

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Thus says the Lord:

“You shall not wrong or keep down a resident alien,
for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

You shall not abuse any widow or orphan.

If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me,
I will surely listen to their cry;

my wrath will burn,

and I will kill you with the sword,

and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you,
you shall not deal with them as a creditor;

you shall not exact interest from them.

If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pawn,

you shall restore it to that person before the sun goes down;

for it may be their only clothing to use as cover;

in what else shall that person sleep?

And if that person cries out to me,

I will listen, for I am compassionate.”



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 Thessalonians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

You know what kind of persons we proved to be
among you for your sake.

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord,
for in spite of persecution
you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit,
so that you became an example
to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Achaia = uh-KAY-yuh

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you
not only in Macedonia and Achaia,
but in every place your faith in God has become known,
so that we have no need to speak about it.
For the people of those regions report about us
what kind of welcome we had among you,
and how you turned to God from idols,
to serve a living and true God,
and to wait for his Son from heaven,
whom he raised from the dead –
Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.



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 30

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together,
and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.
“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”
Jesus said to him,
“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
This is the greatest and first commandment.
And a second is like it:
‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Exodus 22:20-26

This reading is an excerpt from the “book of the covenant” (Ex 20:22-23:19). The materials in this book are akin to many legal codes of the ancient Near East, the most famous of which is the Code of Hammurabi (twentieth century B.C.E.). The biblical code was apparently crystallized in the ninth century B.C.E.

Today’s reading comes from a section of the code dealing with laws of social conduct. They inculcate a social ethic based upon compassion. Abstract justice is not enough, especially for the underprivileged. This lesson was obviously chosen to go with the summary of the Law that forms today’s gospel reading. The effect is to slant the summary in a social direction.

Responsorial Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

This is a royal psalm of thanksgiving for victory in battle, possibly written by David himself. The selected stanzas make an appropriate hymn of praise for any occasion, but it is difficult to discern any specific connections with the other readings here, except perhaps in the refrain, which takes up the thought of the love of God found also in the summary of the law.

Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

This week we continue Paul’s thanksgiving for the progress of the Thessalonians in the gospel.

This passage is particularly important for the hints it gives of what Paul had preached at Thessalonica on his foundation visit: “you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.” From this it may be inferred that Paul’s gospel to Gentile audiences would have comprised:

- an apologetic for monotheism;
- a proclamation for the deliverance wrought by Jesus through his (death and) resurrection;
- the prospect of Jesus’ impending return.

In his evangelistic preaching to pagans, Paul could take less for granted than when preaching to the Jews. He had to start with faith in the one God.

We shall see later how the promise of the parousia would lead to serious problems for the Thessalonians when some of their number died before it occurred.

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40

The summary of the law is not original with Jesus. Its two parts represent a combination of Dt 6:5 and Lev 19:18. Nor is the combination itself original to Jesus, for it is found in at least one earlier Jewish work, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, an amalgam of wisdom and apocalyptic materials.

Jesus' thought was similarly cast in both molds, wisdom and apocalyptic, and the summary of the Law represents the wisdom facet of his teaching. Jesus undoubtedly appeared not only as the final apocalyptic preacher but also as the authoritative declarer of God's wisdom.

In the Jewish parallels, the two commandments stand side by side, as a convenient summary. Jesus understands the interlocking of the two commandments in a new and quite radical way.

You cannot have one without the other. Without the love of neighbor, the love of God remains a barren emotion; and without the love of God, love of neighbor is but a refined form of self-love.

Reginald H. Fuller