

A Reading from the Book of Genesis

(1:26 – 28)

(Male and Female God created them)

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of Genesis

(2:4 – 9, 15 – 24)

(A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs

and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the First Book of the Prophet Samuel

(18:1b, 3, 20:16 – 17, 42a)

(The Lord shall be between me and you...)

The soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the LORD seek out the enemies of David.” Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life. Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, for ever.’”

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of Ruth

(1:8 – 11b, 14 – 18)

(Where you go, I will go)

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and turned to go back to her people, but Ruth clung to Naomi.

So Naomi said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge;

your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried.

May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of Ruth

(1:16 – 17)

(Where you go, I will go)

"Do not press me to leave you

or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;

where you lodge, I will lodge;

your people shall be my people,

and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—

there will I be buried.

May the LORD do thus and so to me,

and more as well,

if even death parts me from you!"

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes

(4:9 – 12)

“Two are better than one...”

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Song of Solomon (2:10 – 13; 8:6 – 7)
(*Many waters cannot quench love*)

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Song of Solomon

My beloved speaks and says to me:

Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;

for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle dove
is heard in our land.

Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.

Love can't be bought, love can't be sold—
it is not to be found in the marketplace;
it is only found in the heart.

Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Song of Songs

(2:8 – 10, 14, 16a; 8:6 – 7a)

Hark! my lover—here he comes
springing across the mountains,
leaping across the hills.

My lover is like a gazelle
or a young stag.

Here he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattices.

My lover speaks; he says to me
“Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and come!

“O my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the secret recesses of the cliff,

Let me see you,
let me hear your voice,

For your voice is sweet,
and you are lovely.”

My lover belongs to me and I to him,
He says to me:

“Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;

For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether-world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.

Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away.”

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Hosea (2:20 – 24)
(*I will take you for my wife in faithfulness...*)

I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.

On that day I will answer, says the LORD,

I will answer the heavens

and they shall answer the earth;

and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,

and they shall answer Jezreel;

and I will sow him for myself in the land.

And I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah¹,

and I will say to Lo-ammi², ‘You are my people’;

and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’

The Word of the Lord.

¹Lo-ruhamah means Not pitied

²Lo-ammi means Not my people

Tobit (8:5b – 8)

(That she and I may grow old together)

Some eight centuries before Christ, a man by the name of Tobias traveled to a far away country to do some family business. While there he fell in love with a beautiful woman whose name was Sarah. Sarah had had eight weddings before, but on each of her previous wedding nights an evil spirit came and killed her husband. In this reading, she and Tobias have just married and prior to their wedding night they say this prayer and the great archangel Raphael defends them.

A Reading from the Book of Tobit

When Tobias and Sarah were alone behind closed doors, Tobias got up from the bed and said to his wife, “Get up dear. Let us pray for the Lord to be merciful and to protect us.” Sarah got up so they could pray together and ask God for protection. Then Tobias prayed:

“God of our ancestors, you are worthy of praise.

May your name be honored forever and ever

by all your creatures in heaven and on earth.

You created Adam and gave him his wife Eve to be his

helper and support.

They became the parents of all humankind.

You said, ‘It is not good for the man to live alone.

I will make a suitable helper for him.’

Lord, I have chosen Sarah because it is right,

not because I lusted for her.

Grant that she and I may find mercy and grow old together.”

They both said “Amen” — and they slept through the night.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (12:9 – 11)
(Let love be genuine)

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

(Love is patient and kind)

(13:1 – 13)

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians
(5:17 – 20)
(See, everything has become new...)

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (12:9 – 18)
(Let love be genuine)

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians (3:14 – 19)
(The Father from whom every family is named)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians

(5:1 – 2, 21 – 33)

(Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians (3:12 – 17)
(Love which binds everything together in harmony)

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians (NLT)
(3:12 – 15)

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the First Letter of St. John (4:7 – 16)
(*Let us love one another for love is of God*)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

The Word of the Lord

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. Matthew (5:1 – 10)
(The Beatitudes)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. Matthew (5:13 – 16)
(You are the light...Let your light so shine)

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. Matthew (7:21, 24 – 29)

(Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. Mark

(10:6 – 9, 13 – 16)

(They are no longer two but one)

Many people were gathered around Jesus and, as was his custom, he again taught them, along with his disciples, saying, “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’”

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. John (15:9 – 12)
(*Love one another as I have loved you*)

(On the night before he died, Jesus gathered his disciples and told them these words...)

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

The Word of the Lord.

A Reading from the Gospel According to St. John (2:1 – 11)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.’ So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.’ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.