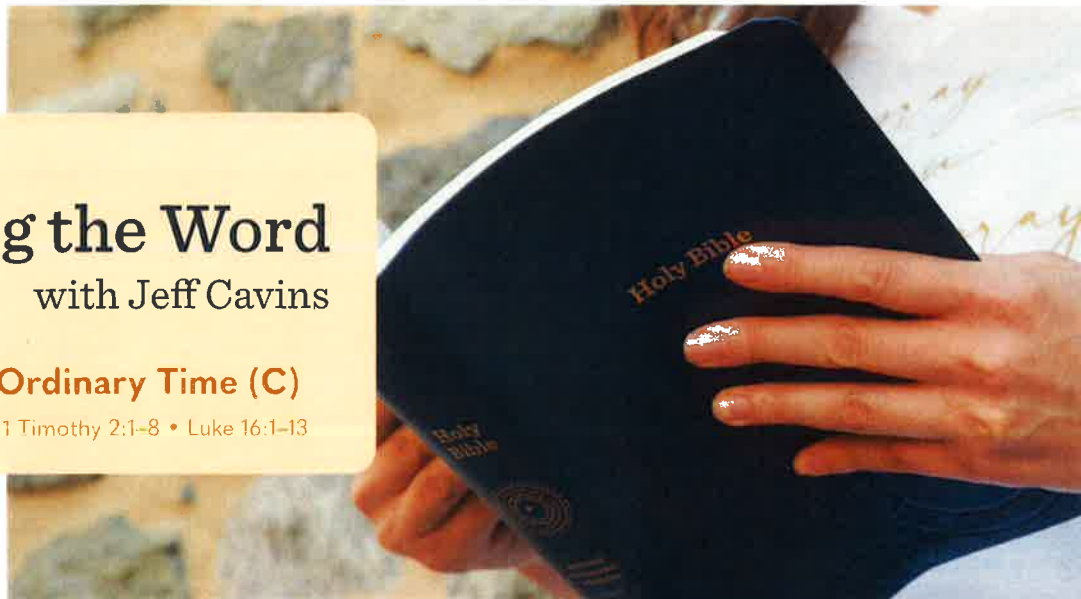


Encountering the Word

with Jeff Cavins

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Amos 8:4–7 • Psalm 113:1–2, 4–6, 7–8 • 1 Timothy 2:1–8 • Luke 16:1–13



Money: A Tool for Serving God and Others

An initially puzzling parable is found in this week's Gospel from Luke 16. Jesus shares the lesson about a dishonest steward who, when faced with losing his position, acts shrewdly to secure favor with his master's debtors. The truth of the parable becomes clear when Jesus concludes, "You cannot serve both God and money" (Luke 16:13). The focus of this teaching is not merely on the steward's actions but on the heart's attachment to wealth and possessions.



Money itself is not evil, but the *love* of money can distort priorities and control our lives. Money represents much more than currency; it represents security, status, power, and freedom. Many of us might believe, "If I just had more, I'd be happy." Yet studies reveal that increased wealth often fails to bring lasting satisfaction and can even lead to unhappiness.

For disciples of Christ, money is not a master but a tool—a resource that God entrusts to us. As stewards, we are called to use what we have to serve God and help others without allowing possessions to dominate our hearts. Jesus reminds us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," trusting that when we put God first, he provides (Matthew 6:33).

This parable challenges us to reflect on where we place our trust and reexamine how we view our earthly resources. True freedom comes when we release our attachment to things and live in, as St. Paul writes, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Live the Gospel

What is your relationship with money? Is it in charge, or is it a tool? If money has taken priority, what can you do? Realign. Consider simplifying your life by focusing on what truly matters—serving God and others. Look where your money goes and adjust if need be. Let Jesus guide your priorities. You're in good hands.

