

Reflecting

On Sunday's Readings

September 2025

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minutes format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.** (The booklet *A Facilitator's Guide* is available from Emmaus Journey to provide additional practical training for leading lively and informative small-group discussions.)
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see that this passage ties into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear Scripture read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely,

Richard A. Cleveland
Info@emmausjourney.org

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On Sunday's Readings

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—September 7, 2025

Introduction: Christianity is aptly called a mystery, and our beliefs, the mystery of faith. This week's Gospel reading introduces one of the most important aspects of that mystery; the cost of discipleship. That term itself, *cost* of discipleship, introduces an enigma, for salvation is offered as a *free* gift. It's no wonder that some have become confused and seek to earn that which can only be given; eternal life. And some have become irresponsible, willing to invest nothing for that which is so costly.

The thief on the cross is perhaps the best example of the free gift of salvation. The thief did nothing to earn salvation. His knowledge of Jesus was limited and his faith immature and undeveloped—yet he had enough faith to ask, “Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom.” To this meager faith Jesus freely grants salvation, assuring the thief that, “This day you will be with me in paradise.”

Consider for a minute what would have happened if, after being granted the promise of paradise the thief had been taken down from the cross and released rather than having been left to die? What would have been required of him? In his gratitude for salvation and possessing new life in Christ he would be faced with some life changing decisions. Would he simply resume his old life of thievery, or not? Would the people who had influenced him previously be allowed to have the same continuing influence, or not? Would his old desires and values, that led him into a life of thievery still reign in his life, or not? The only reasonable alternative was for him to become a genuine follower of his Savior Jesus, but to do so would have cost him dearly. His family, friends, society and even his old nature would all resist a life of true dedication to following Jesus. You can almost hear his family and friends saying, “After all, you can be religious without going overboard, can't you?”

For each of us there comes a time when we are faced with the decision whether we will follow Christ wholeheartedly and without reservations. It is important to consider the cost, and as well to consider the benefits. For if we fail to consider the cost we might easily turn back from the journey when our life as a believer becomes difficult. If we fail to consider the benefits, we will never make the right decision to forsake all and follow him, for we will only see the possible cost. In my fifty-seven years of following Christ I have never met one man or woman who weighed the cost and made this decision to follow Christ wholeheartedly, who ever expressed regret. Rather they always spoke from the perspective that they had given so little and had received so much. On the other hand, I have known some who having put their hand to the plow without considering the cost, turned back, and others who out of fear of the cost never made the decision to wholeheartedly follow Jesus. For these, their life is characterized by an element of sadness usually expressed in terms of regret. We cannot out give God, and when we wholeheartedly give him our life, he gives it back a hundredfold.

In his book *Life Together* Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it well, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him, ‘come die.’” We cannot follow Christ from afar, hanging back on the fringes of the committed, for it is in that never-never land on the fringes of commitment where we are most likely to be torn apart by the spiritual forces pulling us in opposite directions. Consequently, when Jesus says, “Therefore, whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple,” he does us a favor. For the key to happiness as a Christian need not be a mystery, it is wholehearted, unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ. Anything less, simply creates a war zone in our soul which tears us apart and makes us miserable, half-hearted Christians.

First Reading — Wisdom 9:13-18

¹³For what man can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? ¹⁴For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail, ¹⁵for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.

¹⁶We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens? ¹⁷Who has learned thy counsel, unless thou hast given wisdom and sent thy holy Spirit from on high? ¹⁸And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and men were taught what pleases thee, and were saved by wisdom.”

1. How does this passage clarify why we must have faith as a little child to follow Christ?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 90:3-6, 12-17

³Thou turnest man back to the dust, and sayest, “Turn back, O children of men!” ⁴For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. ⁵Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning: ⁶in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. ...

¹²So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

¹³Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on thy servants! ¹⁴Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. ¹⁵Make us glad as many days as thou hast afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.

¹⁶Let thy work be manifest to thy servants, and thy glorious power to their children. ¹⁷Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Second Reading — Philemon 9-10, 12-17

...⁹yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an ambassador and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—¹⁰I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment. ... ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

¹³I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

2. How does this account of Onesimus, the slave, and Saint Paul’s intercession for him reflect the message of salvation and discipleship?

