

In this reading Paul summarizes the heart of the law and urges a way of life in full awareness of the nearness of salvation. All the commandments and all human responsibility for others are fulfilled by “loving your neighbor as yourself.” Disciples must recognize that the nighttime of sinfulness is passing. The daylight, the time for new conduct and the following of Jesus, now comes.

Listen now for these words from the book of Romans

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Matthew 18:15-20

Our gospel presents teaching about how to deal with sin and grievances within the Christian community. The early churches did not have established codes and regulations and had to fashion their own ways of dealing with such matters. Here every effort is made to bring the sinful member to repentance. Failing this, the individual is to be treated as outside the church. Such decisions are understood to be ratified in heaven and by Christ's presence even in the smallest of Christian gatherings.

Hear now these words from the gospel of Matthew

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be^[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[e] loosed in heaven.

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior

All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.