

Lover of souls • Breaking open the word

Readings

Wisdom 11:22-12:2

But you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things!

2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling.

Luke 19:1-10

“Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”

You can read the full text of this Sunday's readings here:

[Scriptures for the Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C](#)

Reflection

The first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, is a beautiful description of God's perfect power, and an illustration of how God uses that power to shower love on all of God's creatures. It brings to light the fact that God cannot hate anything or anyone that God made, but wants everyone to be in relationship with God. It speaks of God as a “lover of souls” who uses gentle reminders of how to make good decisions and to move away from sin. As much as this is describing God, it is a good benchmark for us to see how we're doing as people made in the image and likeness of God.

The author of the second letter to the Thessalonians is trying to ease the fear of the community after hearing that Jesus was going to come back and end the world soon. They were told to “make every effort to be worthy of his calling,” but to not live afraid. As we heard at the beginning of the month, God does not mean for us to be afraid, but to trust in God’s constant, loving care for us.

Jesus brings the compassion and mercy of God directly and very personally to a man who was hated by his community, bringing the words of the first reading to life. Jesus reaches into life of a man who everyone else thought was irredeemable (remember the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector from last week?). Tax collectors were traitors to their neighbors and extorted them to fund their oppressors and make themselves rich in the process. All Jesus did was go to Zacchaeus’ house and treat him with kindness. That small encounter with the love of God changed Zacchaeus’ life forever. He paid back what he cheated from people with interest and gave a bunch of money to the poor. This is important—an authentic encounter with Christ doesn’t just change our feelings; it moves us to action—to be more like God.

Break open the word with your family

Kids

In the second reading, the author says that he is praying for the people who received the letter. Who would you like to pray for especially today? Who needs a little extra help today?

Teens

Who would you be in the story of Zacchaeus? Would you be like Jesus, reaching out to the unpopular? Would you be Zacchaeus, wanting a glimpse but not confident enough to approach Jesus? Would you be a person in the crowd, gasping in disbelief that

out of everyone there—good, kind people—that Jesus chose to hang out with *him*?

Adults

Re-read the first reading. What points about God stand out for you? Which ones do you measure up to in your relationships? Which would you like to do better at?

A little lectio

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to [Lectio Divina for Kids](#) to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

A little Bible study

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?
- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens before, or after?
- Read the NABRE's introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?

- If you don't have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the [Daily Readings](#) web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday's readings, head over to [The Sunday Website](#).