

**Readings:** Deuteronomy 30: 10 – 14; Verses from Psalm 68 (69); Colossians 1: 15 – 20;  
Luke 10: 25 – 37.

Today's Gospel Reading skips a passage in which Jesus thanks his Father because he has *hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants*, and then says to the disciples *privately*, "*Blessed are the eyes that see the things you are seeing*".

This concludes a section in which Jesus has been speaking to his disciples, and it is followed by an encounter with a hostile critic. This will be followed – in next week's reading – by the welcome Jesus receives in the house of Martha and Mary. This alternation between supporters and opponents of Jesus is found throughout Luke's account of the journey to Jerusalem.

The hostile critic in today's reading is a *lawyer* – that is a student of the Jewish Law. The words *to disconcert Jesus* are a weak translation: the Greek word means *to test*, (it's the word used in the testing of Jesus in the wilderness). The lawyer knows the answer to his own question: the way to *inherit eternal life* is to keep the double commandment of love for God and neighbour. But, rather than acknowledge this truth and so justify God and Jesus his representative, the lawyer is *anxious to justify himself*. The Hebrew word which lies behind our word 'justify' has a legal meaning – declaring someone to be in the right.

Jesus does not explicitly condemn the lawyer, but the parable he tells of the three people who have the opportunity of helping the robbed and wounded traveller makes it clear that the lawyer's hostile question '*And who is my neighbour?*' shows an inadequate grasp of the demands of the Law. The *neighbour* is anyone – including a *Samaritan* – who *takes pity* on someone in need. So we are not to make a mental list of those who are our neighbours, whom we are legally obliged to love, so excluding some we don't have to love. Rather, we are to look out for the opportunity of showing love to anyone in need – and the Samaritan is the example the lawyer – and all who hear the parable should follow: *Go and do the same yourself*.

In his teaching Jesus rejects the narrow legalism of lists and takes up the encouragement of the last words of today's Old Testament Reading: *The Word is very near you*. For us Christians 'the Word' is Jesus himself – and he is indeed *very near* – living in us through his Spirit.