in distress and ends on a note of assurance. Psalms such as this reflect the pattern of Christ's death-resurrection and the Christian experience of sin and justification.

Psalm 69 makes a fitting response to Deuteronomy 30:10-14, interpreted in the light of Romans 10:5-8.

OR

Responsorial Psalm: 19:8, 9, 10, 11

Psalm 19 falls into two distinct halves, perhaps indicating the combination of two different psalms. The first half is a nature psalm and praises God for his gift of sunlight. The second half, beginning with verse (8), praises God for the gift of the light of his law.

Today's selection is taken from the second half and (during the Easter Vigil) follows appropriately upon the reading from Baruch (3:9-15, 32 - 4:4, see Reading VI from the Easter Vigil), since wisdom and law (Torah) are closely akin, if not identical.

The refrain highlights the truth that the (Lord's words are Spirit and) life. The word of God is his self-communication.

This self-communication was present in creation, in Israel's Torah, but above all in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Word-made-flesh, as the Johannine prologue puts it, thereby meaning the whole history of Jesus.

The words of (Spirit and) life are therefore spoken supremely in the death and resurrection of Christ. This is God's final word to humankind, his final act of self-communication, which is the source of "everlasting life," authentic existence.

Reading II: Luke 10:25-37

This passage is a Christological hymn. The first part speaks of Christ in terms of the later Jewish concept of wisdom—the image of God personified as the agent of creation and preservation. The second part moves to the theme of redemption, but is patterned on the first part.

As preexistent wisdom, Christ was the first-born of creation; as the risen One, he is the first-born of the dead. As the agent of creation he created the cosmic powers; in his exaltation he is their victor and the head of his body, the Church.

The divine wisdom becomes incarnate in Jesus, and the incarnation reaches its climax in the cross, the source of reconciliation and peace.

It was a bold step for the New Testament to identify Christ with the preexistent "Wisdom." What led it to take this step? It was the conviction that the God who had revealed himself and acted in Jesus Christ was the same God who had created the world.

Redemption is not redemption out of the world, but the restoration of the created world when it had fallen into sin. The implications of this for the Christian attitude toward the world are far-reaching.

Christianity says a preliminary "yes" to the world as God's creation, and a preliminary "no" to it as subject to the powers of evil. But it says an ultimate "yes" to the world, because that world has been reconciled through the blood of the cross.

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

The double commandment of love has come down in two different forms. In the Marcan/Matthean form, it is Jesus who gives the command in response to a question; in the Lucan form it is elicited from the "lawyer" in response to Jesus' counter-question.

The content of the commandment is not original to Jesus, for it is a combination of texts from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Nor is it certain that the combination is original to him, for it is also found in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (although some scholars think that there it is a Christian interpolation).

It is arguable, however, that in Christian tradition the double commandment stems from Jesus and that Luke's form of it is a secondary adaptation to the dramatic exigencies of his pericope.

Even if Jesus was not the first to combine love of God and love of neighbor, he understood that combination with a unique and radical seriousness (G. Bornkamm). There can be no love of God that does not express itself in love of neighbor.

Conversely, there is no authentic love of neighbor that does not spring from love of God, for otherwise it is a refined, subtle form of self-love.

In Luke's dramatic construction, Jesus' acceptance of the lawyer's reply leads to a further question on his part. He wanted to "justify himself," to get the whole thing straight. He asks, "And who is my neighbor?" The dramatic exchange is the springboard for the parable of the Good Samaritan.

But the parable does not really answer the lawyer's question. It ends by reversing it: "Which of the three proved neighbor to him who fell among the robbers?"

It is right here that the point of the parable lies. "You shall love your neighbor" does not mean that you may love some people but not others; rather, it means: be a neighbor to another, not just indulging in general sentiments of benevolence, but doing concrete acts for the person in concrete need.

"Neighborliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. We have literally no time to sit down and ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbor or not. We must get into action and obey; we must behave like a neighbor to him" (D. Bonhoeffer).

Reginald H. Fuller