Gospel Reading — Luke 14:25-33

²⁵Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

3. How would you describe your journey of commitment to be Jesus’ disciple?
4. What aspect of life do you struggle with that hinders your wholehearted commitment?

5. How do we build upon our foundation—our baptismal vows?

Scripture text is from the *Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, (New York: The National Council of Churches) 1997, c1994.
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Reflecting

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THE EXHALATION OF THE HOLY CROSS—September 14, 2025

Introduction: “What is the reason Catholics have a cross with Christ hanging on it and Protestants have the empty cross?” is a question I recently received from someone who is in the midst of their journey to Catholicism. This question introduces a much deeper question than why Protestants and Catholics choose different symbols to explain their faith. The deeper question is, “Why was Christ’s death on a cross even necessary?”

In this week’s Gospel reading, Jesus refers to the incident with Israel in the wilderness. The Israelites sinned against the Lord due to their ingratitude for God’s salvation from Egyptian slavery, and salvation from sure death in the desert, by his provision of manna in the wilderness. Their complaining spirit was an indictment against God by a people who considered God’s salvation “worthless.”

Many began to die from the bite of serpents due to their sin, and rightly so, but God, ever merciful, provided a means for their continuing salvation. Moses was commanded to erect a brass serpent which the people could gaze on when bitten, and be saved. What a foolish means of salvation this must have seemed to the people, but to avoid death and be saved they had to acknowledge their sin and by faith humbly accept God’s means of salvation.

This incident is an Old Testament sign of the coming salvation through Jesus. Raymond Brown points out in his commentary on John’s Gospel that people were saved not by the brass serpent that they saw but by the Savior of all. It is the turning of one’s heart to the only God who can save, that one is saved.

Today, as in New Testament times, many speak of the “foolishness” of the Cross, the foolishness of God’s salvation. Many cannot grasp the wonder of the incarnation — that God so loved humankind that he would send his Son from heaven to become a Sacrifice, Savior, and Lord for the very people who reject him. Many cannot envision a love so strong that a heavenly Father would sacrifice his only Son. Nor can they envision a love so merciful that a Divine Son would willingly abandon the glory he was due and freely submit to the brutal trial and death of the Cross, to redeem the very perpetrators of this travesty of justice. To the foolish it is incomprehensible that one could be sinless as Jesus was, or that one so sinless would willingly become the propitiation for the sins of humankind.

For those who believe, it is not foolishness to acknowledge their sin and to look to Jesus’ sacrifice as the means of salvation. For us the Cross becomes a triumphal symbol. As the Second Reading indicates, the Father, aware of the significance of what the Son has done, has highly exalted Jesus and given him a name that is above every other name. For us, exaltation in the Cross of Christ is the only reasonable response to a salvation so grand, to a life so worthy, and to the salvation which he garnered for us, wonderfully snatching us from the jaws of certain eternal death.

St. Augustine challenges us, “Brethren, let us then fearlessly acknowledge, and even openly proclaim, that Christ was crucified for us; let us confess it, not in fear but in joy, not in shame but in glory.

“The apostle Paul saw Christ, and extolled his claim to glory. He had many great and inspired things to say about Christ, but he did not say that he boasted in Christ’s wonderful works: in creating the world, since he was God with the Father, or in ruling the world, though he was also a human like us. Rather, he said: *Let me not boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Why do we choose to express our faith through a crucifix rather than just an empty cross—because we worship and honor the Savior who died there and rose again for our salvation. Jesus said that he must be “lifted up”, and we remember and honor the Savior of the Cross and not simply the wood upon which he hung. We hang the crucifix in our churches, in our homes, and around our necks as a symbol and boast of God’s love for us and the world, and as a visible reflection of our love for him and reliance upon his sacrifice to save and heal our souls.

* *The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. II*, (page 433).

First Reading — Numbers 21:4-9

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” ⁶ Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷ And the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

1. What can we learn about how we should respond to God’s salvation from this incident?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 78:1-2, 34-38

¹ Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ² I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ...

³⁴ When he slew them, they sought for him; they repented and sought God earnestly. ³⁵ They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer. ³⁶ But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues. ³⁷ Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not true to his covenant.

