



God's Word for this Week  
Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020  
(The Fourth Sunday before Advent)

The Collect of the Day

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have kindled the flame of love in the hearts of the saints:  
Grant to us the same faith and power of love,  
that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,  
we may be sustained by their example and fellowship;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The First Reading

Joshua 3: 7-17

<sup>7</sup> The Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. <sup>8</sup>You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, "When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan." ' <sup>9</sup>Joshua then said to the Israelites, 'Draw near and hear the words of the Lord your God.' <sup>10</sup>Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you your enemies. <sup>11</sup>The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup>So now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. <sup>13</sup>When the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a single heap.'

<sup>14</sup> When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. <sup>15</sup>Now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in

the edge of the water, <sup>16</sup>the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing towards the sea of the Dead Sea, \* were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup>While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

*Israel stands on the banks of the Jordon and on the very brink of the fulfilment of God's promises, with the Ark of the Covenant at the centre of this scripture. These are dangerous moments for Israel as the river is at flood stage. Yet the ark goes before Israel into the Jordan's waters showing that the 'Lord of all the earth' and the 'living God' remains triumphant and powerful even in the most dangerous moments of Israel's journey.*



## The Epistle

## 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13

9 You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; \* we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was towards you believers. <sup>11</sup>As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup>urging and encouraging you and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

*The idea that God's word is different because it is actively 'at work within' us is worth some consideration. The phrase that begins John's Gospel – 'in the beginning was the Word and the word was with God and the word was God..' comes to mind. Remember that God 'spoke' the world into being; commanding the light; the waters and the earth itself. Word is a very powerful thing. Far more than a verbal communication, it has the ability to create or destroy.*



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**FATHER, WE  
HAVE THE  
ABILITY TO  
CREATE OR  
DESTROY WITH  
ONE WORD.**

Open our hearts to receive you so that what comes from our hearts and mouths is a positive and creative force.





## The Gospel Reading

## Matthew 23: 1-12

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 24 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 25 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach. 26 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,\* and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 27 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 28 They love to have the place of honour at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 29 and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have people call them rabbi. 30 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.\* 31 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. 32 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.\* 33 The greatest among you will be your servant. 34 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.



*A phylacterie is a box containing four pieces of scripture which may be worn on the forehead of a member of the Jewish faith for prayer. It symbolises the scriptures as being forefront in the mind. Similarly another type of phylacterie can be bound to the forearm and around the finger of the hand. This symbolises God's word travelling down the arm and into the hands (actions) of an individual. The fringes (blue and tied to the four corners of the garment worn) represent the Commandments given to Moses*

*as stated in the book of Numbers - "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, ... that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord" (Numbers 15:38-39).*

*Jesus did not reprimand the religious authorities for the wearing of these items but for the emphasis on outward appearance whereas the word of God should be worn deeply within one's heart first and foremost. Our Gospel this week reminds us of that small quiet place within ourselves where we connect with God in Jesus' own words ..*



*If we are operating within the realms of outward appearances, we are doing so to please or impress other people or to make them think more highly of us. Why is that need within us? God offers us a solid foundation of unconditional love. That is not to say that we are perfect but that we are accepted in our perfect and imperfect moments throughout our lives. If we begin to operate from a place of acceptance the need to impress disappears within ourselves and is replaced, quite naturally, by peace and joy.*



What are the areas in your life where you feel the need to impress an individual or group?

What would it feel like to be free of this need?

Father, you have created us and you know us. Remind us today that we are loved unconditionally by you; that you guide us forward through our perfect and imperfect moments and encourage us to learn and grow. Help us to find in your acceptance of us, a solid place to begin to change our hearts and the way we live, that we may have life in abundance and bring your love into the lives we encounter. Amen.

