

## Thought for the Week

*Thought for the Week is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.*

*For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>*

*Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)*

*Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.*

### **Wednesday 28 April**

#### **Deuteronomy 10.12-end**

We may not know the book of Deuteronomy very well – it's couched as a very long speech from Moses before he died – but here's a great passage to summarise its message and to put right any misapprehension that the OT is about law and the NT is about love – as if there were a massive contrast and Jesus was contradicting the old.

'Love' comes 4 times in this short passage and commandments are mentioned once. Much more than that, they were exhorted to 'circumcise the foreskin of the heart' – there's the Sermon on the Mount, right there. Obedience isn't in outward matters, or that is never sufficient. It must come from the heart, from the inner person, we are talking about transformation not compliance. What does God want of us, Moses asks? To love him! And because we love God, to put God first, and do you know what? This is for our own well-being.

That was pointed out to Adam and Eve in the garden – better not touch that tree's fruit because if you do it will bring you nothing good – it will bring death. But they decided that they knew better what was good for them; there's the pattern of how we humans go wrong - and the rest, as they say, is history – the history of the human race and all its conflicts and problems and suffering.

So to follow the logic of Deuteronomy, if we love God as God loves us, how does that manifest itself? Or in NT terms, what is the fruit of that love? Moses says it's justice for the orphan and widow; love for the stranger.

These categories of people were those without power or influence or a voice, without rights or property; the downtrodden, those who were dependent. Moses says the mark of a society which loves God is a society of justice and compassion expressed towards those who cannot demand it or buy it or enforce it.

Because the love of God is poured out to us without money and without price, as Isaiah said, we too ought to pour out love to those who cannot pay us back. Israel was reminded of their time as strangers in Egypt, and how God rescued them from that oppression.

Today's strangers in this sense are migrant workers, asylum seekers, refugees. Once we use those familiar terms, I hope Deuteronomy sounds rather relevant. A text from ancient times turns out to be full of ethical exhortation which we desperately need to hear in our own time.

As we go to the polling stations next week, we will not agree about which political party is best placed to lead our country in this way; but we should all aspire to achieve a society which is characterised like this; a society which treats its least powerful members with respect and compassion, a community of good neighbours; a just and caring society.

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort,*

*knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*