³⁸ Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often, and did not stir up all his wrath.

Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11

⁶ Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. What new aspect of Christ, or of his sacrifice on our behalf did you discover in this passage? Why is it important to you?

3. What do the actions of bowing the knee and confessing with the tongue imply regarding our relationship to Christ?

Gospel Reading — John 3:13-17

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

4. Identify as many aspects of the Good News which are revealed in this passage as you can?

5. Why do you think that God was not interested in sending Jesus here to condemn us?

6. What are some accurate synonyms that could amplify what it means to believe?.

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THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—September 21, 2025

Introduction: Recently I observed an experiment on television that endeavored to test the theory that people who go to church are more honest than people who do not. Several wallets were placed on the ground at different locations outside of a church's entrance to see what would happen as people exited from worship. In every case the wallet was picked up and taken into the church office to find the owner. A similar experiment was tried outside of a busy downtown office complex. Several times the wallet was picked up and kept without any attempt to find the owner. The conclusion was that churchgoers are more honest. Hopefully so! But it would have also provided helpful insight to determine if those people downtown who kept the wallet also participated in some way in a local church.

Unfortunately, many professed Christians do live life with a split personality, behaving one way when surrounded by other believers and behaving another way when not around professed believers. This dichotomy of life is one of the things that drains joy from life and causes believers to be unhappy and miserable Christians. It is this duality of life that Jesus speaks of in this week's Gospel reading when he says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." **Many of us don't believe Jesus on this point and try to serve both, but we get torn apart in the process.**

The point Jesus is making in this parable it seems, is that we will be able to determine our future behavior by noting the consistency with which we now practice honesty and faithfulness even in the little things of life. If someone is scrupulously honest and faithful in the little things, when they are given bigger responsibilities, they will be scrupulous there also. On the other hand, if someone has no qualms about cutting corners on the little things in life we should not be surprised if they cut corners on the more important things of life when it comes to honesty and faithfulness. For instance, when you are given change after making a purchase and you discover that you were given a quarter or a dollar too much change, do you pocket it, or turn around and go back to the clerk and return it? Your response to be faithful and honest with little opportunities like this, indicates your inclination towards faithfulness and honesty regarding bigger things.

During this time of rampant dishonesty and unfaithfulness, where we can often also be the victim of another's dishonesty, why not just keep it? Won't it simply even out the times when we were short-changed by someone else's dishonesty? You know the old saying, "Finders-keepers, losers-weepers." Isn't it okay to simply be a keeper sometimes?

The answer to all these questions is, "No!" There is only one reason not to embrace this worldly philosophy; our love for, and desire to please the Truth, our faithful Savior. If our motive is to serve God, we will serve him even in the little things. We honor him by our behavior whether we are observed by others or not. We can be assured that we are always observed by him, and that he will see our faithfulness and honesty as the expression of our love for him.

We cannot love God and mammon, so let's love God by being faithful. "While there is much in the world to love, it is best lived in relation to the One who made it. The world is beautiful, but much fairer is the One who fashioned it. The world is glorious, but more delightful is the One by whom the world was established. Therefore, let us labor as much as we can, beloved, that love of the world as such may not overwhelm us and

that we may not love the creature more than the creator. God has given us earthly possessions in order that we may love him with our whole heart and soul.” (Caesarius of Arles from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Vol. II*)

First Reading — Amos 8:4-7

⁴Hear this, you who trample upon the needy, and bring the poor of the land to an end, ⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great, and deal deceitfully with false balances, ⁶that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the refuse of the wheat?”

⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.”

1. How should our “sabbath” worship affect our weekday commerce?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 113:1-2, 4-8

¹Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD! ²Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore! ...

⁴The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! ⁵Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, ⁶who looks far down upon the heavens and the earth? ⁷He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, ⁸to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.

Second Reading — 1 Timothy 2:1-8

¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. ³This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time. ⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

⁸I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ...

2. Why is prayer such an integral part of living uprightly as a Christian?

Gospel Reading — Luke 16:1-13

¹He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. ²And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ ³And the steward said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ ⁸The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

¹⁰“He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

3. Disciples are stewards. What is the relationship between faithfulness and stewardship?

4. Describe the behavior of someone who is “faithful in the unrighteous mammon.”
5. What problems are encountered when someone endeavors to serve two different masters?
6. If someone has had problems with faithfulness in the past, what would you recommend as the next steps ?