Dive Deeper

Scan this code to watch:



Or go to:

<https://media.ascensionpress.com/video/twenty-fifth-sunday-in-ordinary-time/>

Ponder and Pray

» Are there ways you have prioritized financial security over relationships, spiritual growth, or serving others? How can you realign your focus?

» In what ways can you use money as a tool to serve God and help others rather than as a source of status or security?

» How does your relationship with money influence your decisions, and does it reflect a heart fully surrendered to God?

Make It Your Own

You and others in your household may use this space to write anything about today's Mass. It might be your view of Jeff Cavins' reflection, your priest's homily, or your answers to the questions on this page—anything to help you and your household get the most out of today's Mass.

“

No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.

—Luke 16:13

”

Jeff Cavins is the author of *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* and the creator of the video series *Sundays with Ascension*, from which this reflection was adapted.

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Week 38



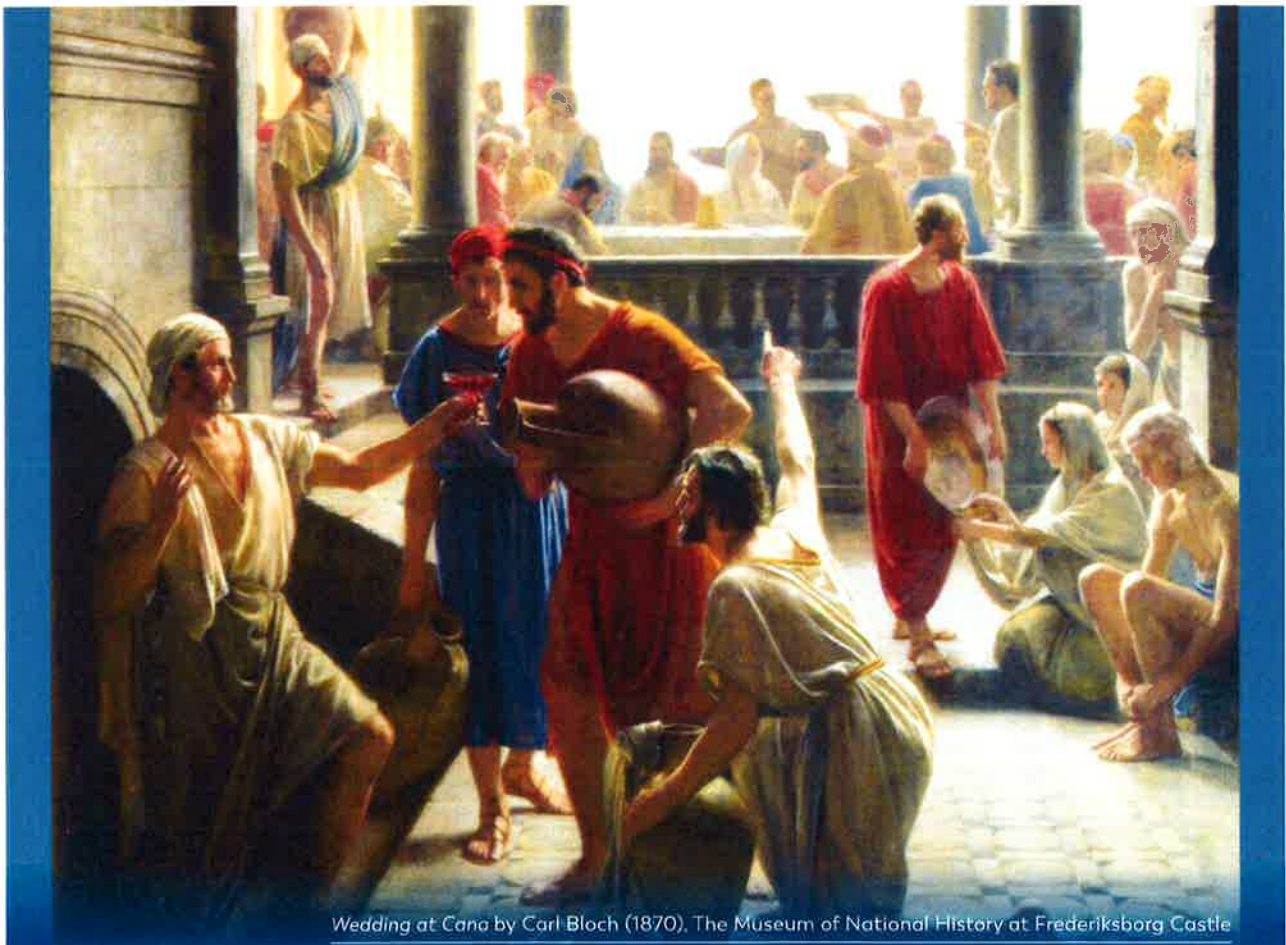
PHASE 3: MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES

The Luminous Mysteries in Art

THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA

This week, we will meditate on a piece of sacred art depicting the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-12): an oil painting on copper by Carl Bloch, *Wedding at Cana*, painted in 1870. It is located at the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle in Hillerød, Denmark.

After taking a moment to collect your thoughts and lift your mind to God, prayerfully gaze upon the image, noticing what catches your eye and what intrigues you. Below are points of reflection to assist in your meditation.



Wedding at Cana by Carl Bloch (1870), The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle

Reflection and Contemplation

- This depiction of the Wedding at Cana focuses on the moment the steward tries the water that has been turned into wine by Jesus. Why do you think the artist focused on this moment?
- John 2:9 says that before drinking the wine, the steward was unaware of its source. However, the servants who obeyed Jesus and Mary's directions saw the miracle take place. How can obedience to Christ, as Our Lady urges us, lead to blessings within our lives?
- One servant is shown pointing toward Jesus, indicating where he got the wine. Another servant, dressed in blue, stares in awe at the wine the steward has in his hand. He is amazed by Jesus' miracle. How would you react if you were one of the servants?
- Look at the steward. His body and face seem to express how good the wine is. How is this wine a sign of the goodness of the New Covenant?
- After the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost, some people ridiculed them by saying, "They are filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13). While this comment was meant to be derisive, there is a deeper sense in which it is true. Why is being filled with the Holy Spirit sometimes compared to being filled with wine?
- The Gospel of John tells us that the changing of water to wine at this wedding feast was the first miracle of Jesus, leading his followers to have faith in him. How can the miracles of Christ strengthen our faith?

Make It Your Own

What stood out to you about your Rosary experience this week?

[illegible]

Scan the QR code to view *The Rosary in a Year* videos on the Ascension app. Download the prayer plan at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8s69yd>.

The Rosary in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR. It takes Catholics on a journey to form a lasting habit of prayer and gain tools to enter more deeply into meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary through the Rosary. This bulletin was adapted from the podcast and materials that complement the podcast.



Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus

A MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY

What is the role of a godparent?

When someone is asked to be a godparent, it is a joyful moment. In part, saying yes means getting dressed up, being there for a baptism, undertaking certain ceremonious responsibilities, and probably eating some cake after the Mass. But what is the deeper significance? What about after the ceremony? *Belonging*, Ascension's baptismal preparation program, answers those questions.

Sharing the Catholic Faith

A godparent's more important role kicks in after the ceremony: They are expected to help parents raise the child in the Catholic Faith. A godparent should be someone who can be a good example and spiritual mentor for your child. Although asking someone to be a godparent can be seen as a gesture of admiration and respect, it is most importantly about providing your son or daughter with a Catholic role model. Far from being merely a personal honor, being a godparent is ultimately about witnessing to one's own relationship with Jesus and the Church.

As with parenting, there is no exact prescription or "rule book" for how to be a godparent. Here are a few guidelines, however:

First, godparents should be actively practicing their Catholic Faith and striving to be a good witness of it. By

canon law, godparents must be confirmed Catholics in good standing with their own parish. (This is why a letter from their pastor is required prior to them being accepted as godparents.)

