

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-8** *A description of the faithful ministry of the apostles among the Thessalonians, in spite of persecution – a ministry approved by God, free from impure motives or boasting, not seeking special treatment, but caring and gentle.* As you know, brothers and sisters, our visit with you wasn't a waste of time. On the contrary, we had the courage through God to speak God's good news in spite of a lot of opposition, although we had already suffered and were publicly insulted in Philippi, as you know. Our appeal isn't based on false information, the wrong motives, or deception. Rather, we have been examined and approved by God to be trusted with the good news, and that's exactly how we speak. We aren't trying to please people, but we are trying to please God, who continues to examine our hearts. As you know, we never used flattery, and God is our witness that we didn't have greedy motives. We didn't ask for special treatment from people - not from you or from others - although we could have thrown our weight around as Christ's apostles. Instead, we were gentle with you like a nursing mother caring for her own children. We were glad to share not only God's good news with you but also our very lives because we cared for you so much.

**Matthew 22:34-46:** *Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, and he replies that it is to love God with everything and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Then he asks whose son the Messiah is. When the religious leaders reply that he is David's son, Jesus asks why David refers to the Messiah as "Lord" – and no one is able to give an answer.*

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. One of them, a legal expert, tested him. "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

He replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

Now as the Pharisees were gathering, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"

"David's son," they replied.

He said, "Then how is it that David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, called him Lord when he said, The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right side until I turn your enemies into your footstool'? If David calls him Lord, how can he be David's son?" Nobody was able to answer him. And from that day forward nobody dared to ask him anything.

## **COCU62A**

The Great Commandment resonates powerfully through this week in the Lectionary. It's significant that this is what ends the great debate between Jesus and the religious leaders in the Gospel reading – even in confrontation, the focus of Jesus is on love. The related OT reading (Leviticus) gives the original reference for the second part of the commandment, about loving our neighbours. In the continuous Old Testament readings we come to the end of Moses' life on the brink of the promised land. Moses power in leading the Israelite people is praised in this account, which evokes the memory, not just of Moses' mighty works, but also of his great patience and care for God's people – a quality which, although not specifically mentioned here, certainly contributed to his greatness. The Psalm of Moses picks up Moses' compassion and love as he pleads (as he often did) for God to care for and be kind to God's people. Psalm 1 connects with the Gospel, celebrating those who obey God's laws which, in this case, relates specifically to those who live in love of God and of neighbour. The letter to the Thessalonians describes a ministry performed in grace and love, which is focussed on bringing others into the joy of the love of God, and which expresses deep love for the people to whom the ministry is being offered.

Ultimately all of our dealings in the world will grow out of one of two sources. If fear is the primary driver of our lives, we will ensure we have more than enough weaponry to protect us and we will easily attack any person or country we perceive as a threat. If fear is our foundation, we will hoard our wealth, and we will grab what we can with little concern for the impact on others or on our environment. When fear is our foundation, we will tend to minimise care and compassion for those who are unrelated to us or different from us. But, when love is our foundation, everything changes. Love drives us to seek connection & understanding, not war. Love drives us to share what we have so that all may have their needs met. Love leads us to think carefully about how we treat our environment and how we use our resources, and how we deal with those who are suffering, even if they are unrelated to us. Authentic love is expressed in practical efforts to bring justice, in tough and vulnerable peacemaking, in concern for the "least" and most vulnerable. Authentic love recognises the connections and interdependence between all people and between us and our world. Authentic love is the most desperately needed, and most powerful, solution to the tough struggles of our time.

*(John van de Laar, [sacredise.com](http://sacredise.com))*

**Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17:** *A prayer accredited to Moses, praising God for God's greatness, God's help for God's people and God's calling of the people to turn back to God. Also a plea for God's kindness to be with God's people and for God to sustain their work.*

Lord, you have been our help,  
generation after generation.

**Before the mountains were born,  
before you birthed the earth and the inhabited world -  
from forever in the past  
to forever in the future, you are God.**

You return people to dust,  
saying, "Go back, humans,"  
because in your perspective a thousand years  
are like yesterday past,  
like a short period during the night watch.

**You sweep humans away like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning.**

True, in the morning it thrives, renewed,  
but come evening it withers, all dried up.

Come back to us, Lord!

Please, quick!

Have some compassion for your servants!

**Fill us full every morning with your faithful love  
so we can rejoice and celebrate our whole life long.**

Make us happy for the same amount of time that you afflicted us -  
for the same number of years that we saw only trouble.

**Let your acts be seen by your servants;  
let your glory be seen by their children.**

Let the kindness of the Lord our God be over us.

Make the work of our hands last.

**Make the work of our hands last!**

**Alternative Psalm 1:** *A song in celebration of the righteous whose lives are built on God's commands, and who, unlike the wicked, bear fruit and prosper.*

**Deuteronomy 34:1-12:** *Moses climbs Mount Nebo and views the whole of the promised land. Then he dies, but no one knows where his grave is. After the thirty day mourning period, Joshua takes over as leader of the Israelites.*

Then Moses hiked up from the Moabite plains to Mount Nebo, the peak of the Pisgah slope, which faces Jericho. The Lord showed him the whole land: the Gilead region as far as Dan's territory; all the parts belonging to Naphtali along with the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as the entirety of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea; also the arid southern plain, and the plain - including the Jericho Valley, Palm City - as far as Zoar.

Then the Lord said to Moses: "This is the land that I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I promised: 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have shown it to you with your own eyes; however, you will not cross over into it."

Then Moses, the Lord's servant, died - right there in the land of Moab, according to the Lord's command. The Lord buried him in a valley in Moabite country across from Beth-peor. Even now, no one knows where Moses' grave is.

Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eyesight wasn't impaired, and his vigor hadn't diminished a bit.

Back down in the Moabite plains, the Israelites mourned Moses' death for thirty days. At that point, the time for weeping and for mourning Moses was over.

Joshua, Nun's son, was filled with wisdom because Moses had placed his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to Joshua, and they did exactly what the Lord commanded Moses.

No prophet like Moses has yet emerged in Israel; Moses knew the Lord face-to-face! That's not even to mention all those signs and wonders that the Lord sent Moses to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to his entire land— as well as all the extraordinary power that Moses displayed before Israel's own eyes!

**Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 (alternative Old Testament):** *God commands Moses to tell the people to be holy as God is holy. Commands are then given that they must deal justly and fairly with one another, and must love their neighbours as they love themselves.*