

The Second Reading

During our worship service, we have a formal dialogue with the Word of God. The dialogue begins with us raising our concerns of the day in the Prayer of the Day. Then God responds in the written Word in the First Reading that usually is out of the Old Testament. Then we respond with a prayer called a Psalm that is also usually out of the Old Testament. Then God's Word speaks to us again in the Second Reading.

The Second Reading is usually from an epistle in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, there are 4 Gospels about Jesus Christ (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) and there is the Book of Acts that chronicles the spread of the Church in the 30 years after Jesus' ascension into heaven. And all of the rest of the books in the New Testament are epistles that were letters written by apostles and church leaders giving instruction in how to be the church.

On Festival Days – a.k.a., Feast Days – in the church calendar, the Second Reading usually has a similar theme as the Gospel reading. This would be during Advent, Christmas, Lent, and the Easter season and on the Day of Epiphany, the Baptism of our Lord, the Transfiguration of our Lord, the Day of the Pentecost, Holy Trinity Sunday, Reformation Sunday, All Saints Sunday, and Christ the King Sunday.

On non-festival Sundays – called Ordinary Time – the Second Reading is a series of readings from throughout a particular Epistle. For instance on Sundays, November 8th & 15th, the Second Readings are from select passages from 1 Thessalonians. These readings do not correlate with the Gospel reading.

In some Lutheran churches, the Second Reading during the Easter season is not from the epistles in the New Testament, but from the Book of Acts in the New Testament.

The Second Reading always proclaims how God's Word is manifested in the life of the Church.

The Second Reading for 24th Sunday after Pentecost (Nov. 15th) is 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

Here are some of my thoughts to help you with your reflection on this text.

- This is one of two letters that we have that the apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Thessalonica.
- 1 Thessalonians is the earliest of Paul's writings in the Bible.
- This letter was probably written about 15 years after Jesus' death and resurrection occurred.
- The first Christians thought that Jesus' Second Coming would occur in their lifetimes. But when Christians started dying, questions arose about what happens to those who die before Christ returns and about what's taking Jesus so long to come back again.
- In this text, Paul is addressing the question of why the Second Coming hasn't happened yet.
- Paul assures the church that no one knows when Christ will come again. He will come like "a thief in the night".
- But Paul assures us that we are already living in the promise of Christ's salvation, so we need not worry.
- We await that glorious day like people wide awake during the day time because we live in the light of God.
- In verse 3, Paul describes the Second Coming as being like a woman in childbirth. There will be fear and pain before the joy of a new life with God.
- In verse 8, Paul encourages us "to put on the breastplate of faith and love" and wear the hope of salvation as our helmet. It is Christ who clothes us with these gifts.
- In verse 11, Paul tells us to encourage one another and to build each other up as the Church.
- Don't be afraid of the difficult times that we live in, just arm yourself with Christ and keep loving one another.

Conclude with the Prayer of the Day for Sunday, Nov. 15th:

Righteous God, our merciful master, you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.