

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me,  
my Lord has forgotten me.”  
Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
yet I will not forget you.

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 first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:  
Think of us in this way,  
as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.  
Moreover, it is required of stewards  
that they be found trustworthy.

But with me it is a very small thing  
that I should be judged by you or by any human court.  
I do not even judge myself.  
I am not aware of anything against myself,  
but I am not thereby acquitted.  
It is the Lord who judges me.  
Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time,  
before the Lord comes,  
who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Then each one will receive commendation from God.

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



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – A 08

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Jesus taught his disciples, saying:

“No one can serve two masters;

for a slave will either hate the one and love the other,  
or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth.

Therefore I tell you,

do not worry about your life,

what you will eat or what you will drink,

or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food,

and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air;

they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,

and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they?

And can any of you by worrying

add a single hour to your span of life?

And why do you worry about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;

they neither toil nor spin,

yet I tell you,

even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field,

which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,

will he not much more clothe you —

you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying,

‘What will we eat?’

or ‘What will we drink?’

or ‘What will we wear?’

For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things;

and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow,

for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Today’s trouble is enough for today.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Isaiah 49:14-15

Today's selection from Second Isaiah is a song of consolation. Israel has been in exile in Babylon. Zion has felt forsaken by YHWH during those seventy years. But YHWH cannot and will not forget this people. Sooner would a mother forget the child she has borne and nursed. The evangelical poet William Cowper drew on this passage in the verse:

Can a woman's tender care  
Cease toward the child she bear?  
Yes, she may forgetful be,  
Yet will I remember thee.

(Unfortunately, this stanza is omitted in both *The Hymnal 1940* and *The Hymnal 1982*.)

This is one of the few examples in the Bible of female imagery used for God—today a welcome corrective to the predominant use of male imagery.

### Responsorial Psalm 62:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

This selection forms three stanzas, of which the first two are almost identical in thought and wording. This psalm is an expression of individual trust in God, matching the message of the gospel.

Note the repetition of “alone . . . only . . . alone” in the first two stanzas. It is a devotional expression of the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.”

The quiet trust of this psalm forms an impressive contrast to the anguished, feverish appeals of so many of the psalms of lament. God alone and no worldly thing or person is worthy of ultimate trust.

### Reading II: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Behind the divisions in the Corinthian church lay a wrong attitude toward their apostolic leaders. The Corinthians regarded them as exalted personages who had some special mystical religious knowledge (gnosis) that they imparted to those whom they initiated into the Christian faith.

Paul insists that the apostles are nothing in themselves, only servants. The Greek word is *hyperetes*, not the usual *diakonos*. It was a common word for the secretary of a religious society. But the Christian servant is a servant primarily of Christ, not just a secretary in the employ of a human society.

The other word that Paul uses for the apostles, namely, “stewards,” suggests that they are the people entrusted with the administration of someone else’s property—in this case, God’s.

What exactly are “the mysteries”? The term is commonly interpreted to mean the sacraments, but in the New Testament its usual meaning is secret truths revealed by God, primarily the gospel, though of course that would also include the sacraments.

Paul then takes up the notion of stewardship and develops the theme of fidelity as the steward’s primary duty. The Corinthians expected the apostle to show initiative and to exercise personal authority. They were criticizing Paul for not measuring up to their expectations. He did not appear as a successful “divine man,” like the false apostles Paul fulminates against in 1 Corinthians.

When Paul says that he has nothing on his conscience, this must not be generalized. All he means is that he knows he has stooped to emulate the successful divine men or wandering preachers (they were something like the successful television evangelists of our day). Paul is content to await the final evaluation of God on the last day.

### **Gospel: Matthew 6:24-34**

This section of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the disciples’ attitude toward material possessions. It is absent from Luke’s Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6) but is found later in Lk 12:22-31, and therefore comes from Q. Matthew is thought to have preserved the wording of Q better, though Luke probably has it in its original sequence in Q.

Verse 24 serves as the title to the whole section. God demands our ultimate allegiance; there can be no other ultimate allegiance, for then God would not be the ultimate.

Anxiety arises from making something other than God our ultimate concern. The ensuing passage instances concern for food, drink, and clothes—the most elementary of human needs. The argument is from the lesser to the greater: “If the birds, the grass, the flowers ... will he not much more ... you?”

Behind the argument rests faith in God as Creator. This faith is not just a matter of subscribing to the doctrine that the universe was originally created by God some thousands or billions of years ago; rather, it is a matter of present, immediate experience. We receive the world from God at this moment and at every moment of our lives as his gift.

Anxiety is the result of listening to the serpent’s temptation of Adam and Eve: “you will be like God.” It is attempting to be our own gods, to usurp God’s function as Creator.

Reginald H. Fuller