

# This week's Scripture - Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October - Proper 25A

## Leviticus 19.1-2, 15-18 and Psalm 1; 1 Thessalonians 2.1-8; Matthew 22.34-46

**Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18:** This portion of the law called upon the people to be holy as God is holy, and to live into justice. The people are called not to take advantage of their neighbours, not to slander them, and not to hate them; instead, they are called to love their neighbour as themselves.

**Psalm 1:** The book of Psalms begins with a psalm that speaks of the blessings for those who live into God's ways. This psalm of wisdom refers to those who take joy in God's law. They are like trees whose roots are near streams of water, and in all they do, they prosper, and their leaves do not wither. For those not rooted in God's ways, they are blown away like chaff in the wind, with no roots. The wicked will not stand in time of judgment; they will fall, for God is with the righteous.

**1 Thessalonians 2.1-8:** Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his early days of ministry, which included a time in Philippi (well before he wrote the letter to the Philippians) when Paul and his companions suffered insults. Paul writes that what he and his companions preach of is not based on false motivations, but simply the truth, the Good News. Paul and his companions didn't come seeking worldly praise or flattery, but simply to care for them and share the Good News with them.

**Matthew 22.34-46:** Jesus was once again challenged about his authority by those around him. When a lawyer asked a question to test him about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered with two: the Shema (call to prayer) of Deuteronomy 6:4 to love God with our whole being, and Leviticus 19:18 about loving our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus declared that this is the meaning of Scripture (the law and the prophets was widely accepted as canon by the time of Jesus). Jesus then poses a question back to them: whose son is the Messiah? Jesus quotes from Psalm 110, and claims that the Messiah cannot be the son of David, if David calls the Messiah, the anointed king, Lord. The Messiah must be more than what David was. No one asked him any more questions after that.

**Reflection:** One of Aesop's well-known fables concerns a dispute between the North Wind and the Sun. Each claimed to be stronger than the other and they agreed to try their powers upon a traveller, to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it around himself. Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveller, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders: then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had gone many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad and with his face lifted to receive the Sun's warmth and light.

It's a tough challenge to love our neighbours even if they mean us harm or are simply so different that we can see no common ground. It's a tough challenge to put our whole being into loving God. We're often weary, stressed and overburdened by relationships and complications in our lives. They are like that strong North Wind that made the traveller tighten up his protective defences. We need to lift our faces towards God's Son, allowing him to warm us and open us up to receiving his gentle loving kindness. If we look to him with all the longing of our hearts, our souls and our minds, he will respond to our longing like the sun, touching us with his gentle love, warmth and comfort.

## Praying with others...

### Call to Worship

God of our ancestors made a promise, long ago;

God's steadfast love endures forever.

God is made known to us through Christ Jesus our Lord,

God's steadfast love endures forever.

God continues to be revealed through the Holy Spirit,

God's steadfast love endures forever.

Come! May we worship God, who was, and who is, and who is to come,

The Almighty, whose love endures forever.

### Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we confess that we have failed to remember Your covenant with us.

We turn from Your ways to the ways of this world we created, seeking selfish gain.

We forget to love our neighbours and simply tolerate them, if that.

We complain and quarrel and are bitter.

We at times fail to believe that You are still at work in our world.

Forgive us for our faithlessness.

Forgive us for not trusting in You.

Forgive us for not living into Your ways of love, and loving our neighbours as ourselves.

Call us back into repentance, into Your way, Your truth, and Your life for us,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Assurance of Forgiveness

Listen! God is calling your name.

God knows the hairs on your head.

God knows your heart.

Listen! Hear the Good News: God's love endures forever.

There is nothing you can do to separate you from God's love.

There is nowhere you can go where God cannot find you!

Listen! Turn back to God, and know God's love has always been with you, is with you now,  
and will lead you home.

Amen.

### Prayer

Alpha and Omega, You are the one who makes all things new.

As seasons come to an end, You turn the wheel and the new season begins.

Guide us in this time of seasonal change in our lives, on the earth, and in our world.

May the new season bring for us a hope for peace, a hope for justice.

May the new season cause us to change our ways to live into Your hope for us.

May we not despair because of the world humanity created,

but may we rejoice because You are our Creator.

You made the heavens and earth, and You make all things new.

Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, may we know a new beginning in You,  
in this moment, in the now.

Amen.