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THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—September 28, 2025

Introduction: What is the message Jesus is endeavoring to illustrate through the story of the rich man and Lazarus? Did Jesus primarily want to communicate the horrors of damnation, the importance of being merciful, or the unresponsiveness of people to the truth? All three of these themes are present in the story.

When we read of the rich man's plea for mercy and for a few drops of water to quench the torment and anguish of the flames of Hades it should certainly give us reason for concern. His punishment raises the question of *our* life's direction and whether we are bound toward an eternity of peace with God or an eternity of torment and separation from God.

When we recognize that the rich man was not in Hades for committing some terrible crime but that his predicament was brought about by his unmerciful lifestyle, it should cause us to pause and think. Do we walk around and ignore the less fortunate that we encounter? Are we oblivious to their physical and social dilemma? It is obvious from this story, as well as a myriad of other Scripture passages, that God puts a high premium on care and concern for the poor and unfortunate people of the world, and holds us accountable for how we respond to them.

The rich man's mercy was not present in this life when he encountered Lazarus and people like him. It only seemed to appear when in the torment of Hades he realized that others in his family might be joining him. His mercy reached out from there to his brothers in hope that someone from eternity might go to them to warn them of their impending doom if they did not become more merciful. It sounds like a good idea, at first glance, but Jesus knew the hearts of people and that it wouldn't make a difference to those who are already ignoring God. Do you remember in Saint Luke's Gospel the story of another Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead? Those who were disinclined to believe went right on not believing even though Lazarus arose from the dead to witness to them. **More importantly Jesus himself came back from the grave to communicate God's message of love to people.** Though he was seen and heard prior to his ascension, those who were disinclined to believe the Scriptures (Moses and the Prophets) continued on in their disbelief in spite of someone returning from the dead. The rich man's good idea doesn't work.

Perhaps the truth of this story is that now is the time to repent. If we have not been serious with God and have only half-heartedly responded to him and his Word, the message of this story is to repent and do it now. Stop waiting for some profound sign, like someone communicating from the dead, rather listen to the Scriptures and believe and obey. Though we cannot describe in detail all that hell will entail, the fact that it is described as a continual burning torment in flames, means that it is a pretty awful eternal future. So the message is, repent and believe now, to escape the torment later, and to recognize that true repentance and belief will affect the way we relate to others and show them mercy.

Bede the Venerable, a wise and holy monk whose life spanned the seventh and eighth centuries, wisely put in perspective the decision we face regarding the direction of our life and the need to repent. He advised,

“Do not rejoice in the things of this world, but remember the sins which you have committed and spend the short time which is allotted to you on this earth looking for the joys of the heavenly kingdom. **You do not want to find that your pursuit of earthly enjoyment produces a situation in which you will be a beggar in eternity, weeping and wailing forever in your torment.**” (from the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol. XI)

First Reading — Amos 6:1, 4-7

¹“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! ... ⁴“Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; ⁵ who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music; ⁶who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! ⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first of those to go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall pass away”

1. What are the dangers people face in making an eternal decision from within their current comfort and complacency?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 146:7-10

[Happy is he who keeps faith forever] ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, thy God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD

Second Reading — 1 Timothy 6:11-16

¹¹ But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;

¹⁵ and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

2. What does it mean to “aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness”?

3. Describe the attitude and behavior of one who is trying to “take hold of the eternal life to which we have been called.”?

Gospel Reading — Luke 16:19-31

¹⁹ “There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ ²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’

³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’

³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.’”

4. When you encounter someone asking for a handout how do you relate to the person? Has God allowed you to encounter other poor people in your life? How do you feel about contact with them?

5. How do you feel about facing eternity? Is it scary to you? Why, or why not?

6. Do you have relatives that need warning about their future eternal direction? What can be done to get the message to them now?

Scripture text is from the *Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, (New York: The National Council of Churches) 1997, c1994. *Reflecting On Sunday's Readings*, Copyright 2025, Richard A. Cleveland, available at emmausjourney.org .