

## Bible Study

### Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle A

**Opening Prayer:** (Sign of the Cross) “Holy and Almighty God, you are Lord of all time and of timelessness, Lord of the universe and all that is in it, Lord of every human heart. Reveal your perfect wisdom to us today and fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we might know your will and have the courage to choose to do it. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

#### **Re-connecting Question**

1. Tell about an act of kindness that you experienced this week.
2. Have you ever experienced feeling like an outcast? Who reached out to you?

#### **Commentary before the First Reading: Exodus 22:20–26**

This reading is taken from a section of Exodus which spells out a number of obligations upon the Jews as God’s Chosen People. When Moses delivered these words, he did not speak them as his interpretation of what God had spoken to him on Mount Sinai; he spoke them as the very words of God. They are nonnegotiable terms of the covenant. Notice how they still apply to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in one form or another.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. Which 4 groups of persons did God single out as needing special protection from those around them?
2. Which word in verse 26 basically sums up the attitude demanded of God’s people toward these people?
3. One commentary maintains that the passage does not forbid the charging of interest for a loan, only demanding an exorbitant interest. Do you see anything here to support that statement?
4. Which phrase shows how strongly God feels about the most vulnerable in a society?

#### **Commentary before the Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10**

Thessalonica was an influential city in the time after Jesus’ death and resurrection. It was the crossroads where east (Asia) and west (Europe) met. The Christian community there was important for its visibility among the neighboring territories. St. Paul applauds them for abandoning the only gods they had ever known, idols, to place their faith in a God who could not be seen, touched, or manipulated with sacrifices.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. What sort of reception did Saint Paul receive from the Thessalonians when he first came there?
2. At that time, to be a student was to be an imitator of one’s teacher. The more perfectly one could reproduce the knowledge or actions of the teacher, the more one had learned. What did the Thessalonians learn from Saint Paul and his companions?
3. What has Saint Paul been hearing about the Thessalonians when he visits other cities?
4. What does Saint Paul say was even stronger than the ridicule and expulsion that the first Christians suffered when they began to believe in Jesus? Does he seem surprised at that?

#### **Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:34-40**

The first 5 books of the Bible contain 613 statements or commandments which begin with either “You shall...” or “You shall not...” A favorite debate topic among Jewish scholars at the time of Jesus was to attempt to prioritize those laws. Hence, the question posed to Jesus in this reading was supposed to be impossible to answer definitively, but He does. The 2 commandments that Jesus quoted do not even appear together in the Old Testament. The first is from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and the second appears in Leviticus 19:18. By connecting them, Jesus rendered further debate rather futile.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Three different groups of people, each with their own area of interest, have attempted to trap Jesus in this story and in the 2 preceding it. Identify those 3 groups of people.
2. Summarize the essence of the question which the Sadducees posed to Jesus in an attempt to trap him?
3. Which of the 2 great commandments did the Pharisees break by trying to trap and discredit Jesus?
4. Read verse 37 again. What makes that commandment so difficult to carry out?
5. Is it possible to keep either of those 2 commandments without keeping the other? Explain your thinking.

**Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives**

1. Find the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. Decide whether keeping each one is more about loving God or loving neighbor. Identify the “loving” part of each one.
2. Is it possible to be a person of faith without acting with justice and mercy?
3. How does God let us know if we are doing well at that or not?
4. How do people in our own society also try to trap Jesus at times?
5. Is there a particular saint whom you try to imitate in how you live? Explain a little about that.
6. If the widows, the orphans, the poor, and the immigrant are to have a special place in the hearts of God’s people, how could you reach out to one of those groups today or tomorrow in a very concrete way?

**Closing Prayer (*a paraphrase of Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51*)**

“I love you, O Lord. You are my strength; you are my protection; you are my defender, you are my deliverer. I praise you, O God. In your presence I feel safe, affirmed, and loved. You are a living God, unchanging since all eternity. I bless you, I honor you above all else, and I will do whatever you ask of me. Amen.” (Sign of the Cross)