

A reading from the book of the prophet Zechariah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Thus says the Lord:
Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the warrior's bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.



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

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A 14

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

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothes and sisters:

You are not in the flesh;

you are in the Spirit,

since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ
does not belong to him.

If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
he who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also
through his Spirit that dwells in you.

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors,
not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh –
for if you live according to the flesh, you will die;
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

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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 14

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

At that time Jesus said,
“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent
and have revealed them to infants;
yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”
He continued:
“All things have been handed over to me by my Father;
and no one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
Come to me,
all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Zechariah 9:9-10

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 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

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: Romans 8:9, 11-13

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 11:25-30

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