Second, godparents should be regularly invited to share their faith with your child over the years. The actual involvement of godparents can take many forms; it can even be effective long distance. Helping them to stay in your son or daughter's life will most likely require regular invitations on your part. As your child grows up, tell them about their godparents, and help them to keep in touch.

The special role of godparents can and should extend throughout your child's early years and adolescence. Hopefully, the relationship of spiritual support will remain meaningful even beyond those years.

"A godparent's more important role kicks in after the ceremony."

Ponder and Pray

- Who are your godparents? What has been their role in your life?
- Do you have godchildren? How can you connect more deeply with them?



Make it Your Own

Write a letter to your current or future godchildren. Here are some ideas for what to say:

- Assure your godchildren you will pray for them and develop a concrete plan to do so.
- Share your faith and testimony.
- Include some ideas for how to live as a faithful Catholic.
- Tell your godchildren how you became their godparent.
- Help them look ahead to Confirmation, share some information about how you were confirmed, and tell them the name you took and why.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is a vertical margin line on the left side, creating a narrow left margin. The top-left corner of the paper is rounded. The paper appears to be part of a notebook or binder.

Tip of the Week

Every day, pray for your godchildren
and future godchildren.

Dive Deeper

For more on Ascension's award-winning *Belonging: Baptism in the Family of God*, scan the QR code or visit: <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/belonging-baptism-in-the-family-of-god>.





LET US SERVE THE GOD OF MANY NAMES



Amos 8:4-7 • 1 Timothy 2:1-8 • Luke 16:1-13

Family Car Talk

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, *"The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones."* Talk with your family on the way home from Mass today about trust.

- I** What are some things your family trusts you to do for them?
- B** What are some things you trust your family to do for you?
- A** Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. What are some ways you can build trust in small matters so you can be trusted in big ones?

CRACK THE CODE TO SEE THE MEDIATOR!

Instructions: Today's Second Reading says, *"There is also one mediator between God and men, the man _____, who gave himself as ransom for all."* Using the key below, crack the code for who the mediator between God and all people is.



A:	B:	C:	D:	E:	F:	G:	H:	I:
J:	K:	L:	M:	N:	O:	P:	Q:	R:
S:	T:	U:	V:	W:	X:	Y:	Z:	

Answer key: Christ Jesus



COLOR THE NAMES OF GOD

Instructions: Today, Psalm 113 says, “*Blessed be the name of the Lord both now and forever.*” Color the many names of God below and learn about the ways we can call upon him.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

MESSIAH

ABBA

JEHOVAH

LORD

ELOHIM

CREATOR

JESUS

SAVIOR

FATHER

GOD

Week 38

Paragraphs 1975–2029



THE CATECHISM IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MIKE SCHMITZ

How We Live PART THREE: LIFE IN CHRIST

WE ARE CALLED TO BE HOLY

The Law on its own is good, but it is not enough. We are called to live a life of grace. Grace does not just cover us but changes something inside of us. Through the sacraments, our fundamental disposition toward the Lord is radically reoriented. We are made into new creatures. Every one of us has been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and God wants us to cooperate with that redemption and ultimately be holy. Every one of us is called to be a saint and called to the heights of holiness.

Keep in Mind

- Our vocation to “*participation in the life of God*” is supernatural and requires grace (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997).
- Grace is the very life of God “infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it” (CCC 1999).
- Sanctifying grace “makes us inwardly just” (CCC 1992).
- Habitual grace is “the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God’s call” (CCC 2000).
- Actual graces are “God’s interventions” throughout our lives (CCC 2000).
- “Prevenient grace,” given by God to humans without any effort or “earning” on our part, arouses in us a desire to work with God (CCC 2670).
- Charisms are special graces “intended for the common good of the Church” (CCC 2003).
- Some charisms are almost unnoticeable; some are miraculous.
- The way each of us bears fruit and witnesses to God’s mercy looks different.
- All merit “arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*” (CCC 2008).



