



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4–10**  
TIME AFTER PENTECOST — LECTIONARY 23

**FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

A reading from Deuteronomy.

<sup>15</sup>See, I have set before you today life and prosperity,  
death and adversity.

<sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God  
that I am commanding you today,  
by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways,  
and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances,  
then you shall live and become numerous,  
and the LORD your God will bless you  
in the land that you are entering to possess.

<sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you do not hear,  
but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them,

<sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish;  
you shall not live long in the land  
that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

<sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today  
that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.

Choose life so that you and your descendants may live,  
<sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him;  
for that means life to you and length of days,  
so that you may live in the land  
that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors,  
to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The word of the Lord.            *or*            Word of God, word of life.

**PSALMODY: Psalm 1**

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**FIRST READING**

The issues in this reading are clearly life and death issues. The reading must sound like it. Make clear the switch from positive to negative at verse 17 by stressing the “but.” Verse 19 begins the summary and final exhortation. “Choose life” is, of course, the kernel of this reading.

## SECOND READING: Philemon 1-21

A reading from Philemon.

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,  
To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker,

<sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier,  
and to the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>When I remember you in my prayers,  
I always thank my God <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love for all the saints  
and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective  
when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.

<sup>7</sup>I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love,  
because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup>For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ  
to command you to do your duty,

<sup>9</sup>yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—  
and I, Paul, do this as an old man,  
and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

<sup>10</sup>I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus,  
whose father I have become during my imprisonment.

<sup>11</sup>Formerly he was useless to you,  
but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me.

<sup>12</sup>I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.

<sup>13</sup>I wanted to keep him with me,  
so that he might be of service to me in your place  
during my imprisonment for the gospel;

<sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent,  
in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.

<sup>15</sup>Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while,  
so that you might have him back forever,

<sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave,  
a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you,  
both in the flesh and in the Lord. ►

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**SECOND READING** *Philemon = fy-LEE-mun Apphia = AP-fee-uh Archippus = ar-KIP-us  
Onesimus = oh-NES-ih-mus*

This beautiful little letter is filled with love and “loving pressure” exerted on Philemon, a dear friend of Paul, who is apparently in the apostle’s debt. It calls for the reader’s most persuasive voice. Help the hearer sense the urgency in Paul’s request as well as the apostle’s strength in bringing such holy pressure to bear on his reader.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner,  
welcome him as you would welcome me.  
<sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything,  
charge that to my account.  
<sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it.  
I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.  
<sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord!  
Refresh my heart in Christ.  
<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you,  
knowing that you will do even more than I say.

The word of the Lord.            *or*            Word of God, word of life.

### **GOSPEL: Luke 14:25-33**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

<sup>25</sup>Now large crowds were traveling with <sup>1</sup>Jesus;  
and he turned and said to them,  
<sup>26</sup>“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother,  
wife and children, brothers and sisters,  
yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.  
<sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.  
<sup>28</sup>For which of you, intending to build a tower,  
does not first sit down and estimate the cost,  
to see whether he has enough to complete it?  
<sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish,  
all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying,  
‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’  
<sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to wage war against another king,  
will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand  
to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?  
<sup>32</sup>If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away,  
he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.  
<sup>33</sup>So therefore, none of you can become my disciple  
if you do not give up all your possessions.

The gospel of the Lord.

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#### **GOSPEL**

Surely these words are a prime example of early Middle Eastern hyperbole. Finding the hyperbolic sound is no simple assignment. Will it help to contrast the sound of the explanation (verses 28-32) with the exaggerated topic sentences (verses 26-27, 33)? An excellent reading will require some considerable thought as well as practice.