Statue of St. Thérèse of Lisieux
at a church in Levelek, Hungary

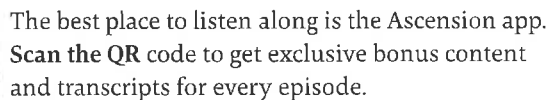
Dive Deeper

As St. Thérèse of Lisieux expressed, in the end, we will approach God “with empty hands,” for even “the merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness” (CCC 2011, 2009).

Contemplate how you personally bear fruit and witness through your gifts and talents. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue shaping you toward holiness.

- Use the space below to reflect on this week's content.

God our Father, thank you for the great call you have placed in our lives. Help us to live it out. Allow faith to guide our steps, thoughts, and hearts. Let your love be the power that moves us. We pray this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.



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Week Thirty-Eight

Days 260–266



Messianic Checkpoint Narrative: Matthew 8–28 | Supplemental: Proverbs 19

HIS STRIFE IS OVER, HIS COMMISSION IS GIVEN



Jesus feeds the multitudes

Jesus showcases his authority as God in this week's concluding chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, which mark the end of this *Bible in a Year* "Messianic Checkpoint." Jesus' ministry of teaching and healing began during last week's readings, and now God, who gave Moses the Torah in establishing the Old Covenant, modifies the Law in light of his Son's coming sacrifice for the redemption of humanity.

- Jesus' ministry is not just about teaching good ethics, as so many people today believe. This false understanding of the Gospels and the Church's teachings lead people to believe that Jesus is just a moral teacher like so many others in history.
- The healing of the paralytic in chapter 9 indicates Jesus' identity. Though his miracles do show his divine identity, Jesus' forgiving of the man's sins is something that everyone acknowledges goes far beyond miracles. Recall the miracles we read about in the Old Testament.
- Jesus performs other miracles similar to what we see in the Old Testament, in part to show the continuity of God's work among his people.
- For example, two stories in this Gospel are about Jesus feeding the hungry multitudes, thousands of people at a time, with leftovers! Here, Jesus' miracles reflect what the prophets Elijah and Elisha did.
- Such miracles also demonstrate how God uses his divine power for our benefit.
- Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but he takes a firm stand against evil. He is meek but not weak. In his humility, Jesus destroys the hold that sin and death have over humanity by winning the war for us on the Cross.
- At the end of Matthew, Jesus' Great Commission sends the apostles forward: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20).

Dive Deeper

The Gospel is like a pearl of great price that is worth sacrificing everything else to have. What in your life must you sacrifice to safeguard and live out the treasure of the Gospel?

Bible Answers

Why do we call priests “Father” when Jesus says, “Call no man your father” (Matthew 23:9)?

Jesus sometimes uses hyperbole to illustrate his preaching. For example, in Matthew 5:30, he says, “If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.” Of course, Jesus does not mean we should permanently maim ourselves to avoid sinning! Remember to keep Jesus’ words in context to see what he is trying to teach.

Thus, when Jesus tells the crowd to “call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven,” he is warning them against giving anyone the spiritual power and truth-giving authority that is reserved for God. Of course, it is appropriate to call priests “Father” and use that word in identifying our male parent.



MOUNT TABOR

Pictured here is Mount Tabor, traditionally considered to be the spot where Jesus was transfigured before his disciples Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17).



Scan the QR code to listen to the *Bible in a Year* podcast on the Ascension app, to get exclusive content, and to access transcripts for every episode. Download the reading plan at <https://media.ascensionpress.com/category/ascension-podcasts/bibleinayear/>.

The Bible in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz, where we read the whole Bible following *The Great Adventure* Bible-study program created by Jeff Cavins. This bulletin was adapted from *The Bible in a Year Companion* books that complement the podcast.